



**The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia**

**AUSTRALIA AND THE
REFUGEE PROBLEM**

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

**Parliamentary Paper
No. 329/1976**

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Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

*Brought up and
ordered to be printed 1 December 1976*

The Commonwealth Government Printer
Canberra 1977

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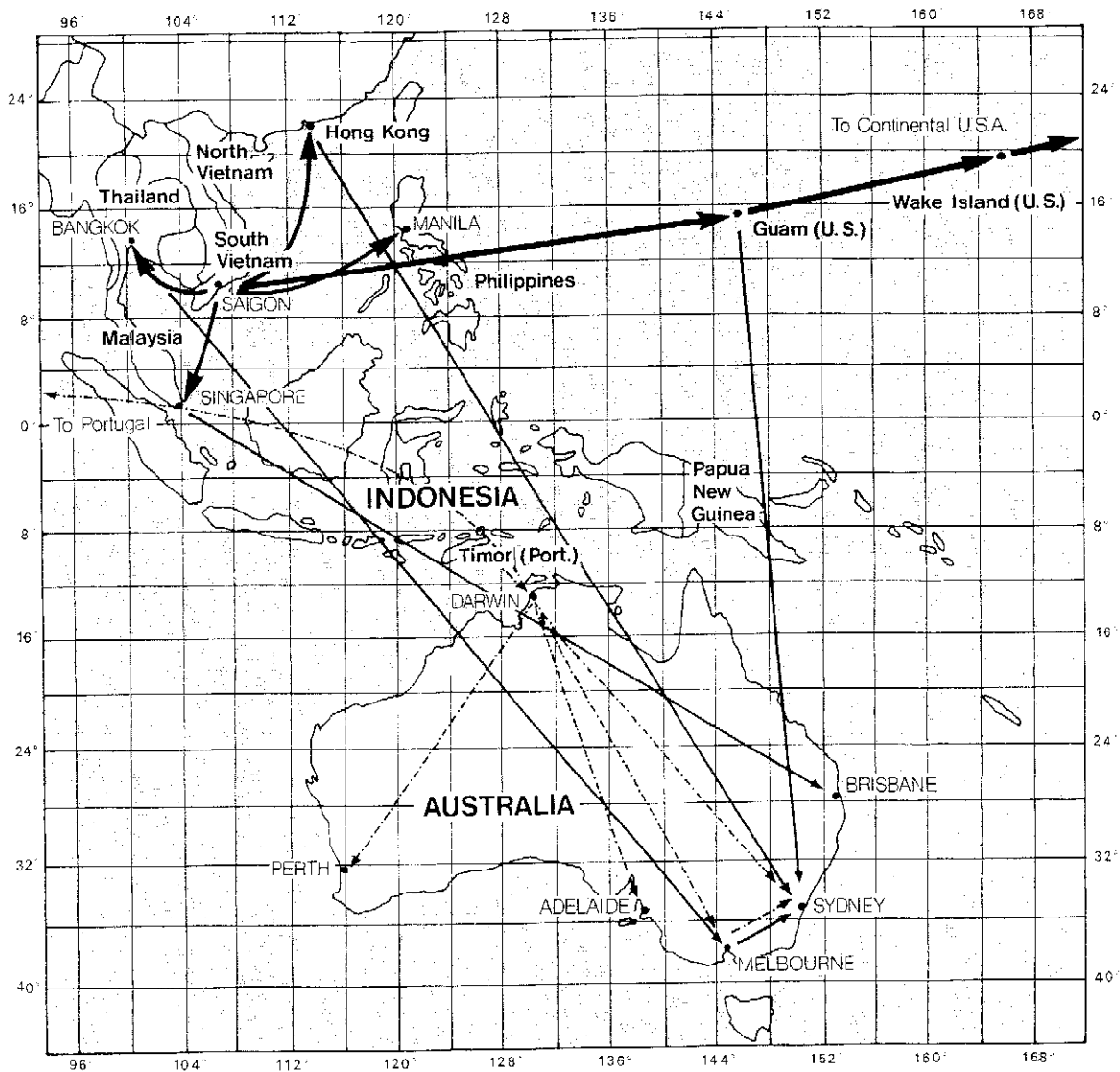
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Refugee Movements



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Preface

On 11 June 1975 the Senate referred the following matters to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for examination and report:

- (a) The plight and circumstances of refugees and other persons forced to leave South Vietnam following the occupation of that area by North Vietnamese forces, together with the existing and future circumstances of all South Vietnamese students now in Australia and their close relatives;
- (b) The response of the Australian Government to the requests made both from within Australia and at the international level for assistance in the matters of resettlement and rehabilitation; and
- (c) The areas of operation in which the Australian nation could render appropriate and effective assistance.

In considering the reference the Committee invited and received submissions from a wide range of interested persons and organisations to all of whom we express our appreciation for their co-operation and assistance. A list of those from whom evidence was received is attached at Appendix 5.

Hearings for the reference commenced on 10 October 1975 but were interrupted by the dissolution of Parliament in November. Members were reappointed to the Committee on 24 March 1976 and hearings resumed on 21 April and continued until 20 May 1976. Where possible, evidence was heard in public sessions although there were several instances where the nature of the material presented necessitated some hearings being held *in camera*.

During May 1976 the Committee visited the 168 Vietnamese refugees who remained at the Wacol Migrant Hostel in Brisbane to discuss the difficulties they faced in settling in Australia. Following this visit, and prior to preparing its report, the Committee conducted a detailed program of research into the practical matter of the settlement of the Vietnamese (and other) refugees. This was accompanied by a number of detailed requests for further information from the various Commonwealth departments having responsibility for the post-arrival care of refugees in Australia.

During the course of the inquiry considerable difficulty was experienced by the Committee in obtaining accurate and comprehensive statistical and other information and in reconciling the sometimes conflicting and often incomplete information which was submitted in evidence by various government departments, voluntary organisations and individuals. To the best of the Committee's ability, this fragmentary information has been pieced together to provide an accurate and factual basis for the conclusions and recommendations which are contained in the report.

The report is divided into three parts. The first part provides a factual background to the Vietnamese refugee problem and consists of a chronological account of the events surrounding the fall of Saigon during April

1975 and the major responses to these events. In the second part consideration is given to the Australian Government's response to the requests for assistance with the resettlement and rehabilitation of the Vietnamese and other refugees who were admitted to Australia during 1975 and in the early part of 1976. In this section the Committee has canvassed such matters as the evacuation of refugees, criteria used for their selection, reception procedures, orientation work, and the post-hostel settlement assistance which has been provided to them. The section concludes with a chapter on the overall nature of the 'resettlement process' itself. The final part of the report contains the Committee's recommendations for the formulation of an Australian policy for refugees together with the necessary advisory and other administrative machinery. These recommendations, if implemented, should ensure that Australia is able to respond quickly and effectively to refugee situations which may arise in the future. The Committee has also included its specific recommendations concerning areas where action is most needed to alleviate the problems experienced by the 1975 and 1976 intakes of Vietnamese, Timorese and Indochinese refugees.

**FACTUAL BACKGROUND TO
THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE
PROBLEM**

1 Chronological Account of Events and Major Responses

The end of the Indochina War, April 1975

1.1. The end of the Indochina War was accompanied by a massive displacement of Vietnamese people from their homes. As the North Vietnamese forces moved rapidly southwards at the beginning of March, there was an exodus of people from the zones of fighting to places of temporary refuge. This resulted in huge concentrations of refugees in the cities of South Vietnam. At one stage the city of Da Nang had a refugee population of 600 000. As the major cities fell to the North Vietnamese forces (Hue on 20 March, Da Nang on 30 March, Nha Trang on 1 April) an atmosphere of panic developed and it became evident that large numbers of Vietnamese wished to be evacuated from their country. Although precise figures were not available on the number that fled, the Committee believes the magnitude is in the order of 150 000.

1.2. On 3 April 1975, President Ford ordered U.S. Navy vessels and aircraft to help evacuate refugees and on 15 April approval was sought from Congress to evacuate up to 176 000 persons. Almost all of the Vietnamese wishing to be evacuated were moved from South Vietnam in the period 3 April 1975 until 29 April when the U.S. evacuation was completed. By 2 May, the United States forces had evacuated 86 000 U.S. citizens and South Vietnamese by air and sea using military or chartered craft.

1.3. Staging centres were established at Guam and Wake Island for the care and preliminary processing of these refugees. Other reception centres were set up in continental United States at Camp Pendleton, Fort Chaffee, Eglin Air Force Base and Fort Indiantown Gap. By 15 June 1975, 131 399 evacuees had been received into these camps. By 24 May, some 140 000 Indochinese refugees had entered the United States and most of them through the Camp system.

1.4. Other Vietnamese who escaped following the fall of Saigon made their way in small vessels and merchant ships to Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. The number of these people was in the order of 50 000.

The role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Vietnamese situation

1.5. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 to 'provide international protection for refugees and to seek permanent solutions to their problems on a purely humanitarian and non-political basis'. Aid work in North and South Vietnam began under the auspices of the UNHCR in 1974. Projects were worked out with the governments concerned not only to facilitate the

return of displaced persons to the villages of their origin but also to contribute to the development of agriculture and to meet certain basic needs such as medical supplies, clothing and food. A total of \$7.8m was contributed towards the UNHCR's program during 1974 and the first half of 1975.

1.6. Emergency relief for South Vietnam began in April 1975 when food, medical supplies, shelter and clothing were shipped by air and sea to the area. In response to the appeal made to the international community, contributions in cash and in kind amounting to over \$27m were received by UNICEF¹ and UNHCR for their joint relief program.

1.7. The UNHCR also undertook repatriation or resettlement assistance to Cambodians and Vietnamese outside their countries, financed by funds received from governments in response to appeals launched by the High Commissioner in May 1976. By 15 July 1976 \$6m had been received.

*Australia and the
UNHCR in Vietnam*

1.8. In overall terms, the decision was taken by the Australian Government to provide assistance to the Vietnamese and Indochinese refugees, under the auspices of the UNHCR. Consequently refugee selection operations, which were carried out in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand by Australian personnel, were conducted following requests from the UNHCR calling on Australia and other countries to indicate the number of refugees which they would accept for 'durable resettlement'.

*Australia's
monetary
contributions*

1.9. As early as July 1974 Australia made a grant of \$150 000 to the United Nations Children's Fund for its program in Cambodia. On 3 November 1974 the then Prime Minister announced a grant of \$1 150 000 to UNICEF, the Indochina Operational Group of the International Committee of the Red Cross (IOG) and the UNHCR for humanitarian and reconstruction work in Indochina.

1.10. On 2 April 1975, the Prime Minister announced a further contribution to UNHCR of \$1m for relief work among refugees in all parts of Indochina. The following day the Prime Minister launched an 'Indochina-Vietnam Appeal' with a donation of \$50 000 from the Federal Government. (The appeal, which was conducted by the International Disaster Emergencies Committee of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, received further donations of \$68 000 from the various State Governments and \$374 000 from the public.) In launching the appeal it was pointed out that Australia had already given \$2.4m to international agencies working in Indochina in 1974-75.

1.11. On 7 April 1975, the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced a further contribution of \$1m to the UNHCR, which would enable supplies purchased previously for the UNHCR to be air freighted to Indochina, as well as allowing for an additional cash grant to be made by Australia.

¹ United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

1.12. On 23 May 1975, following the evacuation of Saigon, Australia made a further grant of \$200 000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross for use in Indochina. On 20 June 1975 the Prime Minister announced a further grant of \$1m to the UNHCR for use in Indochina in response to an appeal made by the High Commissioner on 10 June 1975.

1.13. In total, Australian aid to the international agencies working in Indochina was substantial and amounted to \$4.75m.

*The role and use of
Royal Australian Air
Force aircraft in
Vietnam*

1.14. The Australian Government responded quickly to a call on 29 March 1975 for air transport assistance in South Vietnam. Seven RAAF Hercules C-130 transport aircraft were made available immediately whilst others were placed on 'stand-by' in anticipation of further assistance being required. In Vietnam these aircraft were deployed in airlifting refugees within the country², and in moving relief supplies both into Vietnam and between various refugee camps within the country. Following the closure of the Australian Embassy in Saigon on 25 April, RAAF aircraft were used to transport UNICEF and UNHCR relief supplies to Bangkok from neighbouring countries and Australia, as well as to Vientiane for forwarding to Hanoi. From the beginning of May until early June 1975 this type of assistance was undertaken by two RAAF C-130 aircraft provided to the United Nations to continue work elsewhere in Indochina. These aircraft remained at the United Nations' disposal until early June, when the Australian Government was advised that they were no longer required.

1.15. In addition to the relief supplies and evacuation flights the RAAF undertook a series of special flights in evacuating 283 orphan children from Saigon between 4 April and 16 April 1975.

1.16. From 2 April 1975–27 May 1975, RAAF aircraft carried over 1800 tonnes of relief supplies and over 2000 Vietnamese persons.³

*Australian domestic
action*

1.17. The fall of Saigon and the enormous movement of people within and from South Vietnam attracted considerable attention in the Australian news media. The concern of the general public for the plight of these refugees was reflected also in Parliament where a number of statements were made regarding Australia's involvement and concern for the refugees both in debate and in response to the many questions which were asked of Ministers. (Australia's previous involvement in Vietnam, the unparalleled chaos and unexpected rapidity of events leading up to the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975, Australia's role in providing monetary

² i.e. 'displaced persons'—those who had fled from their homes. In the Committee's view, whilst 'displaced persons' are not 'refugees' in the technical international sense, they are refugees for all practical purposes and require comparable assistance.

³ The Committee was informed in the submission from the former Prime Minister's Office (Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 1 1975, p. 425) that, in its relief operations in Indochina from March 1975 onwards, RAAF aircraft transported 6377 people. In the submission from the Department of Defence, however, the figure of 2000 refugees and evacuees is given (Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 2 1976, p. 729 and statistical table p. 730-731).

aid, the use of RAAF aircraft in Vietnam, Australia's diplomatic initiatives, cables sent from Australia to North and South Vietnam and the adoption of children were amongst the issues raised in Parliament and elsewhere.)

1.18. On 21 April 1975 President Thieu resigned from office as head of the South Vietnamese Government and Vice-President Tran Van Huong became Interim President.

Announcement of guidelines for the entry of refugees into Australia

1.19. On 22 April 1975, the Prime Minister announced the categories of persons having Vietnamese citizenship who would be eligible for temporary entry into Australia. These categories included:

- (a) Spouses and children of Vietnamese students at present living in Australia.
- (b) Spouses and the under 21-year-old children of Australian citizens subject to completion of Australian citizenship formalities.
- (c) Vietnamese with long and close association with the Australian presence in Vietnam whose life was considered to be in danger (and whose applications would be considered on a case by case basis).

The Prime Minister stated that these decisions had been taken with regard to the principle of maintaining the unity of families.

1.20. By 22 April, the Department of Labor and Immigration had received nominations from Australian citizens, from permanent residents in Australia and from temporary residents in Australia for the entry into Australia of a total of 1987 persons in South Vietnam.

Closure of the Australian Embassy in Saigon

1.21. On 24 April 1975 the Australian Embassy in Saigon was closed and on 25 April the remaining staff, together with United Nations' officials and 78 Vietnamese nationals, were evacuated from South Vietnam by RAAF aircraft.

1.22. At this time the Department of Labor and Immigration had received nominations for residence covering 3667 persons, which included 970 nominated by persons permanently resident in Australia together with 2697 nominated by students and other temporary residents. Of these 3667 persons, a total of 342 persons was approved for entry to Australia under the guidelines of 22 April and the Australian Embassy was notified of them prior to its evacuation on 25 April 1975.

1.23. Sponsorships covering a further 1183 people were received from 25-30 April when the Republic of Vietnam capitulated to the opposing forces. Further nominations continued to be received, but at a much slower rate. By 10 July 1975 they covered 5269 persons, of whom an additional 200 were approved for entry to Australia. Of these 5629 persons, a total of 542 was approved—355 for permanent residence and 187 for temporary residence.

Follow-up action

1.24. On 27 April 1975 a list of 366 persons—consisting of the 124 Vietnamese family groups and individuals who had been approved for entry to Australia—was cabled to Australian diplomatic posts in Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Vientiane, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. It included the 342 persons mentioned previously and 24 others who had been approved for entry to Australia on the basis that their long and close association with the Australian presence in Vietnam had endangered their lives.

1.25. The names of a further 200 Vietnamese persons subsequently approved for entry were also cabled to the above posts and to other Australian diplomatic missions as the approvals were given.

*Change of South
Vietnamese
Government*

1.26. On 28 April 1975 General Duong Van Minh took over from Tran Van Huong as President of South Vietnam, and ordered the United States of America to evacuate. By 29 April the US evacuation of its own nationals as well as most Vietnamese refugees was complete. On 30 April the Saigon Government surrendered unconditionally to the Provisional Revolutionary Government and North Vietnamese forces.

1.27. By 2 May 1975 United States ships had ceased their evacuation tasks off the coast of Vietnam and sailed for Guam and Subic Bay in the Philippines. Other Vietnamese made their way in small vessels or merchant ships to a variety of locations in Asia, including Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore. By 4 May 1975 a number of ships and small vessels had arrived in Singapore from South Vietnam and within a few days the number of refugees in Singapore totalled about 8000 persons.

1.28. On 5 May 1975, the Australian Prime Minister gave approval for officers of the then Department of Labor and Immigration to be sent to Guam to arrange documentation and travel for Vietnamese people located there who had been approved to come to Australia under the 22 April guidelines. The decision was also taken to grant assisted passage upon request by any Vietnamese person approved for entry to Australia.

1.29. On 6 May 1975 the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam was recognised by Australia. A communique was issued on that day by the UNHCR which announced the arrival of two UNHCR officials in Guam to assess the situation.

1.30. By 10 and 11 May most of the refugee ships had left Singapore after the local authorities had allowed them to reprovision and refuel. It is believed that most went to Guam or Subic Bay. At this time there were approximately 20 000 refugees in Guam, and an estimated 72 000 in Subic Bay or at sea. Some 4000 Vietnamese refugees had also arrived in Hong Kong, most of whom had been rescued at sea by a Danish ship.

1.31. By 8 May 1975 two Australian officials had arrived on Guam and set up facilities at Orote Point in order to search for persons approved to come to Australia prior to the fall of Saigon.

1.32. The first of the refugees from Guam began to arrive in Australia during May 1975. On 18 May, 61 refugees were evacuated to Australia by RAAF aircraft and since then a further 11 are known to have arrived from Guam and Wake Island on scheduled air services at Australian Government expense. In addition, 36 Vietnamese approved for entry to Australia were located in the United States. Air fares for these were also met by the Australian Government.

1.33. In response to an approach by the UNHCR, the High Commissioner was informed on 14 May 1975, of Australia's willingness to accept refugees from Hong Kong and Singapore for permanent settlement in Australia.

1.34. On 28 May a team of Australian selection officers left for Hong Kong to commence interviews among Vietnamese refugees there with a view to approving persons to come to Australia. On 19 June 1975 the Prime Minister announced that 201 Vietnamese refugees would arrive in Sydney from Hong Kong on the following day. On arrival in Sydney all of the refugees went to the East Hills Migrant Hostel.

1.35. On 24 June 1975 the major refugee camp on Guam—Orote Point—was closed. With the exception of approximately 1600 persons who wished to be repatriated to Vietnam, all refugees had been approved for entry on either a permanent or temporary basis to the U.S., Australia or other countries willing to accept them.

1.36. On 4 July 1975 the Department of Labor and Immigration received UNHCR dossiers covering 273 Vietnamese refugees in Singapore, and on 20 July a team of Australian selection officers were despatched to Singapore to begin the processing and selection of Vietnamese refugees. The team also travelled to Perhentian Island in Malaysia to select further refugees for admission to Australia.

1.37. On 6 August 1975 the Prime Minister announced the Government's intention to settle approximately 300 more Vietnamese refugees, about two-thirds of whom would come from St John's Island, Singapore and one-third from Perhentian Island, Malaysia. On 9 August 323 refugees arrived in Brisbane and were accommodated at Wacol Hostel.

1.38. On 21 January 1976 the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced that a further 800 Indochinese refugees would be admitted to Australia, most of them from refugee camps in Thailand. A selection team left for Bangkok on 2 February 1976 and following the mission's activities in Thailand, 568 persons were subsequently brought to Australia by chartered aircraft during 19-24 March 1976. They comprised 279 Laotians, 228 Cambodians and 61 Vietnamese refugees.

*Resettlement of
refugees as part of
an overall program
administered by the
UNHCR*

Vietnamese students in Australia

1.39. As the North Vietnamese forces moved further south the Vietnamese students in Australia became increasingly fearful for the safety of their families. Their immediate reaction was to try to bring their families to Australia. From the beginning of April these students submitted applications to the Department of Labor and Immigration nominating relatives for entry to Australia. By 25 April the Department had received 2697 nominations from students and other temporary residents, consisting of 802 on behalf of members of families, 1700 for brothers and sisters, and 195 for distant relatives and friends.

1.40. A further 970 Vietnamese were nominated by other persons permanently resident in Australia. These comprised 212 nominations for families, 441 for brothers and sisters and 317 for distant relatives and friends.

1.41. At the beginning of April the criteria for entry of Vietnamese persons were governed solely by the existing quite restrictive immigration policies.⁴

Deferral and eventual waiving of the return-home obligations of Vietnamese and Cambodian students

1.42. On 3 April 1975 the Australian Government announced its decision to allow those tertiary students from Vietnam and Cambodia who were presently studying in Australia to defer their return home. Although it was hoped that these students would be able to return to their own countries and contribute to their reconstruction when peace was restored, their status as temporary residents was extended until 31 December 1975.

1.43. On 13 June 1975 the situation was modified to permit private students from South Vietnam to apply for resident status on the completion of their studies. Similar applications from sponsored students were to be held over until the completion of their studies when a decision would be taken in the light of developments in their home country.

1.44. On 11 November 1975 the policy was further modified to allow government-sponsored students from South Vietnam and Cambodia to apply for resident status in Australia irrespective of the degree of success or stage they had reached in their studies. The decision also enabled private students who were still studying, or who had abandoned their studies, to apply for resident status if they did not wish to return home. The effect of this was the waiving of the return-home obligations of Vietnamese and Cambodian sponsored students.

1.45. The Committee notes that early recognition was given by the Government to the fact that many of the private students had lost contact with their families and were, therefore, without means of support. The resulting arrangements which were made to help alleviate the financial difficulties experienced by these students are outlined briefly in Chapter 4.

⁴ Refer to p. 18 footnote ⁴ for details.

Role of voluntary agencies

1.46. The facilities of voluntary agencies in Australia were offered to the Australian Government early in 1975 to assist with the resettlement of refugees. They estimated that they could handle about 2000 sponsored cases per annum. A meeting was held in March 1975 between representatives of voluntary agencies and government departments, apparently in order to make an estimate of the number of refugees Australia could and/or should accept from Vietnam. In the event, however, nothing was determined. Instead the Government resolved that the international agencies such as UNHCR and the Red Cross were the appropriate authorities to assist in the provision of relief in Indochina; and looked upon Australia's involvement mainly in terms of a financial commitment rather than as a practical one of providing direct and unilateral offers of refuge to the displaced persons from South Vietnam and Indochina generally.

Resettlement study

1.47. On 23 July 1975 the Prime Minister announced that the Government had commissioned a survey of Vietnamese refugees who had recently settled in Australia. The study was to encompass such things as 'the refugees' reasons for leaving their own country; their social characteristics; their aspirations in their new homeland; what Australian government assistance in maintenance and welfare they requested, needed and received; the problems they thought they might have to face in settling in Australia; and how these compared with the problems actually encountered; the problems of culture and language difference they had to face, and what happened to their cultural identity in the process of resettlement, and to what extent—if at all—they suffered from racism'.⁵

⁵ Transcript of Evidence, Vol. I 1975, p. 450.

CONSIDERATION OF THE
AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE
TO REQUESTS FOR
ASSISTANCE WITH
RESETTLEMENT AND
REHABILITATION

2 Response to the Events in South Vietnam

2.1. The events in South Vietnam during March and April 1975, which resulted in one of the greatest refugee problems in recent times, presented the Australian Government (along with the Governments of other countries) with a number of problems requiring urgent executive consideration, decision and action.

2.2. Decisions were required concerning the use of RAAF aircraft in transporting food and other relief supplies to areas of need, in evacuating Vietnamese citizens to areas of safety, and in evacuating Australian citizens (including Embassy staff and their dependants) together with refugees and other selected persons to Australia. Procedures were required to allow the processing of the substantially increased number of applications which were received at the Australian Embassy in Saigon from Vietnamese persons seeking entry to Australia. The situation was further complicated by the need to co-ordinate the procedures for handling these applications with a similar increase in the nominations lodged in Canberra with the Department of Labor and Immigration by both Australian citizens and Vietnamese citizens (mainly students) resident in Australia, on behalf of Vietnamese persons wishing to gain entry to Australia.

Policy decisions

2.3. Basic to all of these decisions was the overall attitude which the Australian Government had adopted towards the situation in Vietnam generally. From the evidence placed before the Committee, the following policy decisions clearly determined the particular responses to the problems which were encountered:

- Prior to the events of March–April 1975, the policy which had been adopted was one which was designed to encourage the combatants in South Vietnam to the negotiating table—hence diplomatic initiatives were taken by Australia to have both sides in the Vietnamese war abide by the Paris Peace Agreement.
- With the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975 a new policy was formulated for relations with Vietnam. That policy urged the victorious forces to show compassion to their former enemies, and pledged Australian assistance both materially and morally for the reconstruction of Vietnam. It included recognition of, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, and the possible reopening of the

Australian Embassy in Saigon which had only been withdrawn temporarily by the Australian Government. It also included the provision of assistance, through international agencies and bilaterally, for the resettlement or repatriation of refugees from South Vietnam.

- The decision to regard those Vietnamese refugees who were evacuated by the United States of America—a substantial majority of those who fled from South Vietnam—as being under the care and responsibility of the Government of the United States of America.
- The decision to regard those persons who left Vietnam of their own volition and by their own means and who were not accepted for resettlement or refuge by a third country as an international problem—and hence best handled by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- The belief that with their experience and human resources, the various international relief agencies were the appropriate authorities to assist in the provision of that relief and most able to make effective use of Australian financial aid for those displaced by the events in South Vietnam.
- Acceptance by the Government on 8 April 1975 that the unparalleled chaos and the suddenness of the collapse in South Vietnam limited the scope and effectiveness of any aid given by the Australian Government or by any other government.

*Response by the
Australian
Government*

2.4. To put these policies into effect, the Committee was informed that the Government had:

- urged adherence to the negotiated settlement provided for in the Paris Peace Agreement of 1973;
- used diplomatic initiatives to urge a negotiated settlement on both sides and urged the Provisional Revolutionary Government after its victory to treat its former enemies with compassion and humanity;
- provided grants to international agencies operating on both sides of the lines of military control for humanitarian assistance for the relief of people afflicted by the war;
- provided RAAF aircraft to transport people out of conflict zones and to take relief supplies to the places of refuge of these people;
- arranged for children permitted exit by Vietnamese authorities to be brought to Australia to adoptive parents approved by State and Territory adoption authorities;
- provided medical teams from the RAAF to assist in the movement of children and arranged for 'stand-by' medical teams through the Australian Red Cross;
- urged the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to develop a resettlement program for refugees and;
- resettled significant numbers of refugees from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia;

- developed and applied humanitarian and compassionate criteria for the selection and admission of refugees under the auspices of the UNHCR;
- approved continued residence for students from Vietnam;
- admitted a number of Vietnamese refugees outside the auspices of the UNHCR; and
- initiated a long-term study on the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in Australia.

*The role and use of
RAAF aircraft in
Vietnam*

2.5. From the evidence placed before the Committee, Australia responded quickly to a call on 29 March 1975 from the Governments of South Vietnam and the United States of America for air transport assistance in evacuating refugees from the northern city of Da Nang. By that time some 600 000 civilian refugees had gathered in Da Nang having fled from more northern centres such as Hue and the province of Quang Tri before the advancing forces invading from North Vietnam. Seven RAAF C-130 Hercules transport aircraft were made available to move civilian refugees away from battle zones. Other Hercules aircraft were placed on 'stand-by' in anticipation of further assistance being required.

2.6. In the circumstances they were unable to be used for these tasks as Da Nang fell before the Australian Government was able to respond to, and put into effect, the request for transport assistance. From the afternoon on 28 April U.S. aircraft were unable to operate into Da Nang due to mortar and rocket fire and the problems of crowd control on the airfield. In retrospect, the call for air transport assistance was too late, and the Committee is concerned that decisions had not been taken earlier to assist in this matter. Notwithstanding this setback, other tasks were allotted to these aircraft. On 2 April 1480 refugees were airlifted in seven separate flights from Phan Rang to Can Tho, south-west of Saigon. From 4–17 April much of the Hercules' effort was utilised in airlifting food and other relief supplies from Saigon to the island of Phu Quoc where a refugee centre had been established by the Government of South Vietnam.

2.7. Although the Committee acknowledges the humanitarian role of Australia's aircraft in Vietnam, it is puzzled about the restricted use to which they were put. In meeting the call for air transport assistance on 29 March it is obvious that Australia then intended assisting the Government of South Vietnam, the U.S. and other countries in providing a massive sea and air evacuation of civilians from Da Nang to Cam Ranh Bay or to Saigon. From 3 April onwards, however, decisions were taken in Canberra to limit the role of the RAAF to that of transporting emergency relief supplies only—a task which was carried out in co-operation with the Government of South Vietnam until 17 April, and which was continued until early June 1975 by two aircraft placed at the disposal of the United Nations. The Committee considers that Australia may thereby have responded in a manner which possibly caused unnecessary loss of life and hardship through refusal to evacuate civilian refugees from battle zones.

Clearly Australia could have rendered greater humanitarian assistance in this regard and could have done so without seriously impairing our future relations with the new government of South Vietnam.

2.8. During the course of the inquiry a witness stated to the Committee that Australia had responded to requests from the Government in Hanoi concerning the use of RAAF aircraft within Vietnam.¹ Although the Committee was unable to substantiate these claims, instructions were issued from Canberra prohibiting the carriage of South Vietnamese government officials on 2 April, troops and refugees on 3 April and press representatives on 4 April 1975. The Committee appreciates the reasons for the ban which was placed on the ferrying of South Vietnamese officials and soldiers in RAAF aircraft, and understands that this decision was made following an incident at Phan Rang on 2 April, when a number of RVN soldiers and some other Vietnamese males, obviously of military age, forced their way aboard a C-130 Hercules aircraft. Apart from endangering our own air crews, Australia clearly did not wish to be seen to be favouring one side or the other when our presence in Vietnam at that time was purely one of humanitarian concern. Nevertheless, this does not account for the ban which was placed on the movement of refugees, wounded Vietnamese and journalists. In the absence of other explanations, the Committee is inclined to accept the view that the Australian Government was open to being influenced by attitudes of the DRV Government in Hanoi concerning the use of Australian aircraft.

*Delays in spite of
forewarnings of
likely events*

2.9. In retrospect, it is clear to the Committee that at the very least, three weeks warning had been given to the Australian Government that it was very likely the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) would be overwhelmed and that consequently the defeat of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon was imminent.

2.10. By 1 April the situation appeared to be serious enough for the Australian Government, after consulting with the Australian Embassy in Saigon, to approve the issue of warning notices to all non-official Australian nationals advising them to leave South Vietnam while commercial means of transport were still available. On 3 April the Government approved the Ambassador's further recommendation to evacuate all dependants of Embassy staff and certain non-essential Embassy and aid personnel. This approval was given on the authority of the Prime Minister.²

¹ Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 1, 1975, p. 246-247 and 270.

² Thirty Embassy dependants and aid personnel were evacuated from Saigon to Bangkok on 4 April. This move was effected by the RAAF in conjunction with three Hercules 'medivac' flights which carried 208 orphans from Saigon for evacuation to Australia by a chartered Qantas 747 aircraft.

By 21 April the Embassy staff had been reduced to a very small number and a second warning letter had been issued to Australian nationals in Saigon together with the offer of RAAF transport out of Vietnam. The third and final notice was issued on 23 April. The Embassy eventually was effectively closed for business as from the morning of 25 April. The Ambassador and all remaining staff (together with 78 Vietnamese nationals) departed from Saigon by RAAF aircraft in the mid-afternoon of that day—5 days before the fall of Saigon and its surrender to the so-called Provisional Revolutionary Government Forces.

The Committee believes that on 1 April the Government was advised by the Australian Ambassador of the possibility that a serious and complicated refugee situation could develop and warned of the likelihood that large numbers of applications for entry into Australia by potential refugees should be anticipated. We believe also that this advice was accompanied by a number of suggestions as to the categories of persons who might reasonably have been granted entry to Australia.

2.11. Other evidence placed before the Committee suggests that about 8 or 9 April, the United States' intelligence services in Vietnam had concluded that Saigon could fall at any moment and had relayed this assessment to Washington. This information, if accurate, reinforces the earlier assessments of the Australian Ambassador and it is extremely doubtful that such advice was not known and relayed also to Canberra. In fact it is curious to note that it was on 8 April that the then Prime Minister announced that 'the suddenness of the collapse in South Vietnam limited the scope and effectiveness of any aid given by the Australian Government or by any other Government'.³ Certainly reports were received in Canberra from 11 April onwards indicating that the military defeat of South Vietnam was imminent.

2.12. In spite of these firm indications the Committee believes that until the necessary decisions had been taken by the Government and instructions issued to the Embassy and relevant departments, little or nothing of a practical nature was able to be done either by Embassy officials in Saigon or by departments in Canberra to assist those who sought to obtain refuge in Australia. These decisions were taken on 21 April and on 22 April when the Prime Minister formally announced the categories of Vietnamese citizens who would be allowed to enter Australia as temporary residents.

2.13. The text of the reply which was given by the Prime Minister to a question without notice in the House of Representatives on 22 April 1975, was as follows:

'It has been decided to allow the entry into Australia for temporary residence of the following categories of persons having Vietnamese citizenship: Firstly, the spouse and children of Vietnamese students at present living in Australia and, secondly the spouses and the under 21 year old children of Australian citizens subject to completion of Australian citizenship formalities, instructions on which have been telegraphed to the Australian Embassy in Saigon which will allow the issue of Australian passports to such persons. These decisions have been taken with regard to the principle of maintaining the unity of families. In the event of representations being received regarding the temporary entry into Australia of any Vietnamese with long and close associations with the Australian presence in Vietnam whose life is considered to be in danger, the Australian Government will consider such representations on a case by case basis. The number of such persons is expected to be small. The exit of Vietnamese citizens from South Vietnam continues to be subject to the

³ Ministerial statement on Indochina made in the House of Representatives 8 April 1975 by the former Prime Minister, the Hon. E. G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P. (*Hansard*, p. 1258)

permission of the Vietnamese authorities in Saigon who, up to the present, have shown reluctance to authorise exit except in a limited number of cases.'

Processing of applications and/or nominations for entry to Australia

2.14. By 22 April, the Department of Labor and Immigration had received nominations covering 1978 persons for either temporary or permanent residence in Australia. On 25 April, the day the Australian Embassy was evacuated, the number of persons nominated totalled 3667—an increase of 1680 persons in three days. All of these cases were considered against both normal immigration criteria⁴ and the additional criteria of 21-22 April. Of the 3667 cases, 366 persons were *approved* for entry to Australia as follows:

- *Cases approved for permanent entry under normal migration criteria*
251 persons
- *Cases approved for temporary entry under 22 April guidelines*
82 persons—the wives and children of Vietnamese students studying in Australia.
9 persons—fiance(e)s of Vietnamese students in Australia.
24 persons—having a long and close association with the Australian presence in Vietnam and whose lives were considered to be in danger⁵.

2.15. Although the Committee was told that the Australian Embassy was informed of 342 of these approved applications⁶ *before* its evacuation (i.e. during the period 22-25 April), the Committee observes the overwhelming agreement in the evidence that the announcement of the Government's admission criteria came so late that it was possible for only a few families to be contacted and processed before the closing of the Australian Embassy and the fall of South Vietnam.

2.16. The Committee was informed that from the commencement of business on the morning of 22 April until noon on 24 April, the Embassy was advised by cable of 325 names of persons to whom the granting of an entry visa had been approved by the Department of Labor and Immigration.⁷ Although the Committee was unable to ascertain how many of these persons were able to be contacted prior to the Embassy's closure, some

⁴ The existing immigration criteria for family reunion cases allowed the spouse, minor dependant children and aged or otherwise dependant parents of persons *permanently* resident in Australia to enter subject only to health and character checks. Other categories of intending migrants were required to meet personal criteria relating to health, character, economic viability and settlement prospects, and were subject to stringent occupational criteria with only a limited range of professional and sub-professional workers, certain tradesmen, (mainly in the metal and electrical fields) and some others with special skills or experience being allowed to enter.

⁵ Unlike the other cases, persons in this category were not reviewed by the Department of Labor and Immigration; this was handled within the Prime Minister's Office. The Committee assumes this was because of the involvement of the then Prime Minister.

⁶ i.e. the above categories of 251, 82 and 9 persons whose applications were processed by the Department of Labor and Immigration. The Committee is unable to comment, however, on the attempts which were made prior to the Embassy's closure to contact the remaining category of 24 special cases.

⁷ No explanation has been given to account for the discrepancy between this figure of 325 and the figure of 342 given previously in paragraph 2.15.

200 type-written letters were prepared in lieu of formal Australian entry visas and either delivered personally or posted to the individual's last-known address.⁸ By the time Canberra's approval was given, and irrespective of whether individuals were able to be informed of the success of their application, it was then too late for many to flee by commercial flights or by other means. The Committee was informed, however, that individual members of the Embassy did their best by preparing affidavits for some of the Vietnamese with the most urgent and deserving cases and passed them on to the American Embassy with a special plea for assistance; some of these were included on the American lists and eventually evacuated to Guam. (Seventy-two persons were subsequently brought to Australia from Guam.)

2.17. On 27 April, the list of 342 approved names was cabled to Australian posts in Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Vientiane, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore together with the names of 24 cases who had been approved for entry on the basis of their long and close association with the Australian presence in Vietnam and hence the possible danger to their well-being. This follow-up action was designed, no doubt, to facilitate the identification and handling of those approved cases who had been able to flee from Vietnam and who had managed to find their way to other Australian diplomatic posts in South-east Asia. The names of a further 200 Vietnamese persons whose applications for entry to Australia were processed and approved during the period 26 April-10 July 1975 were also cabled to these same posts and other Australian diplomatic missions for similar follow-up action.

*The Australian
Embassy in Saigon*

2.18. From the evidence received it is clear to the Committee that the Australian Ambassador and his staff were placed in a most trying and frustrating situation from about the beginning of April onwards when they were involved in a host of tasks. Arrangements had to be made, for example, for the RAAF relief flights and for several flights of orphans to Australia; Embassy personnel were also involved in contacting and helping out of Vietnam, Australians engaged in aid projects as well as other Australian citizens; Embassy staff and their dependants also had to be moved and on 25 April, the Embassy itself was evacuated. Needless to say, the increasingly heavy workload and the reduced number of staff, together with the extraordinary amount of cable traffic to and from Saigon, combined to produce a situation in which the burden of responsibilities and tasks placed upon the Ambassador and his staff was near to overwhelming.

2.19. Notwithstanding this, however, the Committee was informed that the Embassy would have experienced little difficulty in assisting the staff and families of Embassy employees and the families of students studying in Australia in seeking refuge had they been given the authority to do so. And yet, other than the relaying of applications to Canberra, little was

⁸ Further consideration is given to this matter in paragraph 2.29.

able to be achieved in practical terms. In fact the evidence suggests that all of the decision-making and much of the initiative had been centralised in Canberra. Hence approval had to be obtained from Canberra for each individual seeking to obtain refuge in Australia and for authority to allow each non-Australian to board RAAF aircraft. Apart from Australian nationals, the evacuation from Saigon seems to have been controlled totally from Canberra. This impeded the work of the Australian Embassy at a critical time.

2.20. The Committee was informed also of the difficulties which Vietnamese citizens had in discovering whether or not their cases had been approved. A number of wives who had been cabled by their student-husbands in Australia concerning their eligibility under the 22 April guidelines, informed their husbands that, as late as 25 April their names were not on the list of those approved for entry into Australia. These persons and other South Vietnamese citizens wishing to flee as refugees from Saigon, who had turned to the Australian Embassy either for direct or indirect assistance, were thus placed in a most invidious position.

2.21. It is clear from the evidence that the delays were responsible for raising the expectations of many of those who had been approved for entry to Australia about the prospects of obtaining real assistance with their evacuation to Australia. Moreover such persons were placed in a vicious circle, for the longer they waited for advice and possible assistance from the Embassy the more remote became their chances of fleeing to safety. The Committee was informed for example, of one instance where a wife had earlier refused American assistance believing that the Australians would effect her evacuation directly to join her husband in Australia. After the closure of the Australian Embassy she found that she could no longer take up the previous offer. Other wives had organised passages on Vietnamese ships but after 25 April found it impossible to reach the coast.

2.22. The issue of visas and/or passports added further to the dilemmas which they faced. Certainly it should have been made clear to those who were seeking both permanent and temporary refuge that Australia either could not or would not assist in any way with the evacuation of personnel from Saigon.

2.23. It is apparent to the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that the Australian Government generally refused until the last moment to agree to use its transport resources to evacuate Vietnamese nationals from South Vietnam and Saigon. Indeed it appears in retrospect that the attitude was taken that it was the responsibility of individuals to escape as best they could, and only when they were out of Vietnam would the Australian Government consider assisting refugees in coming to Australia. In addition, those refugees who were evacuated by the United States were regarded as coming under the responsibility of that country

*Australia's role in
the evacuation of
personnel from
Saigon*

which, by its act of evacuation, had accepted full responsibility for the resettlement and rehabilitation of those refugees.

2.24. Australia's role thus was limited, initially, to the evacuation to safety of its own nationals i.e. Embassy staff and their dependants, Australia's aid personnel and other Australian citizens in South Vietnam at the time. Under the guidelines of 22 April this was broadened to include 'the (presumably Vietnamese) spouses and under 21 year old children of Australian citizens subject to (the) completion of Australian citizenship formalities, instructions on which have been telegraphed to the Australian Embassy in Saigon which would allow the issue of Australian passports to such persons'. Indeed it was late on 22 April that authority was first given to the Ambassador to allow him to offer seats out of Saigon on a space-available basis, *providing* that such offers could be made only to those Vietnamese nationals possessing a valid exit visa issued by the Government of Vietnam.

2.25. As a consequence, and in contrast to the earlier policy decisions not to accept responsibility for the evacuation of Vietnamese nationals from South Vietnam and/or Saigon, the following categories of Vietnamese nationals were evacuated from Saigon by RAAF aircraft on 25 April: 17 spouses and children of Australian citizens; 10 fiance(e)s (some with children) of Australian citizens; 13 other relatives of citizens and permanent residents of Australia; 5 special cases (comprising the family of one of the locally engaged members of the Embassy staff); and 34 nuns (whose lives were said to be in jeopardy whilst they remained in Vietnam). In all, some 78 Vietnamese nationals were evacuated by Australia.⁹

2.26. While approximately fifteen Australian passports were issued by the Embassy in Saigon to those who were Australian nationals (either by birth or by naturalisation), most of the 78 who were evacuated from Tan Son Nhut (Saigon) airport on 25 April departed without South Vietnamese exit visas¹⁰—contrary to the statement made on 28 April by the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs that 'the only Vietnamese who could

⁹ Once again the Committee notes the conflicting and often contradictory nature of factual information which was provided in evidence. In this case, although we were informed that five persons were evacuated from Saigon by RAAF aircraft on 25 April 1975 as special cases, other evidence indicated that only three such persons—a locally-engaged member of the Embassy staff together with his wife and child—were evacuated on this day.

Similarly the above figures do not correspond with the statement made in evidence that '78 Vietnamese nationals were evacuated from Saigon by RAAF transport on 25 April 1975'. (Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 1, 1975, p. 456)

¹⁰ The 78 Vietnamese nationals evacuated from Saigon by RAAF transport on 25 April 1975 comprised:

- (a) 17 spouses and children of Australian citizens;
- (b) 10 fiance(e)s of Australian citizens (some with children);
- (c) 13 other relatives of citizens and permanent residents of Australia;
- (d) 5 special cases (locally engaged staff and family); and
- (e) 34 nuns (said to be in jeopardy in Vietnam).

Of these persons, the Committee concludes from the evidence that: those in group (a) who had Australian passports—and it may have been as many as fifteen persons—did not have exit visas issued by the Government of Vietnam; those in categories (b), (c) and (d) did not have exit visas; and those in (e) did not have formal exit visas although oral blanket approval had been obtained on their behalf from the President's Office on the day of their departure.

board our aircraft were those with exit permits from the Saigon Government, and regrettably, the Saigon Government has made it difficult for people to obtain travel documents.¹¹

2.27. In fact it seems clear from the evidence that, if it had been so decided by the Australian Government, it might have been possible for the Embassy to arrange for the evacuation of a greater number of Vietnamese nationals from Saigon. The Committee was informed, for example, that on 23 and 25 April, a limited number of Vietnamese persons were able to be included amongst the Australian diplomatic personnel and other non-official Australian nationals being evacuated on those two days. These Vietnamese travelled to Tan Son Nhut airport in Australian Embassy vehicles. Because each vehicle was under the control of an Embassy official possessing diplomatic status, they were able to pass through the series of stringent checkpoints set up by the South Vietnamese authorities. These people, therefore, were able to evade South Vietnam passport control procedures. It should be noted, however, that while these aircraft were still on the ground they remained open and vulnerable to inspection and control by the South Vietnamese authorities as the aircraft were positioned in front of the main airport buildings at Tan Son Nhut. The Committee believes that it was only the overwhelming preoccupations of the airport authorities in an increasingly chaotic situation which contributed to the lack of any last minute incidents during the boarding of these Vietnamese nationals. Certainly the U.S., which assumed the major responsibility for evacuations, was able to overcome the lack of exit visas—probably through informal arrangements—and it is clear that Australia did not bother about them during the final day.

2.28. In the light of the evidence, the Committee is forced to conclude therefore, that the Australian Government, acting through its Ambassador in Saigon, probably could have facilitated, if it had been so minded, a greater number of departures of Vietnamese nationals from Saigon by RAAF aircraft. Furthermore, although the Committee acknowledges the fact that the Government of the time may not have wished to evacuate Vietnamese nationals without the approval of the South Vietnamese authorities, we believe that any potential impediments by the South Vietnamese authorities very probably could have been overcome if instructions to negotiate had been given.

2.29. In the circumstances the Committee appreciates the reasons behind the issuing of type-written letters to those persons who had been given approval from Canberra to enter Australia (either temporarily or

¹¹ The Committee was informed of the South Vietnamese Government's reluctance to issue exit visas to its nationals in case a premature exodus from Saigon stimulated a sense of panic within the community, and that visas could not be obtained in the final days without the payment (the figures US\$5000 and later \$10 000 were mentioned) of a substantial bribe to certain officials.

permanently), and with whom the Embassy had been able to make contract before its evacuation on 25 April.¹²

2.30. Although such documents were better than nothing at all, the letter signed by the Australian Consul was insufficient to allow five Vietnamese wives to collect tickets from Singapore Airlines which had been prepaid by their husbands in Australia for flights departing from Saigon on 26 April. They were also insufficient authority to permit those who held them to board nearly-empty RAAF aircraft which departed from Saigon during the final four days. Indeed, the Committee is unable to explain why almost-empty Hercules aircraft departed from Tan Son Nhut airport taking some 34 Vietnamese nationals without formal exit visas, but leaving behind a considerable number who had been approved for entry to Australia and who had been issued with a letter from the Consul. A witness who left Saigon on the last aircraft on 25 April and who made last minute inquiries through the Embassy to discover whether some Vietnamese whose lives might be in danger could be included, was informed that this was not possible. As an alternative, both the witness and members of the Australian Embassy staff passed lists of names, addresses and occupations to the American Ambassador who promised to do the best he could; some of these persons eventually made their way to the refugee camps in Guam.

2.31. Indeed, as it turned out, the real value of these type-written letters lay in the fact that it enabled *some* of the refugees who had been accepted for entry to Australia to be airlifted out of Vietnam by American aircraft and eventually be found on the island of Guam. Whilst the Committee records its gratitude to Ambassador Martin for his generous assistance, we deplore the fact of the Australian Government's avoidance of responsibility in this matter.

2.32. Recognition of the fears which people had concerning the possibility of reprisals against those persons who had resisted the PRG forces, should have been compelling reason for Australia to accept responsibility to evacuate many more from Vietnam than the 78 who were actually brought out on the final day. Indeed it was suggested to the Committee that the element of personal danger which was accepted (but not questioned) in the case of the 34 nuns who were evacuated as temporary residents to Australia, may have applied with much greater force to other anti-Communist South Vietnamese nationals—particularly members of the armed forces, public officials and former employees of the Australian Embassy.

¹² The letter, issued on Embassy letterhead, was as follows:

'Dear
This is to certify that I have received an approval/or a nomination regarding the entry to Australia of the following:

I am not able to issue the visa to you at this time but can only advise you that your entry to Australia would no doubt be approved subject to identification.

Yours sincerely,
R. S. Devereaux
Consul'

2.33. With respect to the latter group, the Committee notes that, while the 22 April guidelines provided for consideration to be given, on a case by case basis, to applications for temporary entry into Australia from those Vietnamese whose lives were considered to be in danger because of their long and close associations with the Australian presence in Vietnam, only one former employee (with his wife and child) was evacuated from Saigon and given refuge in Australia. The Committee understands that although many of the former employees of the Australian Embassy in Saigon considered coming to Australia, only two made formal applications seeking refuge in Australia. It was submitted in evidence to the Committee that 'many did not make formal applications because they were told simply that there was no point in their doing so because they would not be allowed to leave'.¹³

2.34. It is the Committee's opinion that Australia had some responsibility to assist with the evacuation of Vietnamese citizens from Saigon. Whether the Australian Government's former military involvement in Vietnam was right or wrong, we believe that by being in Vietnam Australia incurred a residual responsibility, not to mention a moral responsibility, to assist in the evacuation from Vietnam of those who had assisted our forces there and whose lives were believed to be in danger because of this assistance. This is not to suggest, however, that Australia should have opened its doors to allow the unrestricted entry of tens of thousands of refugees. Rather the Committee believes that the refugee exodus from Indochina (and particularly from Vietnam) should have been regarded as a special situation requiring an urgent and humanitarian response to meet the needs of those whose lives may have been endangered.

2.35. In view of the Committee's belief that the Australian Government had been informed of the gravity and magnitude of the situation in South Vietnam some three weeks before the evacuation of the Australian Embassy, we are unable to come to any conclusion other than one of deliberate delay in order to minimise the number of refugees with which Australia would have to concern itself. In addition, we believe that the guidelines of 22 April were so narrowly drawn that very few refugees would qualify for entry to Australia. In all, 5629 nominations were received but only 542 were approved—355 for permanent residence and 187 for temporary residence.¹⁴ Of the 542 approved cases, less than 342 persons were informed of their approval in the four-day period prior to the Embassy's evacuation. Other than orphans, 78 Vietnamese nationals were evacuated from Saigon by Australia.

¹³ Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 1 1975, p. 263. (Further consideration is given to this matter at p. 44)

¹⁴ With the benefit of hindsight, and noting the immense problems experienced by the Vietnamese refugees who were brought to Australia—matters which are considered in detail in Chapter 5—the Committee considers that the decision to restrict the number of refugees may have had some beneficial consequences.

2.36. Although the guidelines had been formulated on the principle of 'maintaining the unity of families' the Committee is concerned that confusion arose over this choice of words. In particular, it is clear that the Vietnamese concept of 'family' is quite unlike ours in that it embraces the Asian notion of an 'extended family' as opposed to the more restricted Anglo-Saxon idea of the 'nuclear family'. Clearly this influenced the expectations of both those who sought to obtain refuge in Australia and those who applied to have members of their families enter Australia. Although the Committee has been unable to explain why, it is apparent that this misunderstanding was compounded by an expectation that the Australian Government would assume responsibility for assisting such persons in the matters of resettlement and rehabilitation in Australia—including, of course, their evacuation. Under the circumstances, therefore, Australia had a responsibility to state clearly its position with regard to the evacuation of Vietnamese citizens. It failed to do so.

2.37. Furthermore, the Committee believes that the majority of Vietnamese who sought refuge in Australia through the Embassy in Saigon were tied down much more to the normal and time consuming entry formalities applicable to migrants, rather than to the urgent and special consideration which had been given to meet the needs of refugees in the past. The Committee believes that Australia should differentiate clearly between refugees and migrants in the future, and devise separate and appropriate procedures for the processing of each category. This was done in the selection (but not the settlement) of refugees admitted to Australia from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia during 1975 and from Thailand in March 1976.

2.38. As unpalatable as it may be, we are forced to conclude that the Government acted reluctantly and, as expressed by one witness, in order to placate an increasingly suspicious Australian public.

3 Australia's Concern and Involvement with Refugees in Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand

3.1. Although estimates vary considerably, the Committee was informed that the number of refugees who departed from Vietnam prior to, during and after the fall of Saigon was in the order of 150 000 persons. Those who fled did so for many reasons. Some who had escaped from North Vietnam in 1954, and who had experienced a communist government previously, felt that life under the new regime would be intolerable. Others who had worked with the South Vietnamese Government feared that there might be reprisals. Others fled, however, in sheer panic and it seems that some of these accepted offers of transportation with little thought as to where they were going. Some believed they were being taken to another part of Vietnam but found themselves in refugee camps on Guam and Wake Island.

3.2. After their arrival on Guam some of the refugees reconsidered their hasty decision to leave their country. These and the Vietnamese who had been evacuated by mistake made inquiries about returning to their homes. On 12 May 1975 the UNHCR opened an office in Guam and started taking registrations for voluntary repatriation. Two weeks later the Provisional Revolutionary Government requested the UNHCR to 'render all necessary assistance' to Vietnamese wishing to return. The ship *Thuong Tin* left Guam with 1546 refugees to sail to Vietnam during mid-October but, several days after their departure, the PRG issued a communique stating that the U.S. had violated South Vietnamese sovereignty by attempting to repatriate the refugees without Saigon's permission and that the PRG would therefore refuse to admit them. Fortunately this decision was reversed a few days later and the refugees were allowed to enter.

3.3. The hardship experienced by the refugees from Vietnam caused considerable anguish and distress. Families had become separated in the panic and confusion of the evacuation. Some had seen their parents or children die from starvation or disease. Those who had fled from the central parts of Vietnam had been away from their homes for over a month and were impoverished and suffering from malnutrition. We believe that an atmosphere of confusion and grief engulfed the entire population of displaced persons and refugees--especially during the initial weeks.

U.S. refugee camps

3.4. It is clear from the evidence that the United States Government undertook responsibility for the evacuation of some 86 000 or so refugees who it moved by air and by sea from South Vietnam to hastily erected

refugee camps in Guam (the major refugee centre), Wake Island and Subic Bay in the Philippines.

3.5. Although the conditions experienced by the refugees during the evacuation were sometimes appalling, conditions in the reception centres on Guam and Wake Island were good. The Committee was informed that the centres were well organised with good sanitation, temporary shelter and adequate food. There, using computer techniques, the U.S. authorities recorded names, addresses and other personal details which would assist in the identification of refugees and facilitate the work of UNHCR and other international agencies which were participating in various resettlement programs throughout the world. The refugees were then moved to 'relocation centres' at Camp Pendleton in California, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and Fort Chaffee in Arkansas. As of 24 May 1976 we understand that 140 000 refugees from Indochina had entered the United States and most of them through the Camp system.

*Relocation centres
within Continental
U.S.A.*

3.6. Within the mainland-based relocation centres, efforts to find jobs and sponsors for the refugees were co-ordinated by the 'Interagency Task Force on Indochina Refugees'. This task force, which had been established on 18 April 1975, had the objective of moving all refugees out of the camps within 90 days and dispersing them throughout the nation.

3.7. On 15 June 1975, having been in operation for 60 days, the Task Force reported to the U.S. Congress that its activities during the period 18 April 1975-15 June 1975 had included:

- Co-ordination of the evacuation of 86 000 U.S. citizens and South Vietnamese by air and sea in U.S. military or chartered aircraft.
- Establishment, supply and staffing of staging centres at Guam and Wake Island for the care and preliminary processing of the refugees and of reception centres in continental U.S.A. for the final processing of the refugees prior to their resettlement in the U.S.A.
- The reception into these camps of 131 399 people.
- Organisation and co-ordination of health, social security, and security procedures to facilitate the departure of refugees from the centres.
- Testimony leading to the passage of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975, to fund the refugee program which the President signed into law on 24 May 1975.
- Promotion of international resettlement efforts through initiatives to the UNHCR and ICEM¹ through direct contact with third countries (which resulted in the departure from U.S. territory of 3756 refugees for resettlement elsewhere and the acceptance by other countries of several thousand refugees).

¹ The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, a non-political, international body established to organise the migratory movements of refugees and nationals throughout the world.

- Negotiation of contracts with nine voluntary agencies to support their resettlement programs in the U.S.
- Organising special programs with private American business organisations to provide jobs and housing or commodity support for refugees.
- Establishment of guidelines for the States explaining the nature of Federal Government financial support in the fields of health and medical services, education and welfare services.

3.8. By the week of 19 May 1975, more than 11 800 refugees, mainly relatives of Americans or former employees of U.S. organisations had left the relocation centres to live with American sponsors. As of 15 June 1975 a total of 131 399 evacuees had entered the U.S. system of control, of whom 36 188 were in Western Pacific reception centres, 58 654 in continental U.S. reception centres, 480 on route to centres; 32 321 had been released from the centres for resettlement in the United States and 3756 for resettlement in other countries. By 4 September 85 000 of the refugees had been resettled in the U.S., 6000 had proceeded to other countries, 1800 had requested repatriation to Vietnam while 40 000 still remained in these secondary relocation centres.

3.9. The Committee is aware that these initial waves of enthusiasm to assist the refugees waned as the refugees who had connections with Vietnamese in the U.S. were absorbed by their sponsors and placements then had to be found for those more difficult cases suffering from the disadvantages of little or no English and few if any employable skills. Nevertheless, whilst it is apparent that the U.S. has experienced settlement problems comparable to those with which we have been confronted—and which are discussed at length in Chapter 5—we cannot avoid commenting on the effectiveness of the evacuation and subsequent settlement action of the U.S. compared with that of our own refugee intake which, in relative terms, was much smaller.

3.10. As a consequence of its unilateral action in evacuating the great majority of refugees from Vietnam it is clear that the U.S. Government thereby accepted practical responsibility for the care, well-being and resettlement of the thousands of refugees located in its various camps. Clearly, the evacuation and subsequent settlement activity was the result of a moral commitment towards the Vietnamese which stemmed in part, from its long military involvement in that country. In acknowledging the magnitude of the humanitarian work of the U.S., we regret that the evacuation task was left almost entirely to her and, that other countries with inherited responsibilities in South East Asia, including Australia, declined to contribute more by way of actual assistance with the refugees' evacuation. The Committee notes with satisfaction, however, the extent of Australia's humanitarian aid since the fall of Saigon.

*Vietnamese
refugees in other
parts of the world*

3.11. At the same time, other refugees made their way to neighbouring countries utilising any means of transport available, including small fishing boats, merchant vessels and by walking. Consequently large

groups of refugees found themselves in Singapore Harbour, Malaysia (Perhentian Island), Hong Kong and Thailand. (See Table 1). The Committee was informed that as of 13 October 1975 the approximate number of these people was in the order of 50 000.

Table 1 Selected statistics showing refugee arrivals (and departures) in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand during 1975-76

	<i>Arrivals</i>	<i>Departures</i>
Singapore		
May 1975	904	
June 1975	434	
July-December 1975	303	
February 1976	5	
March 1976	28	
In addition 303 Cambodian refugees arrived during 1975—110 in June and 193 in July		
Source: UNHCR Singapore		
Malaysia		
April-August 1975	1473	1281 to U.S.A., 110 to Australia, 69 to France, 7 to West Germany, 5 to Canada and 2 to Belgium
September 1975	77	15 to U.S.A. and 62 to France
November 1975	31	4 to U.S.A. and 27 to Australia
January 1976	10	10 to France
February 1976	69	
March 1976	28	28 to unknown destinations

In addition 1200 Cambodian Muslims arrived in Malaysia during the period April-August 1975 and were accepted for settlement there.

Source: UNHCR Kuala Lumpur

Hong Kong

3743 refugees from Vietnam arrived in Hong Kong on 4 May 1975 on board a Danish freighter. A further 157 refugees arrived during the following months.

The figures below, set out the number of these who departed each month as well as figures of further refugees who arrived in Hong Kong while in transit to other destinations.

	<i>In Transit Hong Kong</i>	<i>Departing Hong Kong (of 3900 arrivals)</i>
May 1975	51	279
June	222	591
July	172	254
August	99	879
September	285	676
October	281	1067
November	11	11
December	4	74
January	1126	5
February	0	13
March	0	43
April	0	2
Total who transitted through Hong Kong	2251	Total departing Hong Kong 3894

The above figures do not include Indochinese refugees illegally at large in Hong Kong.

Source: Hong Kong Department of Immigration

Thailand

Statistics are not readily available but it is estimated that the number of Vietnamese refugees has remained at about 1500-2000 persons over the last twelve months (i.e. from about June 1975-May 1976). Towards the end of March 1976, there was an estimated total of 80 000 refugees living in Thailand, most of whom were Laotians and Cambodians.

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs, Australia

3.12. Many of the vessels utilised by the refugees were in very poor condition and some of them unseaworthy. The Committee was informed that a flotilla of small ships carrying refugees from Vietnam landed at Singapore during the first weeks of May. Five of the ships carried refugees who wished to go to Australia. From the evidence received the Committee believes that in spite of having relatives resident in Australia, this group of refugees may have been discouraged from proceeding with their original intentions. Although the Singaporean authorities provided them with food, water and bunkering facilities so that they could resume their journey, little is known of their subsequent movements. A routine search by RAAF aircraft failed to sight the ships and it was assumed that they had made for alternative ports.

Refugee camps in Thailand

3.13. In contrast to the well-organised conditions found in the American camps, the conditions in Thailand were generally deplorable. An eyewitness report indicated for example, that in June 1975 people in one camp were crowded together with each family occupying a space of approximately three metres by three metres where they slept, ate and cooked; clean water for drinking and washing was lacking and many of the the refugees were suffering from skin and other diseases.

3.14. Most of the estimated 53 000 persons then in the camps were Laotian and Cambodian refugees with only a small percentage of Vietnamese. The bulk of the Laotians consisted of the Meo hill-tribesmen who had been engaged in fighting the Pathet Lao in the highlands of Laos for many years. Given the certainty of reprisals, repatriation was not a feasible solution for the Meo tribesmen. Nevertheless, we were informed that pressures were being placed on the refugees by the Thai authorities in order to encourage them to return to their homelands. In October 1975 instructions were issued forbidding refugees from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam from obtaining jobs in Thailand. From the Thai point of view, repatriation was regarded as the best solution, and in order to discourage further persons from seeking refuge little more than the minimum of relief was given to persons living in the existing camps.

3.15. In February-March 1976 conditions varied but were mostly poor in the ten camps which were visited by the doctor accompanying the Australian immigration selection team to Thailand. Numbers of occupants in the camps varied from 600 Vietnamese in Sattahip Camp, where there

had been 3000 persons 6 months previously, to 9000 Laotians in a camp near Nong Khai. In several camps occupancy approximated 4000, with camps housing Cambodians or Laotians predominating. Living conditions in most camps were poor except for the camp at Khon Kaen which was an ex-U.S. Army Base housing 2000 persons comfortably with no overcrowding, and the camp at Surin where there was vacant space and attempts had been made to cultivate vegetable crops. By contrast the Sikui Camp was overcrowded with up to 100 members of family groups being housed in each room of approximately 18 metres by 9 metres. Scabies was prevalent in that camp, their spread being assisted by the overcrowding; and a recent epidemic of measles had occurred following which an immunisation program had been conducted by the Red Cross. The camp at Aran Prathet housed 3000 Cambodians who were grossly overcrowded in large huts with family units being separated only by bamboo screens.

3.16. Camp buildings were of various materials and styles. Pong Namron Camp consisted of small huts with thatched roofs and earthen floors unsuitable for conducting medical examinations (a Buddhist temple having been used for that purpose). Some camps had large timber huts with wooden floors elevated about one metre above the ground. The Sikui Camp was well constructed, having previously been used as a gaol for communist insurgents, but the refugees slept on mats on concrete floors. At one camp near Nong Khai where living conditions were primitive, a building program funded by the UNHCR was in progress. Hygiene and sanitary conditions in many of the camps were very poor, with open drains and sewers.

3.17. The refugees appeared to be reasonably well nourished on the daily ration provided by the UNHCR which consisted of one-half kilogram of rice with a small amount of meat and dried fish and occasionally vegetables. Surprisingly, the health of the refugees then accommodated in camps in Thailand was generally good, considering the conditions under which many of them lived.

*Response of the
Australian
Government to the
situation of
Vietnamese
refugees in U.S.
camps*

3.18. The Committee was informed that, from the outset, the Australian Government had viewed the problem of the Vietnamese refugees as essentially an international problem. Accordingly, it was decided to assist in the resettlement of refugees as part of a world-wide program administered by the UNHCR. On 6 May 1975, the Australian Ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations, on instructions from the Prime Minister, approached the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Secretary-General of the United Nations and urged that there should be co-ordinated international action under the direction of the High Commissioner for the placement of refugees from Vietnam in as many countries as possible. In addition, the Australian Government resolved that the various international relief agencies were the proper authorities to assist in the provision of that relief and it moved swiftly in providing aid through these agencies. Mention has been made

previously of the grants which were made to UNHCR, UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross and, within Australia to the 'Indochina-Vietnam Appeal' conducted by the International Disaster Emergencies Committee of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid.

3.19. In the Committee's judgment the great majority of the 150 000 or so Vietnamese who left South Vietnam prior to, during and after the fall of Saigon were clearly *refugees*.² In the Committee's view they had also become *stateless persons* by virtue of their flight from Vietnam and the fact that their former country, the Republic of Vietnam had ceased to exist after its surrender on 30 April 1975.

3.20. The Committee notes that recognition is given internationally to the status of refugees and stateless persons, and obligations rest with countries to afford protection to such persons in addition to granting them certain rights and privileges. Refugees are also properly the concern of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who is charged inter alia with the responsibility of seeking permanent solutions to their settlement problems by assisting governments to this end.

3.21. In practical terms however, the great majority of Vietnamese refugees were regarded as *US evacuees*—by both the Australian Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In the case of the Australian Government, we were informed from the submission which was prepared in the Prime Minister's office that:

'Some factors . . . distinguish the plight of the Vietnamese refugees from that of other refugees. One is that the clear majority of persons who left Vietnam did so as evacuees taken out by the United States of America. It is not considered appropriate . . . for the Australian Government to comment on the plight and circumstances of people in the care or under the responsibility of another government. Consequently . . . this Submission will not generally be concerned with Vietnamese people in the continental or territorial United States of America or in countries by which they were accepted.'

the case of the UNHCR, until such time as the US Government seeks the assistance of the UNHCR, these refugees are for all practical purposes of no concern to it—for, in an international-legal sense, by her unilateral action of evacuating the Vietnamese, the United States was deemed to have accepted responsibility for the care and resettlement of these persons.

3.22. Australia's concern was thus restricted to 'those persons who left Vietnam of their own volition and by their own means and who have not

² In accordance with Article 1A(2) of the United Nations 'Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees' a refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'.

³ Submission from the Prime Minister's Office 17 October 1975; Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 1, 1975, p. 413.

yet been accepted for resettlement or refuge'. It was these persons 'about whom there is an international problem'.⁴

3.23. The Committee notes that this was not the only course open to the Government and believes that such an approach was adopted to reduce the number of Vietnamese refugees with which Australia would have to be directly concerned. Clearly, the decision could have been taken for Australia to provide direct assistance in the evacuation and resettlement of refugees whilst, at the same time, continuing to co-operate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international agencies in bringing about an overall solution.

3.24. Although the Committee was unable satisfactorily to ascertain the reasons behind the reluctance to become directly involved and to accept greater numbers of refugees into Australia, it was suggested that domestic economic considerations may have contributed to some extent, together with the fact that a large influx of refugees into Commonwealth facilities such as migrant hostels could have interfered drastically with our immigration program as well as reducing the number of beds being held in reserve for emergencies. With regard to these latter suggestions, and in view of criticism that Australia did not accept its 'fair share' of the refugees, we observe from the figures provided to the Committee, that at the time of the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees from Saigon, only 6235 of the migrant hostels' total of 11 150 beds were occupied.⁵ We believe, therefore, that Australia could have accommodated larger numbers of refugees on a temporary basis, while still maintaining a reserve for other national emergencies and refugee situations.

Australian selection teams to Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand

Guam

3.25. As part of its follow-up action, on 5 May 1975, the Government decided to send a selection team to Guam with the intention of searching through the twelve refugee camps for persons approved to come to Australia prior to the fall of Saigon. The Committee is aware of the difficulties which were encountered by the two officers who were called upon to trace some 366 persons from computer-produced lists of names which fluctuated daily by as many as 3000 refugee-arrivals and 3000 departures, but which averaged around 62 000 persons; and to move from camp to camp to interview those whom they had managed to trace. We believe that the sending of only two persons illustrated a total misunderstanding of the problems involved and was entirely inadequate. In addition we note that a number of Australians who visited the camps were most critical of the limited role undertaken by Australia in Guam. In their view, had the Government wished to do so, efforts could have been made to locate those Vietnamese in Guam having special claims for entry to

⁴ *Ibid* p. 414.

⁵ Figures supplied by Commonwealth Hostels Limited for 28 April 1975.

Australia—either because of the presence of relatives or because of previous association with the Australian presence in Vietnam.

3.26. As a consequence of the selection team's visit to Guam, 61 refugees were brought to Australia by RAAF aircraft on 18 May 1975. A further 11 persons are known to have arrived in Australia from Guam and Wake Island by scheduled air services at Australian Government expense.

Hong Kong

3.27. Having decided to assist in the resettlement of refugees as part of a program administered by the UNHCR, the Australian Government was faced with the task of choosing between the various places of temporary refuge as sources of refugees whom it might resettle. In determining that its priorities for action should take account of locations of greatest need, Hong Kong was selected as presenting the most pressing and immediate problem. According to the evidence, the physical resources, finance and maintenance necessary for the support of the estimated number of 2500 refugees then in Hong Kong, were beyond the Administration of that colony.

3.28. On 28 May a team of Australian selection officers left for Hong Kong to commence interviews among the Vietnamese refugees there, with a view to approving persons to come to Australia. 201 refugees were selected for admission and subsequently arrived in Sydney on 20 June 1975. In announcing their arrival on 19 June, we note the Prime Minister's statement that almost all those coming to Australia were unlikely to have been offered resettlement in other countries and for this reason their cases had received special consideration.

Singapore and Malaysia

3.29. Following request from the UNHCR that Australia accept further refugees for resettlement, a selection team was sent, on 20 July, to Singapore and then on to Perhentian Island in Malaysia to commence the selection and processing of a further 300 Vietnamese refugees. In the event, 323 refugees were selected and brought to Brisbane on 9 August 1975.

3.30. As with the selection in Hong Kong, the Committee was informed that Australia had taken refugees who were least likely to be selected for entry under normal migration criteria and who appeared most in need of the humanitarian assistance which entry to Australia would provide. We note that in each of these instances selection criteria which had not been used previously by the Australian Government were employed to allow the admission of refugees. Whilst many people welcomed this approach, others felt that Australia's priorities had been misdirected. The Vietnamese students who had been undertaking courses of tertiary study in Australia during 1975 were particularly perturbed by the decision which was regarded as being unfair to them. In their view, preference should have been given to bringing to Australia those of their relatives who had managed to escape from Vietnam.

Thailand

3.31. On 21 January 1976 the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced that the Government would admit up to 800 Indochinese refugees to Australia. It was proposed that most of these would come from Thailand where Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese were living in refugee camps. The decision also contemplated that Indochinese refugees who had already applied or who had been nominated to come to Australia at the date of the announcement and who had not obtained permanent settlement, would be considered regardless of where they were then living outside their former homelands.

3.32. A team of experienced officers from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and a doctor from the Department of Health proceeded to Thailand to select at least 500 refugees. This team left for Thailand on 2 February and priority was given to persons seeking family reunion with Australian residents and persons having a special relationship with Australia. In descending order of preference family reunion included:

- Spouses and dependent children
- Fiancees and fiances
- Parents
- Non-dependent children
- Brothers and sisters
- Other relatives.

3.33. The number of refugees admitted to Australia following the mission's activities in Thailand was 568 of whom 279 were Laotians, 228 Cambodians and 61 Vietnamese; they arrived in Australia by chartered aircraft during 19-24 March 1976. The selection criteria applied to these refugees was that they be in sound health with no known adverse record and that they be able to integrate into the Australian community. With regard to their ability to integrate into the Australian community, the Committee was concerned to note that although Australia's Immigration Officials had no previous experience in the selection of Asian refugees, selection officers were required to make a judgment in the case of each refugee whom they interviewed. This was done on the basis of consideration of the individual's background, previous employment and education.

3.34. In retrospect the Committee is concerned that a decision to involve ourselves with the Thai-based refugees was not taken until nine months after the fall of Saigon. In view of the conditions which were known to exist in these camps, and the likelihood that six months or so would be required before the UNHCR could commence resolving the settlement problems of these people, we question the accuracy of the assessment that the Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysian-based refugees were those who

experienced the greatest physical hardship. Once again we believe that a decision could have been taken by the Government to provide relief and settlement assistance directly to these unfortunate persons in Thailand whilst continuing to co-operate in the longer-term with the UNHCR.

4 Vietnamese Students, Orphans and Other Persons

Vietnamese students

4.1. The 475 Vietnamese students in Australia were placed in a most difficult and distressing situation by events in their home country. As the North Vietnamese forces moved further south the Vietnamese student community in Australia became increasingly fearful for the safety of their families. Reports of thousands of Vietnamese fleeing and tragic stories of starvation and disease caused a great deal of anguish. The close-knit nature of the Vietnamese student community in Australia exacerbated their fears. Rumours were rife and stories of reprisals and atrocities—some of which were undoubtedly true—circulated amongst them.

4.2. For the first few months after the fall of Saigon the students received no communication at all from their families; thus their fears were further aroused. Those whose families had managed to escape later sent letters describing destitute living conditions in the refugee camps. Those whose families were still in Vietnam either received no communication at all or a cable dispatched from a third country worded in a standard form saying that the family was well and there were no problems. The fact that these cables were almost identical immediately aroused suspicion in the minds of the students.

4.3. Because there had been reprisals on those who had been associated with the Thieu Government, many students were fearful for their parents' safety and consequently became very cautious in their own actions. Many did not attempt to send mail to South Vietnam as they feared its possible interception and the repercussions this could have for their families. The Committee was informed by witnesses representing the students that most of them did not want attention drawn to themselves in any way in case it somehow affected their families and it was no doubt for this reason that the Committee received very little direct response from the students.

4.4. Other evidence placed before the Committee indicated that on some university campuses Vietnamese students were being subjected to pressure to join the communist cause by other students who supported the PRG regime in Vietnam. Although the Committee was unable either to disprove or to substantiate the serious allegations of harassment, intimidation, threat and innuendo, it is clear that many of the students felt they were being pressured to return to Vietnam and to register their personal particulars with either the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the 'North Vietnamese Embassy') in Canberra, or the diplomatic mission of the PRG in France.

4.5. Prior to the fall of Saigon, a few Vietnamese students decided to help their parents by taking action. Letters were sent to the Prime Minister and the press describing their plight; a petition of 1000 signatures was organised; a rally was conducted and an impromptu fast was held. All of this action was designed to enable them to bring their families to Australia. Their problems were complicated, however, by the fact that most of them had been admitted to study in Australia on condition that they would return to their home countries on completion of their courses. They were thus granted temporary resident status and such status did not permit them to bring other members of their families with them to Australia.

4.6. Nevertheless, from the beginning of April 1975—when the situation in Vietnam had deteriorated significantly—the reaction of most students was to take direct steps to bring their families to Australia. Consequently applications were forwarded to the then Department of Labor and Immigration seeking to nominate their relatives for entry to Australia. By 25 April the Department had received 2687 nominations from students and other temporary residents. These comprised 802 on behalf of members of families;¹ 1700 for brothers and sisters; and 195 for distant relatives and friends.

4.7. A further 970 Vietnamese were nominated by persons permanently resident in Australia. These comprised 212 for families, 441 for brothers and sisters and 317 for distant relatives and friends.

Normal criteria for entry

4.8. At the beginning of April the criteria for entry of Vietnamese persons were governed solely by existing immigration policies. These policies allowed families, i.e. spouse, minor dependent children and aged or otherwise dependent parents of persons *permanently* resident in Australia to enter subject only to health and character checks. Other categories of intending migrants were required to meet personal criteria relating to health, character, economic viability and settlement prospects. In addition, they were subject to stringent occupational criteria, only a limited range of professional and sub-professional workers, certain tradesmen (mainly in the metal and electrical fields) and some others with special skills or experience being allowed to enter.

4.9. Under these conditions very few of those nominated met the requirements. As the students had only temporary resident status their relatives could not be considered within the provisions for family reunion and very few of them met the normal occupational requirements. In fact of the total 3667 persons nominated by both temporary and permanent residents, only 251 were accepted under the normal immigration criteria.

¹ Spouses, dependent children and aged or otherwise dependent parents

*Guidelines for entry
of Vietnamese*

4.10. As discussed previously, guidelines were announced by the Prime Minister on 22 April 1975 for the temporary entry of additional categories of Vietnamese into Australia. During the course of the inquiry it became obvious to the Committee that this statement caused a great deal of confusion among the students as to who was to be admitted to Australia. Whilst it was made clear that the spouses and dependent children of students were to be given visas for temporary residence in Australia and assisted by the Government to join the students, specific mention was made that the decisions had been taken with regard to the principle of maintaining the unity of families. In retrospect we believe that it was this latter part of the statement rather than the operative section on spouses and children, which the students emphasised and interpreted to mean they could bring their families to Australia.

4.11. Ironically, many of the voluntary organisations and private individuals who were assisting the students saw the guidelines in this same light, thus adding unnecessarily to the confusion. Many of the submissions received by the Committee contained complaints about the lack of cooperation from the Department of Labor and Immigration. The students could not understand why applications had not been approved since the people nominated were members of the family. There was no appreciation that the Department had been issued with set guidelines which allowed for a nuclear family, i.e. spouses and dependent children, rather than the extended family which included wives, children, parents, brothers, sisters and other distant relatives.

4.12. As far as the Committee was able to ascertain, only 82 of the 2697 nominations lodged by students were approved for temporary entry under these new guidelines.

4.13. Other criticism of a quite different nature alleged that the guidelines split families rather than united them; that the formulation of guidelines were delayed in order to minimise the number of refugees with which Australia would have to concern itself; and that they were so narrowly drawn that very few refugees would qualify for entry to Australia.

Resident status

4.14. The events of April 1975 prompted many students to consider the question of whether or not they would be allowed to remain permanently in Australia. Besides looking to their future security, the granting of permanent resident status would have conferred eligibility on them to nominate spouses, minor dependent children and aged or otherwise dependent parents for permanent entry to Australia under the normal immigration family reunion criteria. Hence with family unity considerations foremost in their minds, many students were prompted to apply to the Department of Labor and Immigration for status as permanent residents. At that time, however, the policy of the government was to grant permanent status only to private students who had successfully completed their courses; sponsored students who were still engaged in study were to

retain their temporary status—a decision which caused a great deal of anguish in the student community for many months.

4.15. While assurances were given on 3 April 1975 that the students could defer their obligations to return home, and their visas were extended to 31 December (after which time the situation was to be reconsidered), the Government expressed the hope that many would be able to return and contribute to the reconstruction of their country when peace was restored. On 13 June 1975, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs indicated that private students from South Vietnam who had successfully completed their studies would be eligible to apply for resident status. Applications for resident status lodged by sponsored students, however, would be held over until they had completed their studies in Australia and then determined in the light of developments in their home country. While the Committee feels sure that no students would have been sent to their former homeland, these statements gave no guarantees beyond 31 December 1975 and left the question of their long-term future unanswered.

4.16. It was not until 11 November 1975 that an announcement was made giving sponsored students from South Vietnam and Cambodia the right to apply for permanent resident status irrespective of whether they had completed their studies, terminated their studies or still faced a further period of study in order to complete their courses. This decision also enabled those private students who were still studying or who had abandoned their studies to apply for resident status if they did not wish to return home. The Committee endorses the final decision to allow all students to apply for permanent resident status, but notes that much confusion and anguish would have been avoided if the decision had been made:

- prior to the fall of Saigon in the case of private students; and
- in the case of sponsored students, at the time Saigon fell—when, for all practical purposes, their return-home obligations (and the obligations on the Australian Government) had lapsed.

*Financial assistance
to students*

4.17. The Committee was informed that many of the students were in severe financial difficulties at the time of the fall of Saigon. While the 385 sponsored students who were financed through the Colombo Plan received a basic living allowance of about \$3000 per year, the 90 private students were in a more desperate situation. Some relied almost totally on assistance from their parents. Because the families had either lost contact with their children or were in financial difficulties themselves, they could no longer continue this form of assistance and the students found themselves with very little or no financial support. Furthermore, those who relied on additional income from part-time work found that their temporary resident status adversely affected their employment prospects as many employers were unwilling to engage persons whose period of residency expired on 31 December 1975.

4.18. In spite of these observations, the Committee notes that early recognition was given to the fact that many private students had lost contact with their families and were thus without means of support. On 29 April 1975 a special emergency scheme of assistance was introduced to provide for an immediate grant of \$100 for food and shelter to private Vietnamese students in proven financial difficulties. To cope with the longer-term situation this was supplemented on 2 May 1975 with a special living allowance scheme which had been modelled upon and means-tested in the same way as the scholarship schemes available to students who were Australian citizens or permanent residents.² An additional step taken to help alleviate financial difficulties was the relaxation by the Department of Labor and Immigration of its restrictions which prevented students from undertaking part-time employment.

4.19. Since July 1975 there has been a significant decline in the number of private Vietnamese students in receipt of financial assistance. As at 30 March 1976 the number of students receiving assistance totalled 74 and comprised 24 Vietnamese undertaking higher degree courses, 26 Vietnamese and 15 Cambodians undertaking tertiary courses and 6 Vietnamese and 3 Cambodian school children. Three factors accounted for the decline in numbers being assisted—the completion of courses at the end of the 1975 academic year; the review of the financial circumstances of school children and the discontinuation of assistance to a number of them; and the granting of permanent resident status to a number of students.

4.20. Apart from the financial assistance which was provided to them, we believe that the students (and others) suffered from a lack of appreciation or genuine concern for the predicament in which they found themselves placed. It is clear to the Committee that communication with the students was generally ineffective. Instead of being conveyed directly to *all* of the students, information ‘filtered through their ranks’ from those who had overheard the Prime Minister’s replies to questions in Parliament and from persons and departmental officials to whom they had turned for practical assistance. Moreover, because so many of the decisions were taken in piecemeal fashion, the students lacked an overall understanding of their own status and the government’s intentions towards them and their families. Such factors only helped to exacerbate their feelings of anxiety and concern as to the whereabouts and safety of their immediate family as well as the members of their ‘extended family’.

² This special living allowance scheme provided for students pursuing post graduate courses to receive comparable benefits to those paid to Australian students under the Post Graduate Award Scheme; undergraduate students to receive benefits at the maximum rate payable under Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme; and primary and secondary students to receive living allowance within the range of \$350 to \$1600 per annum. Under these arrangements an amount of \$53 385 was expended during the period 2 May-30 June 1975 and a further \$340 000 was requested to provide for benefits for the 1975-76 financial year. (In March 1976, this estimate was revised to an amount not to exceed \$250 000.)

The Committee notes the advantage, in this instance, of students’ retaining their temporary resident status. Had they been granted status as permanent residents, they would then have had to compete with Australian students for financial assistance, and their prospects in that wider field would have been less favourable.

Orphans

4.21. During the war in Vietnam there was a very high mortality rate among the civilian population. The nature of the war, the method by which it was prosecuted and the armaments employed were such that death and injury were generally indiscriminately caused, with the result that the civilian population was as often at risk as were serving members of the armed forces. In these circumstances it was to be expected that there would be large numbers of orphan children.

4.22. During the final stages of the war in Vietnam, many stories of personal tragedy and deprivation reached Australia; television showed emotionally charged scenes of misery, despair and of children lost amid a mass of confusion and terror. It was this last aspect that particularly aroused the compassion of many Australians and which gave rise to the thousands of inquiries about Vietnamese orphans.

4.23. For many years the fate of these children had been a matter of great concern to charitable organisations and individuals in Western nations. Some organisations tackled the problem by establishing programs for the sponsored maintenance of orphans—an approach the Vietnamese government preferred—while other organisations and individuals attempted to arrange for adoptions of Vietnamese orphans in overseas countries. There were, however, a number of obstacles to the latter approach: the concept of adoption was alien to traditional Vietnamese thinking; the Vietnamese authorities showed no enthusiasm for overseas adoptions; Vietnamese law regulated such adoptions very closely and took considerable time and effort for compliance; and, there was a considerable body of opinion in Vietnamese government circles that the country should not release its children to foreigners but should care for them itself. There were also problems at the Australian end: Australian welfare authorities did not encourage intending Australian parents to adopt children from overseas, and the requirements of the Australian regulatory authorities were time-consuming. Another impediment to overseas adoption of Vietnamese children was the then law of South Vietnam which required that the proposed adoption be approved by a Court. In these circumstances, although there existed a large number of orphan children, the number available for adoption in other countries was relatively small.

4.24. When it became apparent that ‘the fall of Saigon and South Vietnam was imminent,’³ the Australian Government acted to ensure that those orphan children already approved for exit were moved immediately. On 4 April 1975 three RAAF Hercules aircraft equipped for ‘medivac’ tasks carried Vietnamese orphans from Saigon to Bangkok and connected with a chartered Qantas 747 aircraft. This flight, which carried relief supplies to Bangkok for onward freight to Saigon, returned to Australia with 208 Vietnamese children. A further flight scheduled to leave Australia on 7 April was cancelled because of the attitude of the

³ Submission from the Prime Minister's Office, 17 October 1975; Transcript of Evidence, Vol. I 1975, p. 428

Republic of Vietnam to releasing more children for international adoption.

4.25. The second airlift was carried out on 16 April 1975 when a Qantas flight transported doctors, nurses and medical supplies to Bangkok. Twenty-five members of the team went to Saigon by RAAF aircraft to accompany the 75 children from Saigon to Bangkok and thence to Melbourne where they arrived on 18 April 1975. With regard to this orphan flight, the Committee notes that members of a voluntary body, the Australian Society for Inter-Country Aid (Children), provided the Australian Embassy with considerable assistance in Saigon in securing the release for the children's evacuation.

4.26. Because the normal medical examinations and clearance requirements were waived for all of the orphans brought to Australia, many were in very poor health. The Committee was informed that most of the orphanages had only rice water to give to the children, which meant most were suffering from severe malnutrition. In the first flight of 208 orphan children, 80 of these were babies or very young infants in need of individual attention; many suffered from dehydration, respiratory and skin infections and gastro-enteritis; 10 were acutely ill and several others had measles or chickenpox. On arrival in Sydney, 109 children were admitted to the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children and 99 were taken to North Head Quarantine Station. Twenty-six of these were subsequently transferred to the hospital. In the case of the second flight, all of the 75 children were taken by ambulance to the Fairfield Hospital where medical teams were waiting to provide necessary attention. In spite of the best medical care and attention in Australia, 13 of the 283 orphans have died.

4.27. Since their arrival in Australia the Vietnamese orphans are believed to have been integrated satisfactorily into the Australian community. On 19 September 1975 only 21 of the children were unplaced or were in temporary foster care—the remainder had been placed with prospective adoptive parents.⁴ Until such time as adoption procedures have been completed, these children come within the terms of the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act and their welfare is supervised by the Directors or Senior Administrators of the relevant child welfare authorities of the States and Territories.

4.28. In overall terms we believe that the action taken to alleviate the plight of these Vietnamese orphans is to be commended. In making this comment, however, we note that the Government's efforts were not assisted at the time by exaggerated claims by some State authorities concerning the numbers of orphans who could be placed with approved prospective adoptive parents, or by media reports which created great anxiety among prospective adoptive parents and raised expectations that

⁴ As of October 1976, of the initial groups of children that arrived, 4 have been permitted to leave Australia in the custody of the persons with whom they were placed, and 2 children who are severely handicapped are in institutions; the remainder have been placed for adoption, long-term foster care or, because of their age, are now capable of living independently.

thousands of children were available for adoption by any interested person whether or not they met the requirements laid down by State adoption agencies.

4.29. The Committee also notes the concern which has been expressed over the delays and legal difficulties being experienced by prospective adoptive parents seeking to adopt the Vietnamese orphans who have been placed in their care; in our view, these matters must be concluded without further delay. Under the circumstances, therefore, and in view of the special nature of this situation, the Committee believes that the Minister for Social Security (in whose care and guardianship the orphans are placed) should now consent to the adoption of those children who were evacuated from Saigon in the two flights during April 1975.⁵

4.30. Finally the Committee is most concerned about the apathy and indecision of the past 13 months over the questions of guardianship and acceptance of legal and financial responsibility for the welfare and full-time care of a number of children who fled with the refugees from East Timor without their parents. Such matters must be settled quickly and cannot await the uncertain outcome of attempts to reunite these children with their parents.

Other persons

4.31. During the inquiry a considerable amount of criticism was levelled at the Government regarding its treatment of those Vietnamese who had for many years been closely associated with the Australian presence in Vietnam. The guidelines for entry announced by the Prime Minister on 22 April 1975 included provisions for these people. 'In the event of representations being received regarding the temporary entry into Australia of any Vietnamese with long and close associations with the Australian presence in Vietnam whose life is considered to be in danger, the Australian Government will consider such representations on a case by case basis. The number of such persons is expected to be small.' Indeed the numbers were small—of a total of 27 cases submitted for Ministers' consideration on this basis, 9 (plus their dependants) were approved for permanent residence, including one member of the locally-engaged staff of the Australian Embassy in Saigon. The other 18 were rejected. Outside this category, approval was given as special cases for two groups of nuns, numbering respectively 34 and 9, for temporary residence in Australia. With regard to the former employees of the Embassy in Saigon, the Committee was told that only two had made formal applications seeking to obtain refuge in Australia. It was also submitted that the reason so few had applied was that they were told there was no point in their doing so as they

⁵ In the context of these remarks, the Committee draws attention to Section 6 of the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946-1973* which provides that:

'The Minister shall be the guardian of the person, and of the estate in Australia, of every immigrant child who arrives in Australia after the commencement of this Act to the exclusion of the father and mother and every other guardian of the child, and shall have, as guardian, the same rights, powers, duties, obligations and liabilities as a natural guardian of the child would have, until the child reaches the age of twenty-one years or leaves Australia permanently, or until the provisions of this Act cease to apply to and in relation to the child, whichever first happens.'

would not be allowed to leave Saigon. In the light of all the evidence received, however, the Committee can draw no other conclusion than, that it was felt in Canberra at the time that former employees would not be endangered because of their association with Australia's presence in Vietnam and hence their applications would generally not be approved.

5 Settlement of Refugees Admitted to Australia

Reception

Vietnamese refugees admitted to Australia

5.1. In response to the plight of the Vietnamese people who fled their country, Australia gave refuge to 748 individuals during 1975:¹ 119 were spouses, minor dependent children and aged or otherwise dependent parents of Australian residents; 63 met the occupational requirements for normal migrant entry; 42 were admitted on compelling compassionate grounds or accepted by religious orders in Australia; 201 were brought from Hong Kong during June 1975 on the grounds that they were most in need of humanitarian assistance which settlement in Australia would provide and were not likely to receive such assistance from another country; and the same criteria were used to select another 323 from Singapore and Malaysia during August 1975.²

5.2. The first two of the above-mentioned groups were admitted to Australia under normal immigration criteria and most of the refugees were accommodated by relatives already in Australia. As these individuals and the refugees who were subsequently sponsored by relatives proceeded to private accommodation immediately on arrival, little contact has been had with them by the State or regional offices of either the Department of Social Security or the Commonwealth Employment Service. Little is known therefore about the settlement experiences of this category of person, the difficulties they are encountering in adjusting to life in Australia or the support being provided to assist them in this task. In many ways these people are 'hidden' from both the government and non-government welfare agencies. Accordingly, the Committee is unable to make any comment about the plight and circumstances of these particular refugees.

5.3. A great deal of information has been obtained, however, about the two latter groups of refugees who were admitted on humanitarian grounds—and to a lesser extent about the Timorese refugees who arrived in 1975 and the Indochinese refugees admitted during 1976—many of whom have already experienced considerable difficulty in settling in Australia and who will continue to endure hardship, possibly for many years.

5.4. It is clear to the Committee—from the evidence, from our research and from our direct observations and contact with the refugees themselves—that both the previous and present Governments (together with their various departments) viewed the 1975 and March 1976 admissions of refugees as comprising two distinct and largely unrelated steps, viz.

Government and official attitudes towards refugees

¹ If the 283 Vietnamese orphans are included, this total increases to 1031 individuals. Additional arrivals of Vietnamese and other refugees are set out in paras 5.8-5.10.

² The Committee notes that while a number of additional Vietnamese refugees have since been admitted to Australia, precise statistics are not available for these arrivals.

their selection and their settlement. As a consequence, the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (formerly the Department of Labor and Immigration) was responsible for the selection of refugees and their entry into Australia,³ and the Department of Social Security was responsible—at least on paper—for the post-arrival care of migrants and hence for refugees. Indeed, except for a period of two weeks immediately following the refugees' arrival—when Federal and State government bodies joined with the non-government agencies to handle the various health, documentation, social welfare registration and other reception procedures—little on-going contact took place between the central offices of the two departments and their policy/planning sections.

5.5. In the Committee's view this approach was a natural follow-on from the immigration practices of the past. In previous years, and irrespective of whether they were accommodated in migrant hostels or went direct to private accommodation, migrants were left to orientate themselves to, what was in some cases, a new way of life, i.e. to familiarise themselves with and to adjust as best they could to conditions generally; and to learn of the complex of governmental and non-governmental services and facilities at their disposal to assist with their integration into the Australian community.

5.6. In more recent years, and until the 1975 arrivals of refugees occurred, the migrant hostels have come to be regarded simply as a place of temporary accommodation. The rationale behind their use and the objective of those who manage them, appears to have been that of bringing the migrant as quickly as possible to the point where employment can be found by the Commonwealth Employment Service and outside accommodation obtained through the services of a 'Hostel Accommodation Officer'. In other words, to get the individual to move out of the hostel and into the community as quickly as possible.⁴ When this occurs, official (i.e. governmental) care and responsibility for the individual's well-being then largely ceases and it becomes the individual's responsibility to seek out from both government and voluntary agencies the social security and welfare services he wants.

5.7. Implicit in this is an attitude concerning the 'status' of the refugees once they have arrived in Australia. Thus, in spite of the special criteria which may have been considered when selecting refugees for entry to Australia—compared with the usual conditions for migrant entry—they are regarded as and treated like normal migrants.

Arrivals

5.8. During 1975, 524 'hard-core' Vietnamese refugees were brought to Australia by chartered aircraft as part of our program of co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: 201

³ The Committee has used the term 'hard-core' refugees in view of its usage by the various government and community organisations who have responsibilities and/or interests in providing welfare assistance, language training, accommodation advice, employment assistance and post-hostel support to the refugees. The term is used throughout the report to denote those refugees who are in extreme circumstances and who require maximum assistance with their settlement.

arrived from Hong Kong on 20 June 1975 and were accommodated in the East Hills Migrant Hostel in Sydney while a further 323 were brought from Singapore and Malaysia on 9 August 1975. These latter groups were housed at the Wacol Migrant Hostel in Brisbane.

5.9. In August 1975, a further group of refugees arrived in Australia, having fled by their own means from Portuguese East Timor to Darwin. By September 1975, this group had swollen to 1355 persons who were accommodated at Cabramatta and Endeavour Hostels in Sydney, and Midway-Phillip and Enterprise Hostels in Melbourne. Some further, smaller groups were accommodated at Pennington Hostel in Adelaide, Greylands Hostel Perth, and Wacol Hostel Brisbane.

5.10. Between 19 and 24 March 1976, a further 568 refugees were brought to Australia by chartered aircraft following the Government's announcement on 21 January 1976 to accept an additional 800 persons mainly from refugee camps in Thailand. This group comprised 279 Laotian, 228 Cambodian refugees and a further 61 Vietnamese; 271 of these disembarked in Melbourne whilst the remaining 297 went to Sydney. The Melbourne refugees went, in the first instance, to the Victorian Health Department Sanatorium at Heatherton where immigration, customs and health procedures were carried out over a period of four days. The refugees were then accommodated at Eastbridge Hostel. The Sydney group were accommodated at Westbridge Hostel.

Reception and hostel intake

5.11. Each of these refugee intakes was met by departmental officials, interpreters and Commonwealth Hostels personnel together with representatives from voluntary organisations—particularly Red Cross, Life Line and the Society of St Vincent de Paul—who had organised a supply of clothing (suitable for winter conditions in the case of the June and August 1975 arrivals), laundry articles and other personal items. On completion of initial reception procedures, the refugees were assisted by hostel staff to the accommodation that had been prepared for them.

5.12. Following the immediate attention which was given to the refugees' health needs, interviews were conducted by the various Company Hostel Welfare Officers and, in some cases, by social workers from the Department of Social Security to ensure that applications were completed, arrangements made, or information given in respect of such matters as child endowment, medibank, hospital and medical benefit funds, hospital eye examinations and treatment, Primary and High School enrolment, immunisation and additional health matters, and enrolment at English language classes. Representatives of Red Cross, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, local service clubs and other organisations assisted once again in providing transport to hospitals, in meeting the cost of dental and optical treatment and, in some cases, the cost of spectacles required by the refugees.

Lack of forward planning, co-ordination and other problems relating to reception procedures

5.13. In the Committee's judgment, reception procedures were handled satisfactorily for each of the groups of refugees and in fact improved with subsequent arrivals. A number of problems did occur, however, and point—in the case of mass arrivals—to the need for effective forward planning and decision-making directed towards the allocation of responsibilities between government and non-government agencies alike, and the co-ordination of the efforts of such bodies—at the earliest possible stage.⁶

5.14. On future occasions, nominal rolls detailing the composition (sex, age and family groupings), destinations (i.e. hostel allocation) and other information about incoming refugees should be provided at the earliest possible time to those involved at the working level of reception. The Committee can appreciate the absence of nominal rolls in the case of the Timorese refugees brought from Darwin to Sydney and Melbourne since they landed in Australia by their own means and without warning. While the lack of basic information on health, family groupings and languages spoken etc., hampered initial preparations for *their* reception, we are concerned that the *same* difficulties were encountered with the planned intake of Thai-based refugees who arrived during 19-24 March 1976. In this most recent intake, nominal rolls arrived in Melbourne on 16 March—only three days prior to the first refugees themselves. Similar difficulties occurred in Sydney and Brisbane with the 1975 intakes of Vietnamese.

5.15. Planning for each of the receptions was thus handicapped by the absence of detailed information until a few days prior to the arrivals of the groups. Much of the critical comment of which the Committee is aware concerning the immediate post-arrival period is a direct reflection of the absence of such detailed information.

5.16. On another plane it became increasingly clear to all who were to be involved at the practical level of reception (or who had been involved in previous receptions), that co-ordination was essential. In Melbourne, for example, the group of government and non-government agencies who were preparing for the reception (and settlement) of the 1976 intake of Indochinese refugees—the 'Victorian Resettlement Co-ordination Committee'—was informed that 'the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs would be the co-ordinating department, but the Department of Social Security would be responsible for co-ordinating the voluntary agencies'. The representatives of the Department of Social Security made it clear, however, that they had minimal staff resources available and that they were particularly keen not to dominate the voluntary agencies. In fact the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee understands that,

⁶ The Committee notes the relevance of these comments to the arrangements made to receive the Vietnamese orphans brought to Australia during April 1975 and refers to the Department of Health's statement that:

'Throughout this activity the Department of Health regarded its principal role as the medical care of evacuees and provision of accommodation at the Quarantine Station. Some difficulty was experienced in carrying out the role of medical care as other departments were also involved and the interests of the different groups were at times in minor conflict.'

(Transcript of Evidence, Vol. 2 1976, p. 935)

although the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs did co-ordinate the health and customs procedures, entry requirements and other immediate reception matters, it was not decided in advance who would assume responsibility for attending to the subsequent needs of the refugees. The question of the longer-term responsibility for settlement was raised also but was not resolved at this stage. In the short-term the Hostel welfare staff were envisaged as important co-ordinating links and it was expected that the Department of Social Security would assist by publishing information sheets and helping in other ways.

5.17. The absence of a formalised structure for co-ordination and complete ignorance as to whether the government would make special provisions for the arrivals, waive any regulations or modify any established procedures, clearly aggravated the practical difficulties which were encountered at the time. As time went on it appeared to all who were involved, that the refugees were expected to fit into the 'system' established for migrants. In the hostel situation this was regarded as important in order to prevent exacerbation of tensions between them and the other residents—many of whom were perceived to have similar difficulties to overcome although they were not officially termed refugees. In spite of these difficulties, the attitude and co-operation of all who were involved at the working levels ensured that the receptions were handled satisfactorily.

Orientation and Settlement Work of Government Agencies

5.18. The following paragraphs summarise briefly the settlement work which various departments claim to have carried out with the Vietnamese, Timorese and other Indochinese refugees. The material has been compiled from all of the submissions and information made available to the Committee by departments. The resume is given without comment at this stage in order to indicate the overall understanding and, in a number of cases, lack of understanding which various departments had—individually and collectively—at the time.

Social Welfare

5.19. The Committee was informed that on 10 March 1975, the Department of Social Security had assumed responsibility for the provision of post-arrival social welfare services for migrants, and had created a new Branch within the Social Welfare Division of the Department—the Migrant Community Services Branch—to administer these services. (Prior responsibility for this field had resided with the then Department of Labor and Immigration.) The services provided by the Migrant Community Services Branch are designed to facilitate the settlement of migrants in Australia and 'are available as a matter of course' to refugees who have been admitted to Australia for residence. Newly arrived migrants, including refugees admitted for residence, also are eligible for a wide range of pension benefits and services provided by other branches of the Department of Social Security—either on arrival or following a qualifying period of residence in Australia. In addition, the services which were provided to all migrants in Australia by the Department were available to the refugees

through contact with social workers, welfare officers and the Telephone Interpreter Service.

5.20. The Committee was also informed of the special services which were provided to the Vietnamese refugees. Several Chinese-speaking interpreters were sent to Wacol and East Hills Hostels and Vietnamese-speaking interpreters were engaged for the Telephone Interpreter Service. Two social workers from the Department of Social Security attended the Vietnamese refugees at East Hills Hostel from the outset and worked in close co-operation with the hostel welfare officer and, since May 1976, have continued to make regular visits to Westbridge Hostel in order to maintain close contact with the refugees when they eventually move to private accommodation. We were further informed that the Department had provided assistance in liaison tasks. Links were established with other interested departments, authorities and community organisations. Finally, an information paper on Vietnamese life and family customs was prepared and distributed to persons and organisations helping the refugees in New South Wales.

5.21. The Department of Social Security was also responsible for the financial welfare of the refugees while they continued to depend on the Government for their support. The major source of income for most families was the 'special benefit'⁷ which was paid at the same rate as 'unemployment benefit'. As of June 1975, for couples with four children this amounted to \$88.00 per week of which \$49.25 was paid directly to the hostel for board and lodging and the balance, \$38.75 paid to the refugee family.⁸ Other benefits available to refugees, depending upon their circumstances, included maternity allowances, child endowment, double orphans pensions, widows pensions, age pensions, invalid pensions, wife's pension, sheltered employment allowances, handicapped allowance, supporting mother's benefit, tuberculosis allowance, Australian Government rehabilitation service and medical benefits.

5.22. The Committee was further informed that the Department of Social Security had recognised the special problems of these people and, within existing limitations, was continuing to provide special counselling

⁷ The Committee was informed by the Department of Social Security that a 'special benefit' may be paid to a person ineligible to receive either:

- a pension;
- an unemployment benefit—for which there is normally a twelve month residency qualification or the requirement that the applicant intends to reside permanently in Australia—together with the requirement that the person is willing and able to work and has taken reasonable steps to obtain such work (i.e. has registered for employment with an office of the Commonwealth Employment Service);
- or
- sickness benefit—for which there is also a twelve month qualifying period of residency in Australia or the requirement that the applicant intends to reside permanently in Australia.

In the case of the Vietnamese refugees, 'special benefit' was paid immediately on their arrival in Australia—following formal application to the Department of Social Security and employment registration with the Commonwealth Employment Service. The Committee understands that if suitable work has not been obtained at the end of twelve months' residence, the refugees will then automatically qualify for normal unemployment benefits.

⁸ The same family would receive \$98.50 per week at the current (i.e. October 1976) rates—\$57.10 of which is paid directly to the hostel for board and lodging and \$41.40 to the refugee family.

and interpreting facilities for them. At the time of writing to the Committee, similar settlement problems were anticipated among the groups who arrived during March 1976.

Employment

5.23. The Committee was informed that employment assistance to migrants in hostels is given through special employment offices established in the hostels under the control of the Manager of the Office of the Commonwealth Employment Service responsible for the area in which the hostel is located. These offices are staffed to meet the needs of residents at the particular time and when the refugees arrived special staffing arrangements were made to meet their needs.

5.24. In general, considerable difficulty was experienced by the Commonwealth Employment Service in finding employment for the Vietnamese refugees because the majority were unskilled whilst others were in the older age bracket and almost all had little or no facility in the English language. The refugees were further disadvantaged because of their lack of work experience in an industrialised society and the existing labour market situation added to their difficulties in finding suitable employment.

5.25. In Queensland it appeared to the Commonwealth Employment Service that immediately after their arrival most of the refugees were keen to accept work at any level as soon as possible and to learn English at part-time classes in the hostels. Those who claimed to have skills but no documentation to prove such skills, were prepared to take any work on offer and to seek to obtain recognition of their skills at a later date. Within a short time thereafter, many of the Vietnamese refused to accept referrals to vacancies on the ground of their preference to attend full-time English classes. Furthermore, of those who had accepted immediate employment, a number had left their jobs because the work was apparently too heavy and/or they had communication problems, or were dismissed. In a number of cases brought to the Committee's attention, all of this took place within twelve days from their arrival at the hostel. In addition, when those who had finished their English language courses became available for employment, the job market had become such that employment was extremely scarce.

5.26. Although the occupational standard of the March 1976 intake of refugees was much higher than in the 1975 groups,⁹ the Commonwealth Employment Service informed the Committee that they anticipated difficulties in finding suitable employment for many of these refugees. Once again, they were required to compete for a limited number of opportunities with a large number of similarly experienced people from the Australian workforce who were unemployed. Accordingly, it was expected that many would face the prospect of having to accept semi-skilled or unskilled work in order to obtain initial employment.

⁹ Since they were selected on different criteria; see p. 35 para. 3.33.

5.27. The Committee was informed that arrangements had been made for both children and adults in the refugee groups to receive language instruction under the migrant education program for which the Minister for Education is responsible under the *Immigration (Education) Act* 1971-1973. By arrangement with the Migrant Education Branches of the State Education Departments, adult language courses were established at East Hills and Wacol Hostels where three classes provided instruction in two, three and four-hour sessions daily. For adults with professional backgrounds and tertiary-level students, full time accelerated English language courses were arranged outside the hostels for six hours daily over a period of ten weeks.

5.28. Primary and secondary school children were placed in local schools adjacent to the hostels while the hostels' child minding centres (for children between 2 and 5 years of age) and their baby-watching service (for those under 2 years) provided mothers with an opportunity to attend language classes or, for those with 2 to 5-year-olds, commence work. Where the mother did attend language classes, the cost of these services was met by the Department of Education.

5.29. At the time of preparing its submission (in July 1975) the Department informed the Committee that the qualifications of the refugees wishing to continue tertiary studies had been assessed and the students were guided in applying for enrolment in tertiary institutions for the 1976 academic year. Those successful in enrolment, would be eligible for assistance under the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme. In the meantime the students would attend English classes at the education centre in the hostel and those who had been placed in employment would attend evening classes. On completion of the assessment of qualifications special preparatory language instruction at the intensive level would be provided to the tertiary group through the facilities available at the State Offices of the Department. On 30 April 1976, the Committee was informed that officers of the Department had ' . . . conducted interviews at length, assisted in approaches to the Committee on Overseas Qualifications, personally approached the tertiary institutions to support applications for entry and generally provided every assistance that was possible. In view of the autonomy of tertiary institutions, the final decision on actual enrolment was of course a matter for them'.

5.30. Finally, the Committee was informed that employment, old age, illness and reasonable fluency in English in the case of several individuals, accounted for a number of refugees not attending either day or evening classes. Those who had not enrolled were encouraged to join classes when circumstances permitted.

Summary

5.31. To recapitulate briefly, the Committee was informed that, in the case of the Sydney and Brisbane groups, a number of the large family groups with low income capacity faced great difficulties in affording private accommodation and were therefore unlikely to move out of the hostel

for a considerable time. As refugees, the great majority of these people arrived without financial or material resources; their difficulties were exacerbated in many cases by additional circumstances such as families without bread winners, rurally-oriented subsistence backgrounds, and a lack of relevant occupational skills. It was expected that a reasonably high incidence of health and settlement problems would be encountered amongst these groups, as those who arrived in Australia in July and August 1975 were selected for admission on the basis that they appeared least likely to be offered resettlement in other countries and most in need of the humanitarian assistance which entry to Australia would provide. The main problems were thought to lie in the fields of housing and employment.

*Orientation and Settlement Work of the Local 'Settlement Committees'*¹⁰

5.32. Although humanitarian concern was shown by the Government in accepting refugees into Australia who were most in need of assistance, the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee regrets that at no time did the Government have an overall 'resettlement scheme' to cater for the special settlement needs of these people. The refugees were in fact treated like other migrants. At the practical level and particularly within the hostels, the welfare officers who were responsible for the day-to-day care and well-being of the refugees, gradually evolved various methods to cope with their needs. Trial and error played a significant part in this process of learning how to cope with refugees from Asia.

5.33. It became apparent from our own observations, as indeed it soon became apparent to those who were working with the refugees on a daily face-to-face basis, that many of their problems were far greater and more complicated than those met by the normal migrant. This point was generally not appreciated, however, by many officials at the middle and senior levels of the Departments of Social Security and Education, the Commonwealth Employment Service and Commonwealth Hostels Limited. Nevertheless, as a result of the initiatives of hostel welfare officers, a number of settlement committees were created in New South Wales, and later in Queensland to make a concerted and practical attempt to settle the Vietnamese, Timorese and Indochinese refugees into the community.¹¹ In the Committee's view, most of the real settlement work was and is still being achieved by these ad hoc committees with their large representation of voluntary agencies having practical interests and expertise in the field of settlement.

¹⁰ Although the local and mainly hostel-based settlement committees are currently referred to as 'resettlement committees', the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee believes this is an inappropriate and misleading title and recommends that in future they be known and referred to as 'settlement committees'. (This latter title has therefore been used throughout the report.)

¹¹ The settlement committee which was subsequently established in Victoria is considered later in this chapter.

5.34. In the paragraphs which follow—and in contrast to the information which has been provided to the Committee by government departments concerning their roles in the work of settlement—consideration is given to the work of these mainly hostel-based settlement committees, the problems which they encountered and the methods employed to resolve them. The Committee's comments concerning the problems of the refugees which have yet to be faced realistically follow, together with our comments on the process of resettlement itself.

*Development of
orientation
programs*

5.35. It is clear to the Committee that a program of orientation activities for the refugees was first initiated in New South Wales by the staff of Commonwealth Hostels Limited as they faced the practical problems of coping with the refugees' needs. At East Hills Hostel a program of fortnightly meetings was arranged to inform the refugees of the conditions which they could expect to experience in commencing new lives in Australia. Guest speakers were invited from a number of State and Federal government departments to talk informally with an average attendance of 40 Vietnamese heads of families. These 'orientation meetings' commenced on 5 September 1975 and were conducted on a fortnightly basis for two months and then on a more irregular and 'as-required' basis until 1 May 1976 when the hostel was closed and the remaining Vietnamese residents were transferred to Westbridge Hostel.

5.36. The topics which were covered in discussion with the refugees included such matters as general health care and hygiene; baby care and dietary needs, responsibility of parent to child; availability of health services; dental care including school dental service; English language courses, education and transport to schools; availability of family counselling services; the postal system; reunification of families, sponsorship and the Red Cross tracing service; accommodation offers, housing and furnishings, the payment of bonds, deposits and rents; the role of charitable organisations, community support and referral services; the formation of clubs and associations; and, employment conditions such as award-payments, workers' compensation, notification of accident or sickness, holiday entitlements and the unions and their role in society. In practice the 'program' was devised by a small group of persons who had become involved with the refugees' care and well-being. It included representatives from Commonwealth Hostels Limited, the Anglican Immigration Office and the Department of Social Security, together with a grant-in-aid social worker from the Society of St Vincent de Paul, a social worker/research-assistant from the inquiry being conducted by Dr J. Martin and an interpreter.

5.37. With the transfer to Westbridge Hostel of those Vietnamese who had yet to make a move out into the community it became obvious to the 'organising group' that a more organised and adventurous scheme was required to tackle the settlement problems of those refugees who were accommodated at Westbridge Hostel. As of 1 May 1976 this comprised 51

accommodated at Westbridge Hostel. As of 1 May 1976 this comprised 51 Vietnamese, 265 Indochinese refugees brought from camps in Thailand and 321 refugees from East Timor. Accordingly, assistance was sought from various government and voluntary welfare organisations. Their representatives met on 5 May 1976 and formed a 'settlement committee'—having been 'born' as it were, as a consequence of nine months of practical experience with Asian refugees. This committee grew in membership to 15 representatives from voluntary organisations and government departments and agencies such as the Anglican Immigration Office, the Committee of National Concern for Indochinese Refugees, Returned Services League, Red Cross, Australian Council of Churches, Good Neighbour Council, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the Migrant Community Services Branch of the Department of Social Security, the Commonwealth Employment Service, Department of Youth Ethnic and Community Affairs together with welfare and housing accommodation officers from Commonwealth Hostels Limited.

5.38. Since its inception this committee has met on a monthly basis with a view to achieving the following objectives:

- the promotion and encouragement of community support for involvement with the refugees (particularly outside the hostel);
- the opening up of lines of communication and information between voluntary and governmental organisations, the refugees and the community at large (as a means of reducing the duplication of effort and confusion which it causes to individuals);
- to act as a bridge between the refugees and community groups outside the hostel;
- to assist with the provision of essential counselling and welfare support services—with particular emphasis on post-hostel follow-up visits for the problem families;
- to prevent possible exploitation of the refugees—who were judged to be 'at risk'—when they leave the protective hostel environment; and
- to promote the development of, and the refugees' involvement in, national associations (i.e. to foster a sense of identity amongst the refugees).

In the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee's view, the overall aim of this committee has been to tap and to mobilise the community resources which are available to assist with the settlement of the refugees, i.e. to act as a catalyst with the co-ordinating function foremost.

5.39. In Queensland the Department of Social Security appeared to have assumed overall responsibility for the refugees' settlement from the outset. Using interpreters, two departmental social workers were provided on a full-time basis at Wacol Hostel during the initial two weeks and, with the assistance of a grant-in-aid social worker, obtained basic information from each family and provided immediate assistance to them. In essence this team attended to basic reception tasks. However, this support tapered thereafter. In the eight weeks that followed one departmental social

worker (with part-time assistance from interpreters and two additional social workers) arranged counselling sessions with groups of 10-15 refugees. In contrast to the orientation methods used in New South Wales, topics such as home and child care, housing, hire purchase, shopping, taxation and other aspects of community life in Australia were covered by one social worker in 7 two-hour sessions per week. Ten weeks after the arrival of the Vietnamese, the support rendered by the social worker was reduced to two or three visits to the hostel per week. Clearly the question of providing post-hostel support had not been recognised in Brisbane to the same extent as had occurred in Sydney. Moreover the question of who was to accept overall responsibility for the longer-term tasks of assisting the refugees to settle and establish themselves in the community had yet to be asked.

5.40. As of 8 December 1975, of the original 323 Vietnamese residents, 38 had moved out of the hostel leaving 285 refugees still to be settled. In practical terms little had been achieved in these first five months.

5.41. As a consequence of the delays in decision-making, the lack of co-ordination and, most importantly the lack of practical achievements, the co-ordinating welfare officer of Commonwealth Hostels Limited took the initiative in Brisbane during December 1975. Accordingly a series of orientation evenings were arranged along similar lines to those which had been conducted in the New South Wales hostels. In the light of experience gained with settlement work in Sydney, a small settlement committee was also convened at the hostel in January 1976. Membership of this committee comprised the accommodation and welfare officer at Wacol Hostel; an irrigation and water supply technical officer from the Society of St Vincent de Paul; two representatives from a community service organisation, Jaycees; a farmer; a social worker from the Department of Social Security; a representative of the Commonwealth Employment Service; and the local member of Parliament, the Member for Bowman.

5.42. The principle objective in establishing this committee was to provide some form of practical assistance to the Vietnamese in settling in the community. Because of the farming background of many of the Vietnamese remaining at Wacol Hostel, much of the settlement committee's effort was taken-up in considering and co-ordinating the refugee's preferences for accommodation and agricultural employment with the various offers of rural settlement which had been received from within the community. In the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee's view, and unfortunately for the Vietnamese, this settlement committee has been far less effective than those established in New South Wales. Its effectiveness has not been helped by a general apathy, on the part of employment officers and social security officials, towards rural employment as a possible avenue to the solution of the settlement problems of many of the Vietnamese refugees at Wacol (a matter which is considered in detail at page 67 of the report).

5.43. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the Brisbane refugees, who in many ways faced the greatest difficulties, should have been disadvantaged by these circumstances which were not of their own making. In the context of these remarks we note from the Department of Social Security's reply (received on 16 July 1976) that they have 'recognised that this group of refugees lack material resources and have special problems which will require support and assistance from voluntary agencies and other organisations on a long term basis before full settlement can be said to have occurred'. Given the lack of departmental resources, however, and the limited funds which are available to voluntary agencies, the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee cannot see this type of support eventuating unless special arrangements are made by the Government.

5.44. In Victoria a co-ordinating committee was established from the outset to plan and provide for the needs of the 271 Laotian, Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Melbourne on 19 March and 23 March 1976. Ironically little or nothing of a practical nature has been achieved in the six months to August 1976 by the two committees, five sub-committees and six task-forces which have been created. The organisations which are represented on these bodies comprise four Commonwealth Government departments, five State Government departments, twenty-two voluntary welfare organisations and six Ethnic groups. It is little wonder, therefore, that these various committees are oversighted by a co-ordinating committee, the 'Victorian Resettlement Co-ordinating Committee'. Of the 271 refugees brought to Melbourne, 60 had moved from the hostel into private accommodation as of the middle of August 1976; to that time no program of orientation activities had commenced with the refugees and it appears that more effort has been expended by the Department of Social Security in servicing and co-ordinating these various bodies than in providing for the real needs of the refugees themselves.

5.45. It is significant to note that both of the submissions prepared by the Department of Social Security omitted to mention either an orientation 'program' (or individual orientation activities) being conducted with the refugees, or the 'settlement committees' which had been set up in each of the States. (The first submission was received on 12 September 1975—nearly three months after the first arrivals on 20 June 1975; and the second, on 12 April 1976—some 9-10 months after the initial refugee intake). In fact, the Committee did not obtain any information from the Department of Social Security concerning these matters until 16 July 1976, when a reply was received to the Committee's specific request of 8 June for information on them.

5.46. The Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee concludes, therefore, that the results which were achieved in settling the Vietnamese refugees were largely due to the energy and enthusiasm of individual members who made up the settlement committees rather than to the

efforts of government departments. Indeed in our estimate, these settlement committees were provided with little more than minimal departmental support and backing. While a great deal of departmental assistance was provided in attending to the initial reception procedures, this help was then largely withdrawn because of departmental staffing problems and other preoccupations.

5.47. In the context of these comments, the Committee pays tribute to the efforts of the voluntary agencies in each of the States and especially to the Society of St Vincent de Paul whose social workers have been particularly active in their post-hostel follow up work with the refugees.

Settlement Problems—Areas where Action is Most Needed

5.48. From the foregoing, it is clear that a great deal of effort has been expended for the benefit of the Vietnamese and other refugees in assisting them to settle in Australia. Unfortunately, many of the real problems of the refugees have yet to be tackled by the Government or indeed recognised by officials within the decision-taking and policy-making levels of departments responsible for their care.

5.49. In the paragraphs which follow the Committee has set out the problems which it believes have not been resolved or only partly resolved. Much of the information has been obtained from the refugees themselves and from discussions with individuals having day-to-day contact with the refugees and responsibilities for attending to their needs. Particular efforts were made to identify the *special needs* of the refugees and, in view of their vastly different cultural background, care was taken by the Committee to obtain the services of an appropriate interpreter.

5.50. In order to communicate effectively with the Vietnamese—something which has been achieved by hardly any groups (government and non-government alike) which have had contact with and responsibility for the refugees—we sought and obtained the services of a person who had lived and raised his family in Vietnam, who had absorbed much of the culture, attitudes and value system of the Vietnamese, who was fluent in the dialects of both North and South Vietnam and who, in his own right, was a Vietnamese linguist of international standing and an authority on the teaching of the language. Whilst the Committee was indeed fortunate to obtain the services of such a person, and whilst we note that persons with similar backgrounds are limited in numbers, we cannot fail to reach the conclusion that, in the case of government departments with their vast resources, no such attempt was made to obtain suitable interpreters. Indeed, we conclude that the limited communication which has taken place between the refugees and various departmental and other officials, has been achieved on an *ad hoc* basis making use of any interpreter or interpreting service which happened to be available at the time of need, regardless of the interpreter's expertise or knowledge in the area required. Unfortunately this has been particularly evident in the case of, but not confined to, Commonwealth Hostels Limited. As an illustration of one

such *ad hoc* arrangement made in New South Wales, the Commonwealth Employment Service employed a Laotian interpreter who spoke Vietnamese. In view of the long history of racial antagonism between the Vietnamese and Laotian peoples, this was indeed an unfortunate choice of interpreter and one which must have reduced the effectiveness of officers of the Employment Service.

5.51. In our view these types of problems accounted in large part for the lack of detailed knowledge of the Vietnamese and concern for their problems as refugees.

*Language problems
and prospects of
employment*

5.52. It is apparent to the Committee that the problems experienced by the Vietnamese have stemmed fundamentally from two conflicting sets of pressures, the need to learn English on the one hand and pressure to take jobs on the other.

5.53. At the outset the Committee disagrees with the philosophy adopted by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and the Commonwealth Employment Service. That philosophy gave rise to the situation where the Department made every endeavour to absorb the refugees into the workforce as quickly as possible. It explains in part, the insufficient emphasis which has been given to the teaching of English to the refugees, the dissatisfaction experienced by most refugees with their present employment and the fact that considerable numbers have either left their employment or been sacked—because of language and other problems—and have re-registered with offices of the Commonwealth Employment Service for employment.¹² It accounts also for the differences of opinion between Education authorities and the Commonwealth Employment Service—particularly at Wacol Hostel—concerning the priority to be given to learning the language on the one hand and the need to find employment on the other, and gave rise to the stop/go, full-time/part-time participation in language classes.

5.54. In practical terms, some of the refugees succumbed to the pressures placed on them to commence work first and then to 'pick-up' the language by attending night classes. These pressures stemmed from a fear that their 'special benefit' payments would be terminated if they failed to accept labouring or factory work which was offered; and the reminder notices from Commonwealth Hostel Managers concerning the length of their residency—with their implication that, as they had reached the ten-month point, for example, only two months remained before the usual period of residency expired. Clearly they had to be economically self-sufficient before leaving the hostel at the completion of their twelve months entitlement period. In the Committee's view, these pressures were magnified by the refugees' desire to establish homes for their families as quickly as they could.

¹² The Committee is aware, for example, of 10 Vietnamese individuals who re-registered (on 27 July 1976) with the Bankstown CES office in Sydney.

5.55. As far as the Committee was able to ascertain, prior to the arrival of the Vietnamese, no steps were able to be taken by the Commonwealth Employment Service to identify and resolve potential employment problems. In fact, we believe that very little was done to stimulate employer interest in the Vietnamese as the Department had no information which gave any insight into their skills and experience, employment background, their ability to speak English, their knowledge of Australian customs and culture, their familiarity with industries, etc. This was partly due to the fact that the nominal rolls were received only a day or two prior to the refugee's actual arrival and, in the case of the New South Wales arrivals, because information relating to their occupations was not included. (Indeed the little information which was contained proved inaccurate and of little value and it was not until the Hostel Employment Office Staff were able to register all of the breadwinners that potential problems could be identified.)

5.56. In addition we do not believe that those Vietnamese who have moved from the hostel out into the workforce and community at large can be said to have been permanently settled. In reality many of their problems have simply become hidden from view. From the cases which we were able to document, most are unhappy with their present employment which suits neither their skills, their previous training or their inclinations. These people will undoubtedly require continuing assistance to find appropriate work in the near future. Rather than tending to view the objective as one of finding once-and-for-all placements as quickly as possible, we believe the task should be regarded as one of on-going contact and assistance to the refugees in their progression towards positions regarded as appropriate.

*Inadequate
emphasis on
language training*

5.57. It is clear to the Committee that insufficient importance has been attached to language training for the Vietnamese and other refugees. The courses which have been provided within the hostels have been far too short to be effective and have suffered in the main from their part-time, after-hours nature. The present requirement that an individual must be available for work (and accept suitable employment when offered to him) in order to receive the payment of 'special benefit' (i.e. an unemployment cheque) has prevented individuals from having access to full-time courses. Fatigue on the part of the refugees coupled with the fact that evening English classes compete with other life-demands for the limited time available once people start working, also had its toll in declining attendances and has reduced the effectiveness of language training. We note also that the teaching materials which are currently provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education (the 'Situational English' series) were prepared mainly for people of European background and are not entirely suitable for use with Asians without adaptation by the teacher to suit their special circumstances. Whether or not this has in fact occurred, the Committee is unable to judge. We are of the opinion, however, that the refugees' present facility in the language is generally poor and note the

conclusion reached (ironically) by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations that 'the low standard of English achieved by refugees attending both part-time hostel classes or full-time courses has prevented them from being accepted for other training courses'.

5.58. With regard to the 10-week full-time accelerated language course which was provided to those refugees having some tertiary training and/or professional qualifications, we note that this has not generally provided a 'bridge' between their former professions and comparable ones here in Australia. In fact many of those who completed the course in Queensland have been unable to gain entrance to a tertiary institution in order either to upgrade their existing training or to further their studies. In some instances a poor command of the English language appears to have been the stumbling block, whilst in others, a lack of documentary evidence has prevented their admission to the institution concerned. We suspect that similar situations have occurred in other States and note that the Department of Education was unable to support a request for the attendance of a number of New South Wales refugees at the full-time Day Matriculation Course during 1976. Similarly, a proposal to provide an advanced language course at the English Preparation Centre for a number of refugees—to bring their standard of English up to the level required for university study—was not approved.

5.59. In the context of these findings, the Committee is most concerned about the information given (in Vietnamese) to the refugees in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia prior to embarking for Australia.¹³ Under the heading 'Education—Recognition of Diplomas', the refugees were informed that 'most diplomas issued outside Australia are not usually recognised straight away here. This is very important for those who are doctors or dentists or other professional people, e.g. plumbers or electricians.' They were further informed that 'for those who want to study a profession, there is a special university system', and that 'there are technical colleges to train those children who want to learn a trade'.

5.60. In reality the refugees have secured very few places at any of these educational institutions. Given the autonomy of tertiary institutions and the fact that the decision on enrolment is theirs, we are puzzled as to the inclusion of the comments which were made in the document provided to the refugees. Unfortunately, the situation facing those refugees with tertiary training and/or professional backgrounds looks very bleak in the short-term, for in the absence of documents with which to substantiate

¹³ The handwritten document entitled '*Brief Points for Vietnamese Refugees coming to Australia*' is reproduced at Appendix 1, p. 103 together with an English translation which was prepared for the Committee.

The Committee understands that the document was prepared in English within the Department of Labor and Immigration and vetted within the then Prime Minister's Office. The Vietnamese translation was prepared by the two Australian interpreters who joined the Australian selection teams in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia and was provided to those refugees who had been selected for settlement in Australia.

their claims, no effective machinery exists to ensure that recognition is given to the educational, technical and professional qualifications possessed by the refugees.¹⁴

5.61. The question of what is to be done for the illiterate members of the Vietnamese and Timorese communities, is a matter which we believe has not yet been tackled seriously by the Government or any of its departments. In the Committee's view, the little action which has been taken to date is entirely inadequate given the time which has elapsed since the arrival of these refugees.

5.62. Under the circumstances, therefore, 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. Moreover, as the contribution of the wife's income will be needed to keep many families economically viable, the Committee believes that adult and young women should be given equal opportunities with men for learning English and obtaining job qualifications.

Lack of opportunities for job retraining and the inability of the Vietnamese to compete for apprenticeships

5.63. Prior to their departure for Australia, the Vietnamese refugees were informed in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, that 'A number of people will have the opportunity of retaining in a new field of work if they want to'. They were further informed that 'if suitable work in your field cannot be found, the Government has a training scheme for learning a new trade, and during the time you are training, you will receive an allowance for you and your family'.

5.64. It was the Committee's experience, however, to learn that few if any of the Vietnamese were provided with opportunities to retrain and that most were unhappy about their present employment which, it was felt, did not suit their talents, previous training or their interests. The Committee has mentioned previously that a number of refugees finally accepted employment out of fear that non-acceptance of an offer might result in the cessation of the 'special' unemployment benefits which they were being paid, together with the fact that their inability to speak English prevented them from undertaking some form of retraining.

¹⁴ In reaching this conclusion the Committee notes the comments and findings of the Australian Population and Immigration Council from p. 57 of its report on the 1973 Immigration Survey *A Decade of Migrant Settlement*

Qualifications which are subject to recognition difficulties.

26. Since 1969, a Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications has been responsible for collating information on qualifications which entitle their holders to enter professional practice in overseas countries, and has negotiated with professional organisations and registration authorities in order to review recognition practices in this country. The range of qualifications which fall within the Committee's frame of reference is nevertheless limited, and no official body exists which is empowered to review recognition procedures for all types of overseas qualifications.

27. As table 10 makes clear, the types of overseas qualifications which are most subject to recognition difficulties are outside the scope of the Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications. Least recognised overseas qualifications were qualifications in commerce and administration (41 per cent not recognised); qualifications in technical fields (41 per cent not recognised); and qualifications in the electrical trades, the clothing, footwear and textile trades, and the motor trades (34 per cent not recognised). It should be emphasised that 'technical' qualifications are not technician level qualifications. They are *any* qualifications in technical subjects other than tertiary, technician, trade or commerce/administration qualifications: examples are certificates in basic electronics or boiler attendant certificates.

5.65. For the record, as of July 1976 only 8 of the 524 'hard core' Vietnamese refugees who were admitted to Australia during 1975, have been given the opportunity to undertake some form of retraining as part of the National Employment and Training Scheme (NEAT)—1 in New South Wales and 7 in Queensland. In addition, of the 7 Queensland-based refugees, 6 did not complete their training—4 left the firm concerned and found employment elsewhere, one left due to pregnancy and the other is now unemployed. Similarly, none of the Vietnamese refugees have been able to secure employment as an apprenticed tradesman—in spite of being told before their departure that:

The Commonwealth Employment Bureau will provide a special way for helping the young people find work, and that means will include vocational guidance, to assist the young people find suitable work.

To become a proficient tradesman, there is an apprenticeship scheme, usually of five years' duration. During that time the apprentice receives a proportion of a tradesman's wage, and that proportion increases each year.¹⁵

In fact, at the time the refugees arrived, the apprenticeship vacancies for 1975 had been filled as employers had already recruited at the beginning of the year as is the usual practice. No mention was made of the fact that there were more young people seeking apprenticeships in 1975 than available positions and that the ability to communicate and to read and write English was, in most trades, a prerequisite. It was to be expected, therefore, that at the end of 1975—beginning of 1976, the Vietnamese were unable to compete successfully against Australian school-leavers for apprenticeships commencing in 1976—as employers preferred young people whose educational standards were adequate to meet the demands of the technical college courses which were involved.

5.66. It is obvious that a great deal of confusion has arisen in the refugees' minds because the reality of life in Australia has not measured up to the assurances which were given to them in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia prior to their departure for Australia. This has occurred because of misinterpretation on their part and as a result of having received assurances which could not possibly have been fulfilled.

5.67. Although some of these problems could have been avoided had the Department of Labor and Immigration consulted with officers of the Commonwealth Employment Service during the drafting of the document, this apparently was not done. In fact, having drawn the attention of the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations to the document in a letter dated 8 July 1976, the Committee was informed by them on 29 July 1976 that 'This Department was unaware of the existence of the document handed to the refugees prior to their departure for Australia'.

¹⁵ *Brief Points for Vietnamese Refugees coming to Australia—Concerning Young People (Youth)*, Appendix 1, p. 103.

Failure to recognise the interdependence of the matters of education, employment and economic independence

5.68. In the words of Dr Jean Martin:

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.¹⁶

From the information available to the Committee these predictions appear to be, unfortunately, all too true for many of the Vietnamese—some of whom will become unemployable as they acquire a progressively unsatisfactory employment record.

5.69. 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.

Income maintenance and financial burdens

5.70. The inability of many refugees to find reasonably-paid and stable jobs has meant that considerable numbers of them are beset with financial difficulties. The larger families of 10-12 (or more) individuals face particular problems in finding rental accommodation which is adequate for their needs and which is also within their financial reach. In Victoria, for example, the move into the community is seen to present considerable difficulties with as much as \$500 being required to cover bond, rent in advance, and other costs. We are aware of the fact that in addition to providing furniture and other household goods, charitable organisations have found it necessary to provide cash payments to individual refugee families—for bond money, to assist with rental payments and, in some instances, to supplement social security 'incomes'.¹⁷ In the Committee's judgment this attests clearly to a continuation of the refugees' financial and related problems which are unfortunately lost sight of by government instrumentalities when families depart from hostels and begin to merge into the community.

¹⁶ *The Vietnamese Study*, Jean I. Martin, 1 June 1976, Appendix 4, p. 151.

Dr Martin, who is a Senior Research Fellow in Sociology at the Australian National University, was appointed by the former Prime Minister to conduct a five-year study into the settlement experiences of the Vietnamese refugees admitted to Australia during 1975. (Further reference is made to this study at p. 83 and Dr Martin's brief progress report *The Vietnamese Study* is reproduced at Appendix 4, p. 141.)

¹⁷ e.g. A widow with six children obtained employment on a wage of \$90 per week. This was inadequate for her to move into a home but the Society of St Vincent de Paul arranged for the rental of a house at \$30 per week, paid the widow a subsidy of \$10 per week and assisted with \$10 food vouchers, clothing and the children's school needs.

A family comprising an incapacitated husband, wife and three children was assisted, again by the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Following inquiries, the wife indicated that she had attended a law school in Vietnam and was placed in an intensive English language course. This was followed by an advanced course. The wife is now attending a Catholic teacher training course. The Society of St Vincent de Paul arranged accommodation for this family—a home unit at a rental of \$30 per week—and is to subsidise rent by \$15 per week for the duration of the three year training course.

5.71. In the Committee's opinion it is essential that income maintenance schemes encourage self-help and allow normal Australian living standards to prevail rather than lower them and/or perpetuate poverty. This should be so for refugees, migrants and for all other Australian residents. We were concerned to learn, therefore, that in the case of the refugees such encouragement is not given—at least in a number of instances.

5.72. The Committee was informed, for example, that the Vietnamese refugees were ineligible to receive regular pensions and supporting mother's benefits because of their inability to meet the prescribed residency requirements. While a special benefit was paid to the refugees at the same rate, they were disadvantaged financially in that their permissible earnings—over and above their pensions—were lower than that allowed for other Australians. Their predicament can be illustrated in concrete terms using the following examples:

- (a) Widow's pension: As of November 1975, a widow's pension for a mother with two children provided \$77.50 fortnightly to the mother, \$15 for each of the two children, plus a mother's allowance of \$12 if one of the children is under six years (or \$8 if over six years); total allowance \$119.50. Her permissible fortnightly earnings were \$40 for herself plus \$12 for each child; total \$64.00. Hence her total potential income was \$183.50; per fortnight.
- (b) Special benefit: On special benefit the same mother would again receive \$77.50 fortnightly for herself and \$15 for each child (but no supporting mother's allowance); total \$107.50. Her permissible fortnightly earnings amounted to \$12.00 bringing her total potential income to \$119.50.

Compared with the potential income on a widow's pension, person (b) is disadvantaged by \$64.00 per fortnight.¹⁸ Furthermore, while the refugees are in receipt of 'special benefits' they are ineligible to receive a number of important fringe benefits—such as reduction in the amounts paid for transportation fares, telephone rental, general council rates and water rates, the entitlement to a 'pensioner health card', free dental service, hearing aids and so on. As the majority of the 'problem families'—particularly the families with only female breadwinners and aged persons with dependent children—are illiterate and therefore have a low potential for rehabilitation and employment, these groups face a future of low income maintenance for five years (the qualifying period of residency) at a level lower than that for other Australians.¹⁹

¹⁸ At the current (i.e. October 1976) rates, the fortnightly differential is again \$64.00 in favour of the person receiving a widow's pension. (Although the widow's pension and the special benefit payment have risen from \$77.50 to \$82.50 per fortnight, the other amounts remain as quoted in the above illustrations. Hence (a) now has a total potential income of \$188.50 per fortnight compared with (b)'s total potential income of \$124.50 per fortnight.)

¹⁹ At Wacol Hostel it is understood that seven female breadwinners and their families and four aged persons—three of whom have dependent children for whom a home must eventually be made—were in receipt of special benefits. A further problem-group included four male-breadwinners with their own children and other young relatives to support. All of these face a high risk of breakdown under financial pressure, housing difficulties, schooling needs, language problems and so on, and will need long term emotional support and possibly extensive material assistance.

5.73. While voluntary agencies continue to show their willingness to assist refugees over these types of problems, the Committee believes that our reliance on them for direct financial support is most unsatisfactory. Clearly the responsibility belongs to the Federal Government. Accordingly we believe that residency requirements should be waived in deserving cases. Similarly, a double orphan's allowance should be paid in certain circumstances. In situations where it cannot be established whether a child's parents are dead or alive or whether they have been sent as refugees to other countries and are in no position to contribute to the support of their children, the children should automatically qualify for the double orphan's allowance. This would be of considerable assistance to an older brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin and grandmother etc., to maintain the family—especially since the evidence indicates that the wage they earn as unskilled labourers (or the money they receive whilst on special benefit) is inadequate for the maintenance of the extended family. A specific example of this is the 80 year old grandmother with five grandchildren aged 5-15 years.

5.74. At the other end of the scale, however, the Committee notes that some of the refugees were fortunate enough to bring reasonable sums of money into the country when they arrived. The number of persons in this situation is unknown.

Lack of positive action in providing opportunities for rural resettlement

5.75. Little or nothing of a positive nature has been done by government departments to explore the possibilities which exist for placing the rurally-oriented Vietnamese refugees—and particularly those who reside at Wacol Hostel—in some form of rural occupation where they could be in close proximity to one another. This is in spite of the fact that the prospect of finding alternative settlement opportunities for this problem group looks very bleak indeed, and it is likely that a number of them will be dependent on social welfare payment for many years to come and possibly for the remainder of their lives. These families are for the main part very large (some have 12-16 members) and are without means. The elderly members are in all probability unemployable and would normally have depended on their families for support. Most of this group have had little or no education and some are illiterate in their own language. It is unlikely that these people will ever learn to speak, let alone read or write, in the English language. They are in the main, peasant farmers who continue to look to the family unit for mutual support and to the larger group for a sense of security.

5.76. At this stage the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee is unaware of any plans on the part of government departments directed towards the finding of meaningful solutions to the settlement problems of these particularly unfortunate people. This reluctance to grapple with the problem of rural employment is in sharp contrast to the work of voluntary agencies, private individuals and other organisations who have offered a

number of opportunities involving accommodation and land to the Vietnamese. Although some of these have been successful and others have failed, the efforts of individuals, voluntary organisations and some of the hostel settlement committees to find practical solutions to the problems of rural settlement have been positive ones. By comparison, the extremely cautious and conservative approaches adopted by the Department of Social Security and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations/Commonwealth Employment Service—of limiting their involvement in such matters to counselling the refugees as to the detailed disadvantages which were associated with particular offers²⁰—fell short of positive action and, suggests a negative attitude and/or closed mind as to the possibilities in this field. In one instance the Committee received contradictory comments from these organisations²¹, suggesting that there had been both a lack of concern for the scheme under consideration and a lack of detailed knowledge of it.

5.77. With regard to one offer to settle 39 Vietnamese on a northern Queensland property—on a share-farming basis—the Committee is particularly concerned that a request for continued payment of special benefit until an initial crop was harvested was rejected by an unsympathetic Department of Social Security on the grounds that it constituted a request for financial backing for a business venture—rather than viewing it as a possible means of assisting persons who are otherwise likely to endure hardship for many years to come. The Committee is aware of a number of factors which the Department took into account in reaching this conclusion—including the absence of a formal agreement setting out the precise terms of the share-farming arrangements, the absence of a cash flow budget for the project, and the general vagueness of the offer. Nevertheless in view of the obvious attractiveness of the offer, the Committee sees these reasons as insufficient justification for not entering into direct negotiations with the company on behalf of the refugees with a view to clarifying the matters of concern.

5.78. The Committee notes that the seemingly negative stand taken in this Queensland instance was in sharp contrast to the innovative 'cultural communicator' scheme which was established in New South Wales as a result of joint effort by officers of the Commonwealth Employment

²⁰ e.g. the Department of Social Security stressed to the Committee that 'many offers of employment in rural areas, while usually well intentioned and aiming at the well-being of the Vietnamese often fall far short of meeting the basic necessities required if these people are to settle successfully in Australia. Some offers smacked of exploitation and care was taken to counsel the refugees on the possible implications of offers considered not to be in the best interest of the refugees. Consideration was also given to the high degree of isolation of some areas offered where there was an absence of other Vietnamese for support and a shortage of basic facilities which are essential if the Vietnamese are to become familiar with the Australian way of life.' (Similar comments were made by the Commonwealth Employment Service.)

²¹ In the Department of Social Security's letter dated 8 July 1976, we were informed that 'Another family which moved to Gatton with the assistance of the Catholic Immigration Authorities and the Gatton Apex Club appears to be settling satisfactorily'. We were *subsequently* advised in the reply from the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations/Commonwealth Employment Service dated 29 July 1976 that with regard to the Gatton Apex Club offer, 'Suitable accommodation was not available for persons accepting this offer and the work was of a seasonal nature only. The offer was considered to be unsuitable for these reasons.'

Service, social workers from the Department of Social Security and the management of Lysaght Brothers & Co. Pty Ltd. This project involved the concepts of group employment and housing for 11 Laotian refugees and the training of one of their members as a cultural communicator. Although benefits would obviously flow to the company, the scheme was not shelved on the basis that it constituted government backing for a business venture. Indeed, it was seen as an opportunity to exploit the extended pattern of living, which is characteristic of Indochinese refugees, and thereby promote group cohesion and identity as a means of obtaining stability in employment.²²

*Correction of
birthdates and other
personal details
provided by the
refugees*

5.79. The Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee is aware of a number of refugees who have incorrect birthdates and other personal information recorded on what, in many cases, constitutes their sole document of identity, viz. an 'Authority to travel to Australia'. Seven such documents (held by Vietnamese refugees formerly at East Hills Hostel) were forwarded to the Sydney Office of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs for correction during mid-February 1976. They were returned to the hostel welfare officer unaltered and without explanation early in June 1976. Further approaches to the Department resulted in their return to the Sydney Office. On 14 July 1976 they were again returned to the hostel unaltered. In the case of the refugees who were brought to Wacol Hostel, the Committee understands that 40 or more mainly young Vietnamese males also have incorrect information recorded on their documents. Needless to say, we envisage serious problems arising in future years when claims are made by these persons for pensions and other social security entitlements.

5.80. The Committee notes that for the cases lodged to date in which changes have been sought by the refugees, the Department has been unable to accede to their requests due to the lack of acceptable supporting evidence or other reasons to justify the amendments. Indeed we were informed by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs that 'in considering cases of this nature the Department has a responsibility to the Australian community as a whole. Its approach, therefore, must be consistent irrespective of the nationality or status of the persons concerned. In the absence of acceptable supporting evidence it has no option but to decline such requests for change.' Furthermore:

all the Vietnamese refugees referred to were counselled, when interviewed in connection with their applications for migration to Australia, that they should make truthful statements and give correct information of the personal details of themselves and members of their families.

Each family was then seen again individually. Their authorities to travel to Australia, applications for registration as aliens and incoming passenger cards were handed to them to read and to declare that the information recorded was correct. They were informed that once they signed those documents, they would henceforth be known in Australia by the names and the

²² Details of the 'cultural communicator' scheme are set out in Appendix 2, p. 119.

dates of birth given and that they would not be able to change this information later in Australia.

It was impressed upon them that if the information in those documents was false there could be problems in Australia in regard to social security benefits and other aspects of living here.

The information so recorded now forms part of the Aliens Register and the passenger movement record maintained by the Department. Persons who gave false or inaccurate information, e.g. regarding their dates of birth, may have created problems for themselves. In the light of the careful counsel given to them in group sessions and at interview, official records could not be changed without substantially valid reasons or corroborative evidence of such changes.

5.81. In the Committee's view this is unsatisfactory and there is clearly a need for the declaration of a general amnesty to facilitate the once-for-all tidying up of such problems. We have quoted the departmental position in detail as we believe it is indicative of its attitudes and reasoning. It appears that the refugees are to suffer because of the rule-bound, conservative and inflexible approach of administrators/bureaucrats who are trapped within and by their own precedents and institutions. No consideration has been given to the individuals concerned or their motives in giving false information which we suspect to be extremely complex. The Department overlooks the absolute impossibility of many of the Vietnamese being able to provide documentary evidence in support of their claims. In effect the Department appears to take the stand that correction of this information is too difficult a task and one which would create a new precedent thus encouraging persons of other nationalities to seek similar consideration. We believe that this illustration provides concrete evidence of the deep-seated attitude held by the Department that everybody should be treated as equal rather than being given equal opportunities and access to entitlements. We are further concerned that the Department of Social Security—which has responsibility for attending to the welfare problems of the refugees, as well as paying them the benefits in question—believes that the matter of the correction of this information is one for consideration only by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

*Family reunions
and reunification
policy*

5.82. The Committee believes that family reunions should be pursued as a matter of high priority for those Vietnamese refugees who were admitted to Australia *as special cases* during 1975. This should be done both on grounds of humanity towards the Vietnamese who were separated from their kin and because, in the long term, the family is likely to prove the best safeguard against emotional distress and economic hardship.

5.83. From the information available to the Committee, it is clear that such an approach has not generally been adopted in the case of the 1975 intake of Vietnamese refugees. Of the 201 Vietnamese who arrived at East Hills Hostel on 20 June 1975, applications were lodged by telephone on 26 January 1976 (and 9 and 10 February by mail) on behalf of eight sponsors nominating 35 persons for entry to Australia. Five of these cases

totalling 15 persons have been successful as of 20 August 1976.²³ Of the 323 refugees who arrived in August 1975, 18 sponsors lodged applications in January 1976 (followed by perhaps a dozen more) nominating relatives for entry into Australia; one of these applications has been successful.

5.84. On 21 January 1976 a press announcement by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs indicated that Australia intended to offer sanctuary to a further 800 Indochinese refugees. The Minister's statement at the time indicated that those to be considered would be refugees *who had already applied* (emphasis added) to Australian Embassies or who had in some other way indicated through official channels including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that Australia was their choice for a new home. The statement indicated further that :

Preference will be given to refugees closely related to people already living in Australia. The priority would be to recruit spouses and dependent children with their families to Australia. Then we will consider parents, fiancés and fiancées, non-dependent children, brothers and sisters, and other refugees who have special relationships with Australia.

5.85. The Committee is concerned that although the intention of the statement was reasonably clear, it aroused unnecessary expectations among the Vietnamese in Australia. The evidence suggests that it was misinterpreted by Vietnamese and Australians alike. The 18 nominations for sponsorships which were lodged by the Vietnamese at Wacol Hostel appeared to be a case in question—four were completed on 23 January, nine on 27 January and five on 28 January. All were lodged with the Brisbane Office of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs shortly after 28 January 1976 apparently in response to this press statement. We suspect further that the visit to Westbridge Hostel of an official from the Sponsorship Section of the Department of Social Security in Sydney—which was made at the request of the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese refugees who arrived there during March 1976—resulted partly from emphasis which was given to family reunifications in this press statement. We suspect also that the counselling given to this group prior to their departure from Bangkok—concerning nomination procedures for immediate relatives and others who might qualify for entry into Australia under normal immigration occupational criteria—added to their expectations and resulted in 60 heads of families making formal applications nominating a total of 487 family members for entry to Australia. To date no reunifications have occurred and a number of nominees have been informed that their applications had not been accepted as they failed to meet the existing family reunion criteria or employment categories.²⁴

²³ These reunification cases comprised the following categories of persons—June arrivals: a wife; a nephew. July arrivals: a brother and his two children; the fiancé of an eldest daughter. August arrivals: a wife and her seven children and a sister.

²⁴ As of 13 April 1976, family reunion criteria included spouses, minor dependent children and aged or dependent parents of persons already living permanently in Australia. The employment criteria included certain professional and sub-professional workers, craftsmen, particularly in the metal and electrical fields, and some others (not specified) with special skills in short supply.

5.86. Because the Vietnamese family is an extended group embracing a very large number of individuals, the Vietnamese aspirations are likely to appear totally unrealistic to Australians (an illustration of which is provided from the above figures). This is not a good reason, however, for our failing to discriminate between the more urgent and 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. At the time of preparing our report, the Committee was unaware of any criteria which would allow for the reunification of additional members of the refugees' families, other than the normal restricted migrant entry criteria, viz. spouses, minor dependent children, aged parents and specified occupational categories.

*Communication
with the refugees*

5.87. The problems which have been experienced in dealing with the needs of the 1975-76 refugee intakes, indicate clearly the requirement for the production of documents and information sheets (of concern to the refugees) in Vietnamese and the use of the refugees' language in individual communications to them. Without this effort on our part, further confusion, misinterpretation and lack of comprehension will occur as English meanings are transformed during translation and subsequently modified in the process of being conveyed by word of mouth from one Vietnamese refugee to another.

5.88. It is clear to the Committee that in most instances the contacts which the Vietnamese have made with other people, whether government officials, employers, voluntary workers or teachers, etc., have occurred to a considerable degree in a context of mutual misconception and ignorance. We are concerned about the effects which this lack of comprehension—particularly on the part of the Vietnamese—may be having on refugees themselves, viz. of encouraging them to become passive, uncomprehending participants in situations where other people take the responsibility for their well-being and make decisions for them. This is a particularly insidious and self-reinforcing situation in that we believe there are many people working with refugees and migrants (particularly within government departments) who now take for granted the fact that there is always a lack of communication and accept this as the normal situation.

5.89. Ironically, the unquestioning compliance of the Vietnamese is often an advantage for officials to get things done in terms of their own jobs—such as paying social service benefits or finding employment.

5.90. In Dr Martin's words:

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 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.²⁵

5.91. The use of the Vietnamese language in both oral and written communications is of fundamental importance, in the Committee's view, if we are to give practical application to the basic principle that refugees and migrants should be assured of full access to the statutory services and forms of support or assistance to which they are entitled.

5.92. Whilst practical assistance has been given to them in this regard in the protected environment of the hostel, we are concerned that serious problems will arise as refugees move out into the community—particularly in the absence of visible and easily accessible source of information and liaison, to assist both the Vietnamese and also officials and others in contact with them during this transition stage of the next year or so.

*Post-hostel
follow-up work with
the refugees*

5.93. The Committee agrees with Dr Martin's conclusions concerning the need to appoint social workers, assisted where necessary by trained interpreters, to provide continuing assistance to the Vietnamese with welfare needs and problems, during the early stages of their settlement in the community. By implication persons appointed to fulfil these functions ideally would have to be bilingual. In Dr Martin's assessment, 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.

5.94. The Committee believes strongly that such social workers should constitute the major point of contact for the refugees once they have left the hostel and should provide them with the means of access to services and benefits to which they are entitled. Insofar as the evidence suggests that the existence of the Telephone Interpreter Service is unknown to most Vietnamese and they rarely use it, the existing extremely limited practice of making follow-up visits to the refugees (or arranging for grant-in-aid social workers from voluntary organisations to make these visits) must be extended, rather than relying upon the Vietnamese to initiate contact in times of need.

5.95. Insofar as refugees can be encouraged to make use of the Telephone Interpreter Service we welcome the announcement made in August 1976 concerning the installation of dual telephones within offices of the Department of Social Security which will enable staff to dial immediately to the interpreter service and hold a three-way conversation with the refugee. While we regard this development of the Telephone Interpreter Service as most valuable, we do not see it as a replacement for personal social worker contact with the refugees.

²⁵ *The Vietnamese Study* Appendix 4, p. 150.

Information provided to the Vietnamese refugees by the Australian Selection team in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia

5.96. Although we have made reference previously to the assurances given to the Vietnamese prior to their embarkation to Australia, the Committee wishes to make a number of additional comments about the handwritten document which was provided to the refugees in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.²⁶ At the outset we wish to record our observations concerning the numerous generalisations which were made in the document together with the fact that, whilst on the one hand it avoided giving essential information, on the other hand it provided assurances which could not possibly be fulfilled. Much of this information was clearly misleading to the Vietnamese who either misunderstood or over-optimistically interpreted its assurances concerning the assistance they would receive with accommodation, employment, job-retraining, education and the payment of unemployment benefits.

5.97. The following extracts from a translation of the document indicate how readily a misleading picture might have been conveyed:

There is no need to be concerned about finance for your family, because you have yet to start work, for you will receive free board and lodging.

After you have been here one week, you will receive a small amount of 'pocket money' in addition to free board and lodging.

Employees of the employment service will help you find work, free of charge. If you wish to study English, this can be arranged also free of charge for you.

A number of people have the opportunity of retraining in a new field of work if they want to.

If you are unemployed for any period of time, you need to put your name with the Commonwealth Employment Bureau, and they will make every effort to find suitable work, if you are skilled in a particular field. During the time you are out of work, you will receive an allowance of \$A36 each week for single people and \$A60 for a family. Each child in the family will receive \$A7 per week.

If suitable work in your field cannot be found, the government has a training scheme for learning a new trade, and during the time you are training you will receive an allowance for you and your family.

The Commonwealth Employment Bureau will provide a special way for helping young people find work, and that means will include vocational guidance, to assist young people find suitable work.

To become a professional tradesman, there is an apprenticeship scheme, usually of 5-years duration. During that time the apprentice receives a proportion of a tradesman's wage, and that proportion increases each year.

Most diplomas issued outside Australia are not usually recognised straight away here. This is very important for those who are doctors and dentists or other professional people and for those people who have been trained in a vocation, e.g. plumbers and electricians. But the government will do all it can to help so that you can follow a profession and/or a vocation suitable to your capabilities and experience.

5.98. The resulting feelings of disillusionment and of having been let down manifested themselves clearly in the petition which the Vietnamese refugees at Wacol Hostel provided to the Committee during its visit on 7 May 1976, having attempted unsuccessfully to bring it to the attention of the Federal Ministers for Immigration, Social Welfare, Education, Health

²⁶ Refer to Appendix 1, p. 103.

and Labour.²⁷ It is ironic that the Vietnamese' ignorance as to the proper method of lodging a petition together, perhaps, with their preference to use a middle-man to achieve their ends, prevented the matters which they wished to raise from being given the attention which they deserved. On inquiring about the petition the Committee was informed by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs that, 'An English translation of a petition said to have been lodged by Vietnamese refugees at Wacol Hostel, Brisbane, and dated 5 October 1975, was forwarded by Mr Manfred Cross, M.P., to the Acting Senior Assistant Director (Immigration) in Brisbane on 27 October 1975'. As the copy of the petition received by the Department was not addressed to any person or authority,²⁸ a copy was forwarded to the Department of Social Security which seemed to be the Department most directly concerned with the matters covered in it, and it is understood that the Director of that Department in Queensland replied to Mr Cross on 19 November 1975 assuring him that 'the points raised in the document submitted by you will be carefully considered'. Copies of the petition were subsequently dispatched by the Brisbane Office of the Department of Social Security (on 2 December 1975) to the Brisbane Offices of the Department of Labor and Immigration, the Department of Education, and to the Hostel Manager at Wacol for their information and/or possible action. To the Committee's knowledge, little if anything of a practical nature eventuated from the refugees' attempts to obtain assistance.

The Committee has referred in detail to this matter as we believe it is a concrete illustration of the way in which the disadvantages experienced by the socio-economically under-privileged are often compounded because of their inability to gain access to the very forms of assistance which are available to help alleviate their particular problems.

5.99. Finally, and reverting once again to the information provided to the refugees in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, we note that although the matters referred to in the document are of considerable concern to a number of departments and government agencies, none appears to have been consulted by the then Department of Labor and Immigration concerning its preparation. In fact, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations was not aware of the existence of the document until 8 July 1976 when the Committee drew the Department's attention to it in seeking further information. Given the refugees' basic concern to find a permanent place of refuge, the Committee believes that the provision of advance information in such general terms prior to the refugees' embarkation was both unnecessary and undesirable. By comparison, however, intending migrants in more normal circumstances would require such information (and in greater detail) before reaching their decision on migration.

²⁷ The petition is reproduced at Appendix 3, p. 127 together with an English translation which was prepared for the Committee.

²⁸ The petition is reproduced at p. 137 in the form in which it was received by the Brisbane Office of the then Department of Labor and Immigration.

*Identifying and
recognising the
special
circumstances of
refugees*

5.100. In relation to the Vietnamese refugees, these events demonstrate the essential requirement for the co-ordination of one department's selection activities with other departments' post-arrival activities. Such co-ordination was absent in the case of the 1975 intake of Vietnamese refugees and, to a lesser extent, in the case of the 1976 Indochinese refugees.

5.101. Throughout the inquiry the Committee has been made increasingly aware of the importance of identifying the special needs of the refugees. We are aware that the Vietnamese (and other) refugees experience many problems in common with normal migrants but believe that to the detriment of the Vietnamese, too much emphasis has been placed by departments on these similarities and insufficient emphasis given to the unique problems which they face. The following paragraphs (which have been drawn from the report at Appendix 4), refer briefly to those aspects of the situation of Vietnamese refugees in Australia which are the direct result of their being refugees and not normal migrants.

5.102. In the present circumstances the Vietnamese cannot return home, nor can they (with rare exceptions) go to any other country. As the current returnee rate of approximately 25 per cent for all migrants shows, these are highly realistic options for many migrants, and their very existence can take much of the tension out of the frustrations and disappointments which are often experienced 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.

5.103. Secondly, 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.

5.104. Thirdly, almost all these refugees were separated from close relatives during flight from Vietnam, and 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.

5.105. Fourthly, the great majority of Vietnamese arrived in Australia without money, clothes or personal belongings. Except for a few families

who succeeded 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.

5.106. Fifthly, the Committee draws attention to the fact that the Vietnamese refugees were admitted to Australia during 1975 as *special cases*, i.e. the normal migrant selection criteria relating to health, character, occupation/economic viability and settlement prospects were not applied; instead, the refugees were admitted on the basis of their inability to obtain offers of resettlement from any other country. Since their arrival—and until the Committee commenced its probing into the practical matters of their settlement—they have received little or no *special assistance* with their settlement and have been regarded as normal migrants. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that there has been both a lack of departmental concern for the Vietnamese now that they are here in Australia, and a lack of overall co-ordination of departmental effort with the efforts of others who are attending to their welfare.

The need to discriminate positively in favour of 'hard-core' refugees and other disadvantaged persons

5.107. This lack of positive discrimination in favour of the refugees is irrefutable evidence of the complete lack of policy for the acceptance of people into Australia as *refugees* rather than as normal migrants. Just as the admission of refugees for reasons of humanity involves relaxing the normal selection criteria, so also do our continuing responsibilities to these refugees entail some modification of normal settlement practices.

5.108. The Committee notes, however, that whilst intake criteria have been varied for refugees in the past, the settlement criteria are scarcely varied at all. Clearly there is a need to discriminate positively in favour of 'hard-core' refugees such as the Vietnamese and Timorese and other disadvantaged persons.

5.109. Finally, the Committee quotes from the report by Dr Martin that:

... 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.³⁹

5.110. Two additional obstacles which are shared with other migrants, but which are significant in the Committee's view because of their degree of severity are:

- the Vietnamese' cultural background and their almost alien value system compared with that of European migrants; and
- the fact that the small numbers of the refugees admitted to Australia—together with their wide diversity in their lack of common religion, ethnic background, place or origin, or education, etc.,³⁰ provide little opportunity for the development of viable ethnic associations which are characteristic of the other migrant groups in Australia and which, in their case, generate a considerable degree of solidarity, mutual self-help and formal group structures.

*The significance of
Vietnamese culture,
tradition and
identity*

5.111. During the course of the inquiry, a considerable body of information was received concerning the need to consider the cultural background of the Vietnamese, their thought pattern, value system, and the code of ethics which governs their interpersonal relationships if we are to understand their behaviour in Australian conditions.

5.112. Appreciation of these matters would have added enormously to an increased awareness of the problem of communication, the Vietnamese' use of middle-men to resolve issues, the priority which they attach to the reunification of families and their desire to be fitted into this new society with self-respect and dignity. With regard to the latter point, we conclude in the context of their cultural heritage that much more is at stake in their being fitted appropriately into a vocation which is suited to their station, background and training, than is comprehended by the average Westerner.

³⁹ *The Vietnamese Study* Appendix 4, p. 153.

³⁰ The Committee notes from the information obtained by Dr Martin that the refugees from Vietnam 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 selected on humanitarian grounds the unrepresentativeness is particularly marked. The Vietnamese have a high proportion of dependants, 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).

5.113. There exists in the community, beside 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 have been used as resource personnel in seminars or discussions bringing together groups of officials, people working in private agencies, churchmen, teachers and others. Regrettably, however, there was little evidence to suggest that the Government, its various departments or the voluntary organisations had considered the cultural background of the Vietnamese to be of sufficient significance to warrant the tapping of such sources of information. In New South Wales, some recognition was given to the importance of the Vietnamese background and an information paper on culture, family systems and customs was prepared and distributed by the Sydney Office of the Department of Social Security to those in contact with the refugees. More often than not, however, and particularly within Commonwealth Hostels Limited, we were perturbed to discover a long-standing attitude along the lines that 'as the refugees are now living in Australia they must fit in with our way of life—and the sooner they learn to do so, then the better for all concerned'.

6 The 'Resettlement Process'

6.1. It is apparent to the Committee that 'resettlement' is a complex process which requires co-operative and well co-ordinated action by government agencies, voluntary agencies and individuals. In spite of existing tendencies to think of 'resettlement' mainly in terms of settling people into new houses and jobs, it is clear to the Committee that much more is involved in the process; it commences prior to the refugees' arrival in Australia and continues until the individual has integrated into the Australian community. Furthermore, although a number of phases are involved in the process, e.g. pre-selection, selection, arrival, reception, orientation, post-hostel settlement, community support and so on—each are related and usually merge from one to the other, often overlapping several stages at any one time. It follows, therefore, that the formulation of a national policy for the admission of refugees cannot be viewed as two distinct and unrelated parts, viz. intake and settlement. (In many respects the process is similar for both refugees and migrants).

6.2. It is the Committee's strongly held view that as far as possible resettlement should be promoted through existing agencies, services and facilities. Full use should be made of these whether they take the form of Federal, State, local government or other official agencies or services, or whether they find their support in voluntary organisations (both national and international), community action or private interests. In the Committee's judgment this important principle did not underlie the 1975 intakes of Vietnamese refugees. In fact the evidence shows that the non-government agencies—and particularly those bodies with overseas counterparts—were regarded as nuisances by some Ministers and their departments. At the practical working-levels of departments, however, settlement has been dependent on the work of voluntary agencies and did not really commence until they were drawn into the various Commonwealth hostel situations as participants.

6.3. In some areas the role of official agencies will be to act as a catalyst to assist or to prompt non-governmental bodies in developing additional services. In others, new measures may well have to be taken by government agencies, particularly in those situations where refugees arrive or are brought to Australia *en masse*—whether as a result of the refugees' individual endeavours to obtain refuge or by means of assisted passage.

6.4. The resettlement process extends to all aspects of living within the Australian community, and within the different groups and associations that make up our society—including cultural, ethnic, economic, religious, social, sporting and other bodies. The Committee believes that a community response is an essential ingredient to the effective promotion of

resettlement. Accordingly, there must be a continuing awareness at all levels, of the special needs of the new settlers, particularly refugees and their families, the problems they face, and of their different cultural and economic backgrounds. In one way or another, the active participation of all sections of the community is called for.

Co-ordination of settlement work

6.5. Needless to say many problems arise when attempts are made to co-ordinate the work of voluntary agencies. Nevertheless co-ordination is required if we are to harness the experience, enthusiasm and energies of personnel within these agencies. Co-ordination must be effective but not heavy-handed and must allow for adequate cognizance to be given to the desire on the part of the voluntary bodies to maintain their own individuality and essential freedom. Clearly voluntary agencies prefer to give their help directly and to give it as an individual agency rather than to pool resources and to 'be organised' by some other body.

6.6. The type of co-ordination which the Committee envisages as working most successfully, is that which has evolved in practice within the hostel-based settlement committees discussed previously. We believe that in keeping with its responsibilities for the post-arrival care of migrants and refugees, the Department of Social Security is the appropriate co-ordinating body. It should assume this role formally—and with the support of its Canberra headquarters—without stultifying the spontaneity of those who are involved at the working level. Co-ordination should not be imposed from above on passive voluntary agencies who are seen 'to require organising'. Nor should there be any sense of competition with the voluntary agencies. Rather the atmosphere should be one of mutual co-operation and sharing of the particular tasks which crop up with each refugee group and situation.

6.7. Accordingly we envisage a situation where representatives from the Department of Social Security would chair settlement committees in each State or region. We believe that the voluntary bodies would welcome such an idea—providing they are not told what to do—particularly as they often prefer to direct their relatively scarce financial and manpower resources to getting on with the job in hand, viz. of providing practical assistance to the refugees. If adopted, such a role would relieve the Department of *some* of its burden of providing additional professionally-trained social workers.

6.8. In the context of these remarks, the Committee notes that representatives of both the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and the Department of Social Security indicated at the recent Austcare seminar on refugee settlement in Australia,¹ that government departments are not able to and nor should they be expected to meet all the settlement needs of refugee groups and individuals. Voluntary agencies, however, by virtue of their standing in the community are uniquely positioned to provide the

¹ Austcare (Australians Care about Refugees) 'Seminar on refugee resettlement in Australia'—Sydney, 22-23 July 1976

supportive services which are essential for successful resettlement. Furthermore, their services have been utilised heavily and at considerable savings to the departments concerned.

*Financial support
for voluntary
agencies involved in
settlement work*

6.9. The question of the cost of the aid provided by voluntary agencies is an important matter. While the Committee is appreciative of the considerable financial costs which voluntary agencies have assumed in providing settlement assistance to the Vietnamese refugees, we question the propriety of expecting voluntary agencies to carry such costs at what could be fairly regular intervals.

6.10. It is the Committee's view that the Government of the day must acknowledge the financial commitment which it necessarily incurs in voluntarily accepting 'hard-core' (and other) refugees into the country. Its acceptance (on behalf of the Australian people) carries with it an obligation to meet a far greater proportion of the costs—including those which are hidden—in resettling the refugees, for whom it agrees to provide a new homeland than is recognised at the present time. Insofar as we now have, and will continue to have, a resettlement 'scheme' which depends on joint partnership and participation of government and voluntary community agencies, this necessarily means an increased financial commitment to and support for the agencies involved. The Committee notes that this view is apparently shared by the former Minister for Housing and Construction, whose Department¹ stated in its submission that 'Notwithstanding the cheerful willingness of the agencies to provide this help it is our view that it would be inequitable to leave them to shoulder the burden of settling refugees into the community—at least without an appropriate measure of financial assistance from the Government'.

6.11. Although the Committee has not considered in detail the best ways of providing this support, scope exists for the provision of additional grant-in-aid social workers, revolving funds and resettlement grants. The particular support which is required in a given refugee situation should be worked out in consultation with the agencies themselves (and could well be a major task for consideration by the Refugee Policy Council which is recommended in the final part of the report).

*Requirement for a
comprehensive
policy to be worked
out for refugees*

6.12. It is apparent to the Committee that further refugee situations will arise in the years ahead. Needless to say, they will be of varying kinds and of differing magnitudes and may involve persons seeking refuge from Southeast Asian situations as well as from Europe, South America, Africa and other areas. Unfortunately, they are almost an inevitable and permanent feature of the modern world.

¹ Now the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development.

6.13. In the Committee's view Australia will be confronted with many situations in which she can act to alleviate the sufferings and hardship experienced by refugees. Furthermore, in the world context, we are a technologically and economically affluent society and thus are in a unique position to play a significant role in this regard.

6.14. It is our judgment that Australia should be in a position to respond quickly to refugee crises and to offer assistance. We conclude that in the case of the Vietnamese crisis our response was neither quick enough nor effective. It could also have been greater. Our response to the plight and circumstances of refugees now in the Thai-based camps has been similarly inadequate.

6.15. Clearly the decision as to whether or not a particular refugee/evacuee situation is one in which Australia can and should offer resettlement opportunities or other forms of assistance, is one for the Government of the day to decide and will depend on a number of factors which apply at the time. The extent of our assistance will depend also on the particular conditions which prevail both domestically and internationally at the time. And, of course, this must be so. Nevertheless, we are concerned that in the future, adequate weight is given to the need for 'humanitarian concern' in the context of the other competing and often pragmatic arguments which will be put forward, such as our ability to provide employment opportunities, housing and welfare support.

6.16. In reaching the conclusion that Australia should be in a position to respond quickly and effectively to refugee crises, it is essential that there exist an approved comprehensive set of policy guidelines together with the necessary administrative machinery which can be applied to refugee situations. The absence of these inhibits our practical ability to respond to such crises and in turn can become justification for not responding to particular refugee situations.

6.17. The purpose of having a well-planned and considered program is to enable refugees to adjust quickly to life and work within a new environment—irrespective of the particular disadvantages from which they suffer in being forced to find a new and permanent place of residence. To the extent that this is achieved, two benefits will occur. The individuals themselves will be able to enjoy a full life. They will also be enabled, without unnecessary delay, to make their particular contribution to the country's economic well-being, and to its social and cultural development.

Termination of funds for the five year study of the Vietnamese refugees admitted to Australia during 1975

6.18. During the course of Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee's inquiry, concern has been expressed at the curtailment of funds for the study of the settlement of the Vietnamese refugees who were admitted to Australia during 1975. The project which was to have been conducted over a five-year period by Dr Jean Martin, a Senior Research Fellow in Sociology at the Australian National University, was initiated

by the former Prime Minister on 23 April 1975 and subsequently terminated by the Hon. M. J. R. MacKellar, Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on 13 February 1976 as one of a number of economy measures undertaken by the present Government.

6.19. The Committee understands that the purpose of this study was to provide factual and objective data on these 'hard-core' refugees and thus lead to a basic and detailed understanding of the resettlement process. Such understanding would clearly be of assistance to the Australian Government in future policy decisions.

6.20. During the course of our investigations we received a considerable amount of evidence about the lack of a detailed refugee selection and settlement policy and the *ad hoc* nature of decisions over the admission of refugees from South Vietnam and other Asian countries during 1975 and the early part of 1976. Unfortunately, many decisions concerning the Vietnamese themselves, have been taken not on the basis of factual information but rather on the basis of preconceived notions or assumptions. Many of these matters have been mentioned in the preceding pages.

6.21. As a consequence, the Committee is concerned about the medium and longer-term settlement prospects facing many of these refugees and, perhaps, more importantly, other refugees who may be admitted to Australia as a consequence of international disturbances which will occur inevitably in the future. Clearly the effectiveness of the response which Australia can make to such situations, depends on the extent to which we understand how refugees differ from other migrants and what in fact has been the outcome of our manner of dealing with and responding to those refugees who are already here.

6.22. Although the Committee wrote to the Prime Minister on 20 April 1976 to express concern at the termination of the survey and to seek further explanation for the cessation of funding, we were informed that as a result of the Government's review of over 50 bodies of various kinds, it had been decided that 14 including Dr Martin's study, should be terminated immediately—in spite of the modest sum of money required for its continuation.³ The Committee regrets this decision and recommends that funds be made available urgently to enable the inquiry to continue into a second phase during 1977.

6.23. A copy of Dr Martin's brief progress report which was provided to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on 1 June 1976 and to Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee on 6 August 1976 is reproduced at Appendix 4. As many of the matters raised by Dr Martin have relevance to our own inquiry, we have drawn freely from her report.

³ viz. \$20 000 to complete a two-year study program.

The need to reconsider prevailing departmental attitudes

6.24. The Committee wishes to comment on several deeply-seated attitudes which we believe prevail within the middle and upper levels of a number of government departments.

6.25. In reply to information which the Committee requested concerning the bases which after-care services are provided to the refugees by the Department of Social Security, the Committee was informed that:

It has been Departmental practice to rely heavily on the professional judgment of its Social Work staff as to whether the onus of seeking assistance should be left with the former refugee or whether positive follow-up action should be taken by the Department. In some cases efforts are made to follow-up families who leave the hostel, especially when there is some doubt concerning their ability to cope while in others follow-up action is considered to be unnecessary and even undesirable.⁴ In taking this position the Department is prompted by the dangers of fostering long-term dependency relationships which militate against the successful settlement of these people. Efforts are made to encourage the former refugees to become fully integrated members of the community as soon as practicable.

There are, of course, cases where follow-up action may have prevented a subsequent crisis and provided relief from hardship which developed after the refugee family left the hostel. These cases are unpredictable or occasionally stem from an error of judgment but they should not be used to justify the extension of follow-up activities which tends to differentiate the former refugees from the rest of the community.

6.26. The Committee rejects the notion that the provision of post-hostel supportive services necessarily leads to the fostering of long-term dependency relationships. Indeed, we have stated earlier that after-care responsibilities may extend, in some instances, for a period of up to two years after the refugees' arrival in Australia and are an essential means of assisting the 'hard-core' refugees to integrate meaningfully into the Australian way of life. Rather, it is passive acceptance on part of the refugees themselves—cultivated in an atmosphere of mutual misconception and ignorance—which undoubtedly results in an ever-growing reliance and dependence on social welfare payments for their support. Contrary to the position taken by the Department, we see the post-hostel visits by trained social workers as effective means of encouraging the very qualities of self-help, self-reliance, and the desire for economic independence which, from our own first hand observations, we believe to be fiercely evident in the Vietnamese and which the Department acknowledges as vital for their successful integration.

6.27. The Committee is concerned also about the attitude expressed in the final sentence—that everybody should be treated as equals. In reality—and as demonstrated throughout much of our report—this is not so, and refugees clearly require differential treatment in order to have *equal*

⁴ In fact, the Committee is informed that prior to May 1975, i.e. for a period of 11½ months since the first arrivals at East Hills Hostel, little official contact was made with refugees once they left the hostel. The decision to pursue post-hostel contact work with the refugees in New South Wales was first taken at the 'Resettlement Committee' meeting on 5 May 1976, when the Department of Social Security allocated a social worker to the task of co-ordinating the program of follow-up contact work being carried out by the voluntary agencies—as well as making visits to individual refugee families.

opportunities in making new lives here in Australia. Nevertheless we believe that such an attitude is rooted deeply in the thinking of officials within the Departments of Social Security, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Employment and Industrial Relations and in the Commonwealth Employment Service and Commonwealth Hostels Limited.

6.28. It is clear to the Committee that some considerable reorientation of basic thinking must occur within these departments. In particular there is need to accept the principle that in order to give refugees and migrants equal opportunities and equal access to services and benefits, the assistance which is provided to various ethnic groups must be tailored to suit their particular circumstances. While it is pleasing to note evidence on this occurring at the professionally-trained, lower, working-levels of departments, this is absent within the higher levels where a great deal of concern exists to ensure that departments are seen by the public to be giving equal treatment to all refugees, migrant groups and residents generally. If this principle of discriminating positively in favour of under-privileged groups is accepted by the Government and by departments, it carries a corresponding obligation for them to embark on a positive program of educating the general public as to the propriety of this approach.

*Ministerial
directions and
initiatives*

6.29. Finally, the Committee draws attention to the need for positive Ministerial involvement in the matter of the settlement of the Vietnamese, Timorese, Indochinese and other refugees. We regret the failure of Ministers—in the face of available evidence—to react decisively and with sensitivity to the refugees' needs. These latter qualities are basic requisites to the Ministerial directives and initiatives which are required, if the problems which have been raised in the preceding chapters are to be resolved and the recommendations which are made in the final chapter are to be implemented. Until this is done, some refugees may be little better off in Australia than they would have been had they remained in their own countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7 Refugees Policy—Major Recommendations and Conclusions

Formulation of refugee resettlement policy

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

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

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

Essential features of a new refugee policy

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

and migrants and devise separate and appropriate admission procedures for the processing of each category.

7.5. In acceding to various United Nations conventions and protocols, Australia has agreed to provide legal protection to refugees.¹ The *spirit* of these instruments should continue to be manifested by admitting refugees and other displaced persons for settlement in Australia. Refuge, (and in certain instances assistance with evacuation), should be offered on the basis of humanitarian concern for a person's needs irrespective of whether he is technically a refugee, a stateless person or a displaced person. Australia's refugee policy should recognise that there is a place for a regular and identifiable intake of refugees and displaced persons who do not meet the existing immigration criteria. This intake should constitute a significant part of our broad immigration target in any one year and should be subject to adjustment in emergencies. In determining which refugees and displaced persons should be admitted, Australian policy should acknowledge the claims of those who have no prospect of obtaining permanent resettlement elsewhere or whose needs are for other reasons particularly acute. It should also take a wider view of family reunions than it does at present.

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

*The need to
reconsider
prevailing attitudes*

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

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

- the special needs of all refugees:

¹ The Committee notes that this protection derives in part from a prohibition on the contracting States against the expulsion or return of refugees in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. (Article 33.1 United Nations 'Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951')

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

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

Australia's overall approach to refugee situations

7.10. At the global level it is clear that many refugee situations require international co-operation for their solution. In such situations it is appropriate to regard the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international relief agencies as the authorities best equipped to assist in the provision of relief and most able to make effective use of financial aid from Australia and other countries. The adoption of such an approach should not exclude the possibility, however, that certain situations may arise in which Australia can provide immediate and direct humanitarian assistance with the evacuation and resettlement of refugees, while continuing to co-operate in the longer-term with the UNHCR and other agencies in bringing about an overall solution. We recommend, therefore, that wherever possible this latter, more flexible, positive and humane approach be adopted as the basis of our involvement with future refugee situations. In either case, greater use should be made of the capacity which the Australian Council for Overseas Aid has for co-ordinating the overseas relief work and aid which is provided to refugees through the many Australian non-government organisations.

Dependence of Government on voluntary agencies

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

agencies by virtue of their very nature and standing in the community, are uniquely positioned to provide the supportive services which are essential for successful settlement. Indeed their services have been utilised heavily and with considerable savings to the departments concerned.

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

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

*Policy
formulation—
Establishment
of a Refugee Policy
Council*

7.14. The Committee recommends the establishment of an advisory body to be known as the 'Australian Refugee Policy Council' for the purpose of assisting the Government to formulate an Australian policy on all aspects of refugee resettlement and to review and continually assess its implementation and effectiveness. Membership of this body should be drawn from both government and non-government sources. On the non-government side, membership should comprise representatives from the major Australian refugee-receiving and overseas-aid agencies, the Australian representative of the UNHCR (in an observer capacity), Red Cross, other organisations having practical experience in settlement work and post-hostel community support for refugees, and representatives from the academic community. A similar number of representatives should be drawn from the government side and include the Prime Minister's Department, Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Social Security, Employment and Industrial Relations, Education and Commonwealth Hostels Limited. The Committee recommends that members of refugee groups should be drawn into this forum with other government departments and agencies whenever matters which are of direct concern to them are considered by the Council.

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

- refugee situations requiring urgent Australian involvement and direct action;

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

7.16. Other functions of an on-going nature include those of community education, co-ordination of government and non-government refugee work, and a watchdog function in overseeing the implementation of policy guidelines in particular situations. As some member-organisations of the Council will be directly involved as participants in the local settlement committees (mentioned below), they will be admirably placed to oversee and assess the effectiveness of particular programs and hence contribute positively to the evolving responsiveness of Australian refugee policy. Specific tasks which should be considered immediately include such matters as the most appropriate means of funding voluntary bodies which are engaged in settlement work in the community; the scope which exists for the provision of additional grant-in-aid social workers; the use of revolving funds and resettlement grants; opportunities for rural employment and settlement; and the identification of problems requiring urgent attention.

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

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

7.18. The Committee also recommends the establishment of a 'Standing Interdepartmental Committee on Refugees' with responsibility for the overall forward-planning and co-ordination of government activity with respect to all refugee matters. Membership of this Committee should comprise those departments which are represented on the Refugee Policy Council, with other departments and agencies being drawn into the work of the IDC as required. We recommend that this Committee should again be convened and staffed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister's Department.

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

*Settlement
Committees*

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

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

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

which has evolved in practice within the hostel-based settlement committees.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.28. We reject the notion that the provision of post-hostel supportive services necessarily leads to the fostering of long-term dependency relationships. Indeed after-care responsibilities may extend, in some instances, for a period of up to two years or even longer after the refugees'

arrival in Australia. Such supportive services are an essential means of assisting 'hard-core' refugees to integrate meaningfully into the Australian way of life. Rather, it is passive acceptance on the part of the refugees themselves—cultivated in an atmosphere of mutual misconception and ignorance—which undoubtedly results in a growing reliance and dependence on social welfare payments, for their support. Accordingly we recommend that the Department of Social Security institute a program of post-hostel visits to refugees by trained social workers in order to encourage the very qualities of self-help, self-reliance and the desire for economic independence which, we believe are present in most refugees and which are vital for their successful integration. The Committee believes strongly that these social workers should constitute the major point of contact for the refugees once they have left the hostel and should provide them with the necessary means of access to services and benefits to which they are entitled.

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

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

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

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

English language training

7.33. As a means of providing refugees (and migrants) with realistic opportunities for obtaining apprenticeships, appropriate employment, admission to tertiary and other educational institutions and opportunities for

*Specific
recommendations—
areas
where action is most
needed*

retraining, the Committee recommends that, irrespective of their current levels of proficiency, financial support be provided to all males and females of working age whilst they attend English language classes.

Income Maintenance

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

Positive action to provide opportunities for rural settlement

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

Employment assistance

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

Special programs to assist the illiterate and unemployable refugees

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

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

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

Family reunions

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

Communication with refugees

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

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

Continuation of the Study into the settlement of the Vietnamese refugees

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

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

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

Guardianship and responsibility for unaccompanied Timorese refugee children

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

Acknowledgments

The Committee would like to thank all those who have contributed their time, knowledge, and experience to the inquiry or who have assisted the Committee in various ways by making available services or facilities. Special thanks is due to all those who gave evidence in person before the Committee, and to those individuals and organisations who provided written information. Finally, particular mention should be made of the invaluable assistance rendered throughout the inquiry by Mr R. T. Henry, Mrs B. E. Kennard and Dr Jean I. Martin.

Peter Sim
Chairman

The Senate
Canberra
September 1976

Appendixes

Appendix 1

Information provided (in Vietnamese) to the refugees by the Australian selection team in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia—‘Brief Points for Vietnamese refugees coming to Australia’

Refer to p. 62 footnote (13)

NHỮNG ĐIỂM SƠ LƯỢC CHO NHỮNG NGƯỜI VIỆT NAM ĐI LẬP
SANG ÚC ĐẠI LỢI.

NƯỚC ÚC ĐẠI LỢI.

Úc Đại Lợi, Quốc gia mới của các bạn, là một sự hỗn hợp gồm có nhiều điểm khác nhau.

Nước Úc có một cơ cấu chính trị liên bang và gồm có 6 tiểu bang và 2 lãnh thổ dưới quyền chỉ huy hành chính của chính phủ trung ương. Chính phủ trung ương đó là đại diện cho Quốc gia Úc Đại Lợi hay là phái hành vương chung, và mỗi tiểu bang đều có chính phủ riêng.

Với một diện tích vào khoảng 7 triệu 7 trăm ngàn cây số vuông, nước Úc gồm có những vùng nhiệt đới kèm theo những mùa mưa ở vùng bắc cho tới phía đông nam thì có tuyết ở trên núi vào mùa đông. Ngoài ra, nước Úc cũng có một vùng duyên hải trải dài 36,500 cây số và chiều dài từ phía đông cho tới phía tây là 4,200 cây số.

Dân số của nước Úc có trên 13,500,000 người và phần đông sống ở vùng đông nam bờ biển có khí hậu tương đối ẩm áp và vào khoảng một triệu người sống ở vùng tây nam. (Khí hậu vùng đó cũng tương đối ẩm áp). Vài trăm ngàn người sống ở miền nhiệt đới và vùng dưới về phía bắc của nước Úc.

Về phía nam của nước Úc mùa đông khá lạnh. Do đó quần áo ấm rất cần thiết.

Nước Úc có kỹ nghệ rộng lớn về chăn nuôi và nông nghiệp. Nhưng các kỹ nghệ đó đều dùng bằng máy móc và đòi hỏi nhiều vốn đầu tư. Do đó kỹ nghệ này dùng tương đối ít nhân công.

Tuy nhiên chung quanh những tỉnh lớn đều có những vườn trái cây và vườn rau cũng cấp cho dân số trong tỉnh rau tươi và trái cây.

Phần đông những người Úc sống ở bốn thành phố rộng lớn và làm việc cho các văn phòng, ngân hàng, và các tiệm bán sỉ và bán lẻ, cơ sở kỹ nghệ, xây cất và vận tải. Như vậy nước Úc có thể được coi là một quốc gia tối tân hóa và lôi kéo dân số tập trung trong thành phố rất đông nếu so sánh với các nước kỹ nghệ hóa trên thế giới.

Nước Úc phát triển rất mau về giáo dục với rất nhiều trường học tối tân, đại học và các ngành giáo dục đại học khác. Ngoài ra, về vấn đề xã hội cũng phát triển rộng lớn. Nước Úc đã có kinh nghiệm giúp đỡ những người di dân mới và điều đó rất quan trọng cho các bạn khi các bạn mới tới.

Thực vậy, nước Úc là một trong những nước đã tiếp đón nhiều dân tị nạn các quốc gia khác ở trên thế giới, và ngày hôm nay các bạn sẽ gặp những người đó sống và làm việc cùng với các bạn.

1) VẤN ĐỀ ĐI CHUYỂN.

Các bạn sẽ được chở tới Lick Đại Lợi bằng máy bay phản lực 747 của hãng hàng không quốc tế Qantas và các bạn sẽ đến Brisbane vào 11 giờ sáng, ngày thứ bảy tuần này. Khi các bạn tới Brisbane sẽ có việc xét lại về sức khỏe và qua các thủ tục quan thuế mà các hành khách quốc tế đều phải chịu như vậy, dù sao cũng chỉ kéo dài một thời gian rất ngắn, và các bạn sẽ được các nhân viên của bộ di cư Lick Đại Lợi giúp đỡ và sẽ có xe buýt để đưa các bạn tới chỗ ở của các bạn.

CÁC BẠN SẼ SỐNG Ở CHỖ NÀO.

Nhà đầu tiên của các bạn sẽ là Wacol Hostel, ở vùng ngoại ô của thành phố Brisbane. Nơi này đã được xây cất vài năm trước và chỉ dành riêng cho những người đi dấn. Ở nơi này có cả nhà làm bằng gạch và nhà làm bằng gỗ và có thể nhận trên 1250 người và hiện tại có 350 người từ các nước khác đang sống ở đó.

Nơi này có 136 căn phòng gồm có 30 căn phòng từng nhà làm bằng gạch. Số còn lại ở trong nhà làm bằng gỗ. Khi các bạn mới tới Wacol các bạn sẽ ở trong nhà làm bằng gỗ.

Có phòng tắm và phòng vệ sinh chung để riêng cho một số căn phòng. Các bạn không được phép nấu ăn ở trong các phòng đó, vì đã có một nhà bếp chung ở trong một phòng ăn. Nơi này có phòng giải trí rộng lớn, trung tâm chăm sóc trẻ em, tiệm tập hóa và bưu điện, chỗ giặt quần áo, khu để hành lý và lớp học sinh ngữ tiếng Anh.

Nếu một người nào đó đóng vai trò chính về việc kiếm tiền cho gia đình của các bạn chưa bắt đầu đi làm, thì các bạn sẽ được hưởng không các đồ ăn và tiện nghi về nơi ăn ở. Sau khi đã ở chỗ này một tuần lễ, tuần lễ kế tiếp các bạn sẽ được hưởng một số tiền "túi" nhỏ, cộng thêm các bữa ăn và tiện nghi miễn phí.

Vì có vài bà vợ muốn đi làm, do đó nơi này đã có một trung tâm chăm sóc trẻ em, trên hai tuổi mà chưa đi học. Mỗi tuần các bạn sẽ phải \$2.50 Úc Kim cho đưa trẻ đầu tiên và \$1.50 cho đưa trẻ kế tiếp. Trong trường hợp bất thường thì phải đóng \$3 xu cho mỗi đưa trẻ trong một ngày.

VIỆC LÀM.

Nhân viên của văn phòng kiểm việc làm sẽ giúp các bạn tìm việc làm miễn phí. Nếu các bạn muốn học tiếng Anh, cũng có thể tổ chức miễn phí cho các bạn.

Một số người sẽ có dịp được huấn luyện lại để làm một công việc mới nếu họ muốn.

Khi các bạn làm việc ở Úc, các bạn sẽ có phép nghỉ thường niên, thường là ba tuần lễ có trả lương, cộng thêm những ngày lễ. Cũng có những điều khoản liên quan đến những ngày nghỉ bệnh, những ngày phép thường niên dài hạn, và được bồi thường cho những tai nạn và bệnh hạn xảy ra trong khi làm việc. Tuy nhiên, những điều kiện này thay đổi tùy theo các ngành kỹ năng và các tiểu bang.

THẤT NGHIỆP .

Nếu các bạn thất nghiệp trong thời gian nào đó, các bạn nên ghi tên tại văn phòng tìm việc của chính phủ liên bang vì nơi này sẽ sắp sảng tìm công việc thích hợp, nếu các bạn chuyên nghiệp về ngành đó. Trong thời gian các bạn thất nghiệp, các bạn sẽ được trả một phụ cấp là \$36 Úc Kim một tuần, nếu bạn độc thân và \$60 Úc Kim cho những người có gia đình. Mỗi một đứa trẻ trong gia đình sẽ được \$7 Úc Kim một tuần.

Nếu không tìm được một công việc thích hợp với ngành chuyên nghiệp của các bạn, thì chính phủ sẽ có cách huấn luyện các bạn làm công việc khác, và trong thời gian đó các bạn sẽ nhận được tiền phụ cấp cho bạn và gia đình.

CÔNG VIỆC CHO NHỮNG THANH NIÊN .

Văn phòng tìm việc làm của chính phủ liên bang cũng sẽ cung cấp phương tiện đặc biệt để giúp đỡ các thanh niên có việc làm, và phương tiện đó gồm có các điều chỉ dẫn về huấn nghiệp, nhờ đó sẽ giúp các thanh niên tìm được công việc thích hợp.

Để trở thành một người chuyên nghiệp thì có một hệ thống tập sự, thường kéo dài 5 năm. Trong thời gian đó người tập sự sẽ được trả một phần tiền lương của một người chuyên nghiệp về ngành nào đó, và sẽ được tăng mỗi năm.

Tiền lương và điều kiện làm việc.

Tiền lương tối thiểu và điều kiện làm việc cho phần đông dân chúng ở Úc Đại Lợi đều được ghi ở trong luật, và nhiều người có thể nhận được nhiều hơn tiền lương tối thiểu trong công việc của họ. Mặc tuần lễ chỉ làm việc trong 5 ngày và 40 giờ một tuần cho phần đông nhân công, và ngoài ra, sẽ được trả phụ trội cho những giờ làm việc ngoài giờ thường, chẳng hạn những ngày nghỉ. Các bạn sẽ được hưởng đồng đều số lương mà người Úc được hưởng nếu làm một công việc giống như người Úc khi kiếm việc làm. Nếu một công ty đóng cửa, hay giảm nhân viên, thì người cuối cùng mà bắt đầu được tuyển vào làm việc sẽ là người đó, người Úc hay là người di dân mới.

Phần đông nhân công ở bên Úc đều là hội viên của một nghiệp đoàn.

Những người trưởng thành (đàn ông) đều làm việc 40 giờ một tuần và được trả tối thiểu \$100 Úc kim một tuần.

An Ninh Xã Hội

Nước Úc có một hệ thống an ninh xã hội phát triển rất mạnh và các bạn không cần phải là người Úc đã được hưởng quyền lợi này.

Từ dụ; có phụ cấp vệ sinh đẻ mà các bà mẹ được hưởng khi đưa trẻ được sinh ra, bắt đầu từ đưa trẻ đầu tiên các bà mẹ

sẽ được hưởng là \$50 Úc Kim cho tới \$35 Úc Kim đến đưa thư. Ngoài ra, một đứa trẻ dưới 16 tuổi sẽ được hưởng tiền phụ cấp, và những thanh niên từ 16 đến 21 tuổi mà còn đi học cũng được hưởng phụ cấp, nếu còn ở với gia đình. Chẳng hạn những đứa trẻ dưới 16 tuổi sẽ được hưởng \$2 Úc Kim trong 4 tuần cho một đứa trẻ và có thể lên tới \$33 Úc Kim trong 4 tuần cho 5 đứa trẻ. Cho mỗi thanh niên đi học (từ 16 đến 21 tuổi) thì sẽ được hưởng \$6 Úc Kim trong 4 tuần lễ.

Cũng sẽ trả tiền cho người nào khi đau ốm hay tàn tật hay góa sau khi tới Úc.

Sẽ có những phụ cấp được trả cho những người về hưu, cho những người mù, cho những người vợ hay người chồng bị bỏ rơi.

Kể từ 1-7-75, nước Úc sẽ thi hành một hệ thống mới về bệnh viện và y tế, do chính phủ tài trợ, được gọi là MEDIBANK, mà các bạn sẽ được chữa trị trong những nhà thương công tối tân.

GIÁO DỤC.

THỪA NHẬN CÁC VẤN BẰNG.

Phần lớn các vấn bằng được cấp ngoài nước Úc thường không phải được thừa nhận ngay ở Úc. Điều này rất quan trọng cho những người hành nghề bác sĩ và nha sĩ và những nghề chuyên nghiệp khác, chẳng hạn, thợ ống nước hay thợ điện. Nhưng chính phủ sẽ hết sức giúp đỡ để các bạn hành nghề thích hợp với khả

năm và kinh nghiệm của các bạn.

Nước Úc có một hệ thống giáo dục tân tiến và mọi người phải bắt buộc đi học. Ở Sydney, nơi mà các bạn sống, trẻ em từ 6 đến 15 tuổi đều phải đi học.

Nhiều đứa trẻ học lớp mẫu giáo vào khoảng ba tuổi, nhưng thường thường đều phải ghi trong danh sách chờ đợi cho các lớp mẫu giáo.

Khi được 6 tuổi, các trẻ em đều đi học trường tiểu học và phần đông đều là trường hỗn hợp. Vào khoảng 6 phần 100 các trẻ em đều đi học trường chính phủ, nhưng cũng có nhiều trường tư.

6 hay 7 năm ở tiểu học, các trẻ em sẽ bắt đầu bậc Trung học trong 3 hay 4 năm.

Cho những người muốn học một nghề chuyên nghiệp rần rần, thì có một hệ thống đại học đặc biệt.

Ngoài ra sẽ có các trường học kỹ thuật để huấn luyện các trẻ em muốn được huấn luyện trong ngành kỹ nghệ.

TIỂU HỌC.

Vào khoảng 60 phần 100 các trẻ em đều đi học ở các trường do chính phủ liên bang và các chính phủ tiểu bang kiểm soát. Số còn lại đi học ở các trường tư.

Tại các trường học chính phủ, tiền học đều miễn phí nhưng mà bố mẹ phải trả tiền đồng phục, sách vở và bút viết v.v. - thí dụ, tiền về tập thể thao. Ngoài ra, cũng có thêm những tiền chi phí cho những sách miễn.

NHÀ.

Như đã giải thích cho các bạn ở nơi trên các bạn sẽ sống ở một nơi dành cho những người di dân mới. Nhưng giống như các người Úc hay các người di dân khác, chắc các bạn sẽ muốn có một căn nhà riêng cho mình. Phần đông dân chúng, vào khoảng 70 phần 100, đều có nhà hay mua nhà. Thường thường, có 2 hay 3 hay 4 phòng ngủ trong một căn nhà nhưng mà có một số đông dân chúng mua những căn phòng. Những căn phòng đó thường nhỏ hơn và ít phòng hơn.

Thường thường các bạn phải mất vài năm mới có thể mua được căn nhà riêng cho mình, nhưng, nếu một số người nào đó trong gia đình đều đi làm, thì việc đó không bao lâu.

Có một số nhà xây cất bởi chính phủ để cho thuê, nhưng đã có danh sách chờ đợi rất dài để thuê nhà. Thuê nhà riêng hay căn phòng thì giá rất cao.

Tuy nhiên, các bạn sẽ thấy rằng sẽ có những nhân viên được huấn luyện đặc biệt về vấn đề các tiện nghi tại chỗ các bạn ở sẽ giúp các bạn tìm nơi ở riêng, nếu thời gian thuận tiện.

Sở lược.

Buổi nói chuyện cùng với các câu hỏi các bạn đặt với nhân viên của bộ di trú, chúng tôi hy vọng đưa ra cho các bạn một hình ảnh tổng quát về đời sống ở bên Úc. Sau những vấn đề khó tránh được khi ở một nước mới đã được vượt qua, gia đình các bạn và các bạn sẽ có nhiều cơ hội để sinh sống tại nước Úc. Những di trú sang một quốc gia mới không bao giờ dễ dàng: những rắc rối và thắc vờn sẽ không tránh được.

Có một số người di dân thành công dễ dàng, nhưng không phải ai cũng giống như thế cả. Như vậy chỉ trừ khi các bạn đã sửa soạn đường đầu và vượt qua các khó khăn nói trên, thì các bạn mới nên xin sang Úc.

Như chúng tôi đã đề cập ở trên, Úc Đại Lợi đã có rất nhiều kinh nghiệm với người di dân, đặc biệt trong 25 năm qua. Đa số, trên 3 phần 4 người di dân đã thành công tốt đẹp, số còn lại, vì thất bại, đã rời nước Úc.

Giống như những người di dân khác, các bạn sẽ được giúp đỡ tối đa.

Nhưng, cuối cùng, dù các bạn có thành công hay không, điều đó là do ở nơi các bạn. Bây giờ là lúc để các bạn suy xét định xem rằng có tin tưởng là mình sẽ thành công như đa số những người di dân đổ sang bản Úc hay không.

Brief Points for Vietnamese Refugees coming to Australia

English translation

Australia

Australia, your new country, is a mixture, with many varied points. Australia is a Federation, with six States and two Territories under the control and administration of the central government. The central government is the representative of the people, or the majority, and each State has its own government.

With an area of approx. 7.7 million square kilometres, Australia has torrid zones with wet seasons in the north, to the south east with snow on the mountains in the winter. Furthermore Australia also has a coastline of 36 500 kilometres, and the length from north to south is 3100 kilometres, and west-east is 4200 kilometres.

The population of Australia is 13.5 million, and most live in the south-eastern coastal area, with relatively mild winter, and about one million live in the south-west (the weather there is also relatively mild). A few hundred thousand live in the tropics, to the northern part of Australia.

Australia has a large pastoral and agricultural industry, but those industries are handled mechanically, with a lot of private investment. Because of this the industry has relatively few workers.

Naturally around the towns there are fruit and vegetable gardens to supply the people in the town with fresh fruit and vegetables.

The majority of Australians live in four large towns and work in offices, banks, wholesalers, retailers, factories, building and transport. Australia, then, can be seen as a modern country, with the population centring in the large cities, and can be likened to any other industrialised nation in the world.

Australia is rapidly progressing in the field of education, with many modern schools, universities and colleges. Furthermore, in the area of social welfare, Australia helps the people greatly, with experience in helping new immigrants, and this is an important factor for you as you arrive.

Truly Australia is one of the nations that has welcomed many people from other countries of the world, and today you can see them living and working with you.

Concerning the move

You will be going to Australia in a Qantas 747 jet aircraft, and you will arrive at Brisbane at 11 a.m. this coming Saturday. When you arrive at Brisbane, there will be health checks and Customs procedures that all international travellers have to have, but these will only take a very short time.

There will be employees of the Australian Department of Immigration to assist, and buses will take you to your place of residence.

Where will you live

Your first home will be Wacol Hostel, in a suburb of Brisbane. This place was built a few years ago, and is specially for migrants. There are brick and wooden houses, and it can take 1250 people. At present there are 350 people from other countries living there.

There are 736 flats, with 90 in brick. The remainder are wood. When you arrive at Wacol you will be in the wooden flats.

There are communal washing and toilet facilities for a number of buildings. Cooking in the rooms is not permitted, because there is a communal kitchen in the dining room. There is a large recreation room, child minding centre, shop, post office, laundry, store and English classes.

There is no need to be concerned about finance for your family, because you have yet to start work, for you will receive free board and lodging. After you have been here one week, you will receive a small amount of 'pocket money', in addition to free board and lodging.

Because some wives want to work, there is a child minding centre for children over two who do not as yet go to school. Each week you pay \$2.50 for the first child, and \$1.50 for each additional child. In special circumstances one can pay 80 cents per child per day.

Employment

Employees of the Employment Service will help you find work, free of charge. If you wish to study English, this can be arranged also free of charge for you.

A number of people will have the opportunity of re-training in a new field of work if they want to.

When you work in Australia, you will have annual leave, usually three weeks with pay, plus public holidays. There are laws/regulations about sick leave, long service leave, workers' compensation for accidents or illness sustained at work. Naturally these vary State to State.

Unemployment

If you are unemployed for any period of time, you need to put your name down at the Commonwealth Employment Bureau, and they will make every effort to find suitable work, if you are skilled in a particular field. During the time you are out of work, you will receive an allowance of \$36 each week for single people and \$60 for families. Each child in the family will receive \$7 per week.

If suitable work in your field cannot be found, the government has a training scheme for learning a new trade, and during the time you are training, you will receive an allowance for you and your family.

Concerning young people (youth)

The Commonwealth Employment Bureau will provide a special way for helping the young people find work, and that means will include vocational guidance, to assist the young people find suitable work.

To become a proficient tradesman, there is an apprenticeship scheme, usually of five years' duration. During that time the apprentice receives a proportion of a tradesman's wage, and that proportion increases each year.

Wages and conditions of work

The minimum wage and conditions of work for most of the Australian people is determined by law, and many people can receive above award wages. One works a five-day, 40-hour week, in most cases, and overtime is paid, for example, for working on a day off. You will receive the same wage as Australians doing the same task. If an enterprise shuts down, or puts off people, the last employed worker will be selected, whether Australian or immigrant.

Most Australians are members of a trade union.

Adults (male) work a 40-hour week, and receive a minimum wage of \$100 per week.

Social Security

Australia is very progressive in its social security, and one does not have to be an Australian to receive the privileges; e.g. there is a maternity allowance for parents when a child is born, \$30 for the first child, and \$35 for the rest. Also, every child under 16 receives an allowance, and young people from 16 to 21 still at school receive an allowance, if they are still at home. Children under 16 will receive \$2 every four weeks, for one child, up to \$35 per four weeks for five children.

A young person going to school (from 16 to 21) will receive \$6 for four weeks.

There is also an allowance for invalids, or disabled or one who is widowed after arrival in Australia. There are other pensions paid to the retired, blind, or deserted husband or wife.

From 1/7/75 Australia has a new hospital medical scheme, sponsored by the Government, called 'Medibank', and you will be treated in modern public hospitals.

Education—Recognition of diplomas

Most diplomas issued outside Australia are not usually recognised straight away here. This is very important for those who are doctors or dentists or other professional people, and for those people who have been trained in a vocation, e.g. plumbers or electricians. But the government will do all it can to help so you can follow a profession and/or vocation suitable to your capabilities and experience.

Australia has a progressive education system, and everyone must go to school. In Sydney, where you will live, children from six to fifteen must go to school.

Many children go to kindergarten from around three years old, but usually you have to put one's name on a waiting list.

When a child is six, he or she goes to primary school, and most are mixed schools. About 80 per cent of children go to government schools, but there are many private ones. After six or seven years at primary school, the children will start at high school, for three or four years.

For those who want to study a profession, there is a special university system.

Furthermore there are technical colleges to train those children who want to learn a trade.

School fees

About 80 per cent of children go to Commonwealth or State controlled schools, and the remainder go to private schools.

At the government schools, there are no school fees, but parents must pay for uniforms, books, etc., e.g. sports fees and also library fees.

Housing

As explained, those of you at the place mentioned above will live at a place specially reserved for migrants. But like other Australians, or immigrants, probably you'll want to have a home of your own. Most Australians, about 70 per cent, have bought, or are buying, a home. Usually they have 2, 3 or 4 bedrooms, but a number of people buy units. They are usually smaller with less rooms.

Usually you need to wait a few years before you can buy a house of your own, but if a number of people in a family work, it will not be a long time.

There are a number of houses built by the government for rent, but there is a long waiting list. To rent a private house or flat is very dear.

Naturally you will see that there are employees who have had special training in the facilities at the place where you'll be, to help you find a place of your own, at your convenience.

Summary

With the conversation and your questions with the employees of the Immigration Department, we hope this has given you a general picture of life in Australia. After the problems have been solved of being in a new country, you and your families will have many opportunities to live happily in Australia, but migrating to a new country is not easy. Complications and difficulties cannot be avoided.

A number of migrants get along very well, but not all are the same. It is only from when you are prepared to face and overcome the abovementioned difficulties that you can ask to come to Australia.

As we have mentioned above, Australia has had a lot of experience with migrants, especially in the past 25 years. The majority, about three in four migrants, get along well; the remainder, because they failed, leave Australia.

As with other migrants, you will receive maximum help.

But, finally, whether you succeed or not is up to you. Now is the time to decide and see if you believe you will succeed like other migrants to Australia.

Appendix 2

**The 'Cultural Communicator' Scheme—Lysaght Brothers & Co. Pty Ltd,
Chiswick, New South Wales**

Refer to p. 69 para 5.78

Details of the 'Cultural Communicator' Scheme

(Extract from a paper 'Resettlement of Refugees' given by the Department of Social Security at the AUSTCARE 'Seminar on refugee resettlement in Australia' held in Sydney 22-23 July 1976)

Two innovative pilot programs have been initiated by our Social Workers. The first involved the concept of group employment and group housing and the training of a cultural communicator for one selected national group. The concept was favourably accepted by Lysaght Brothers which employed a group of 12 Lao refugees in mid-May. The company stands to gain in quality of productivity and company loyalty, if there exists high morale and group solidarity. In return, the company provides liberal work hours (three hours daily in the first month of employment) for the learning of English. Through contact with the Commonwealth Department of Education, a migrant English teacher was specially arranged for the group. The company assisted by an officer from Employment and Industrial Relations submitted a work schedule for funding under the National Employment Assistance Training Scheme for the training of a cultural communicator on the comprehensive topic of Australian Welfare Systems. It is important to stress that the cultural communicator was chosen by the Lao group, thereby ensuring acceptance by the group. As part of a comprehensive project, the group intends to move and live within close proximity of each other, some sharing the rented houses. Their locality of residence should preferably be close to the company to minimise transport cost. The cultural communicator would play a vital role of being an interpreter/communicator in the company's induction program and in ongoing working conditions. He would also be a general welfare resource person to the group living in the nearby locality. Our Social Worker undertook the responsibility for the running of the training program (see Attachment I). The project has progressed reasonably well.

- 21 June
10.30 a.m. *Investment/ Banking*
Commonwealth Bank Migrant Advisor
Home Savings Grant
John Robinson
Cnr George and King Streets, Sydney
- 9 June *Legal Aid/ Loan Society*
Public Solicitor
Role of J.P./ Police
- 25 June *Income Tax*
Warren Sexelbuy
Lysaght Bros. Tel. 83 9351
- 5 July *Insurance Policy*
Household
Car—registration—licence
Personal
G.I.O. Tel. 230 0361
Mr Ruffell, ext. 278
- 19-24 July *Immigration Citizenship*
Sponsorship: Travel
Mr Tony Peters
Training Section
Department of Immigration
- 8 July *Commonwealth Employment Service*
Morris Hotson
Australian Government Centre. Tel. 239 3084
- 7 July *Migrant Services Section*
Frayda Davis
Australian Government Centre. Tel. 239 3792

W.I. LYSAGHT BROTHERS & CO. PTY. LTD.

A MEMBER OF THE AUSTRALIAN WIRE INDUSTRIES GROUP

BLACKWALL POINT ROAD, CHISWICK, N.S.W. 2046

TELEPHONE: 80 9351 TELEX: 20767 TELEGRAMS: 'WIREINDUSTRIES' FIVE DOCK

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 55, FIVE DOCK, N.S.W. 2046

PH:JH

14th May, 1976

The Manager,
District Employment Office,
363 Parramatta Road,
LEICHHARDT, N.S.W. 2040.

Dear Sir,

G.19/11 - Training - Ethnic Representative

On 17/5/76, this Company will employ 11 Laotian refugees initially as surplus employees - in anticipation of future Company needs. Once the Laotians have been absorbed, we expect that other Indo-Chinese will be offered positions when vacancies arise.

We are aware of the extended pattern of living of the Indo-Chinese refugees and we are interested in promoting group cohesion and identity, believing that as a result, stability in employment will result.

As there is no existing supportive system for these refugees and as it is inevitable that problems will arise which will require back-up support, we intend to expose a suitable Laotian (selected by the Laotian Group) to the services and facilities available in our community. Once basic skills and knowledge are imparted to this link-person he will return to the factory as an operative, but will maintain contact with his countrymen, in company time, assisting them to overcome their day today problems by acting as a problem-solver or as a referral-person in circumstances that require professional assistance. In addition, he will be seen as the link between the Company and Laotians which will ensure that effective communication takes place.

Following initial induction and familiarisation with his working environment Mr. S. ManavanH will be required to act as an interpreter between the Laotian trainees and their trainers. He will also be required to translate information on Company policy and procedures etc. which will be an on-going requirement.

The Manager,
District Employment Office,
LEICHHARDT.

- 2 -

14th May, 1976.

To be effective as a "Cultural Communicator" knowledge regarding community facilities, government and welfare services, etc. will have to be acquired. We therefore propose to adopt the following broad job instruction schedule.

Job Instruction Schedule

This programme will be co-ordinated by the Company with the assistance of the Department of Social Security, Migrant Services Section. Some aspects of this Schedule, such as the Legal area, will be the responsibility of the Company, where necessary, outside resources will be consulted in the Social and Economic areas.

Coverage : 1 Social
 2 Economic
 3 Legal areas

First Month

1. Social :

- a) Department Social Security : Entitlements - Sickness Benefits, Pensions, Child Endowment, etc. Resources - Migrant Welfare Service.
- b) Child Care Facilities.
- c) Marital Problems : Marriage Guidance Bureau.
- d) Health Funds : Medibank, Private Health Schemes, Ambulance Fund.
- e) Education : Pre-school, Technical Education, Trade Testing, Home Tutor Scheme, Youth Ethnic and Community Affairs (Assistance with uniforms).
- f) Motor Vehicle registration, licences etc.

Second Month

2. Economic :

- a) Housing : Leasing, bonds, responsibilities; ownership, finance, fees (hidden costs, stamp duty, legal fees, rates and taxes etc.), Housing Commission, Home Savings Grants.

The Manager,
District Employment Office,
LEICHHARDT.

- 3 -

14th May, 1976.

- b) Investment : Cheque Accounts, Savings, Building Societies,
Credit Unions, Insurance, Personal Loans.
- c) Budgeting : Short and Long Term - Co-operative buying.
- d) Finance : Hire purchase systems etc.
- e) Consumer groups : Choice, Safety Standards Association.

Third Month

3. Legal : Legal Aid
 Consumer Affairs Bureau
 Family Law Court
 The Role of Justice of the Peace
 Taxation
 Hire Purchase
 Guarantees

Entitlements : Such as the right to an interpreter when dealing with
Police or Courts.

Government : Federal, State, Local.

Yours faithfully,

B. Salmon
Manager



Appendix 3

Petition of the Vietnamese Refugees at Wacol Hostel, Brisbane

Addressed to:

**Federal Minister for Immigration
Minister for Social Welfare
Minister for Education
Minister for Health
Minister for Labor**

Refer to p. 75 para 5.98

Đã đọc và
mấy ngày 5-10-11
để nhớ & từ chối
và gửi đi

Chức trách nguyên của người tỵ nạn Việt Nam
tại Wacol Hostel - Brisbane.

Kính gửi: Ông. BS. Trương Di Trú hiện đang, Canberra,
BS. Trương An Xá Hội
BS. Trương An Thảo Đức
BS. Trương BS. Y Tế
BS. Trương BS. Di Trú
BS. Trương BS. Lạc Động.

Kính thưa Quý Vị,

Chúng tôi đang ký tên dưới đây là những người tỵ nạn Việt Nam hiện đang cư tại Wacol Hostel. Chúng tôi biết chúng tôi xin chân thành cảm tạ quý vị đã giúp đỡ chúng tôi xây dựng lại cuộc sống mới tại Queensland.

Tuy nhiên, là những người tỵ nạn chúng tôi đã tàn khố rất nhiều về tinh thần, cũng như đã mất hết tài sản, gia đình, thân thuộc. Do vậy, tại đây chúng tôi còn gặp thêm rất nhiều khó khăn trong việc tái tạo một cuộc sống mới và thỉnh nghi về một xã hội hoàn toàn khác lạ. Chúng tôi hy vọng chính quý vị chính phủ sẽ giúp đỡ chúng tôi nhiều hơn với lòng cảm đặc biệt của những người tỵ nạn.

Như vậy, trong tình thân hiệp tác và xây dựng, chúng tôi xin gửi đến quý vị các thỉnh nguyện sau đây:

A. Vấn đề học tiếng Việt: vấn đề này là mối lo hàng đầu của chúng tôi. Đa số chúng tôi đều chưa thông thạo tiếng Việt.

Với kịp nhận của những người đã đi làm việc, chúng tôi nhận thấy:

- những người đã làm kỹ thuật thêm tiếng Việt tại sở làm.
 - trước tiên, chúng cần đi học theo các lớp ban đêm.
- và nhất là - phải ^{đưa} tiếng Việt mới có thể làm việc được, kỹ thuật phần lớn giới chức chưa có năng suất cao.

Và nhất là chúng tôi phải đi làm việc tiếng Việt càng sớm càng tốt để tiếp xúc với tất cả mọi người, trong mọi hoàn cảnh và để có thể sẵn bị lực mùa xuân trong xã hội Việt Nam.

Do đó, chúng tôi xin đề nghị:

Các lớp tiếng Việt kéo dài trong thời gian tối thiểu là một năm. Và trong thời hạn trên, người ty nạn chúng tôi không bị cưỡng ép đi làm.

B. Vấn đề lao động:

Khi còn ở nhà lai và Tân gia Ba, qua ông Artibons và qua tài liệu phân phát, chúng tôi được Đại Diện Chính phủ về đại lý cho biết những điểm sau đây:

1. " Một số người sẽ có dự định luôn luôn làm để làm một công việc mới nếu họ muốn." (tq3)
2. " Chính phủ sẽ biết mức giúp đỡ để các bạn tập nghề theo hợp với khả năng và kinh nghiệm của các bạn." (tq 7-8)
3. " Cho rằng người muốn học 1 nghề chuyên nghiệp vẫn vẫn, thì có một hệ thống đại học đặc biệt." (tq 8)

Do đó, chúng tôi xin đề nghị với quý vị:

1^o Đối với người có nghề chuyên môn:

- Tuồng hợp theo theo được văn bằng: được tiếp tục học nghề cũ, và nếu cần, được theo học một khóa bổ túc trước khi làm nghề.
- Tuồng hợp không may theo được văn bằng: được tái huấn luyện để tái chiếm lại khả năng chuyên môn và được theo học một khóa bổ túc đặc biệt, nếu cần.

2^o Đối với người muốn có nghề chuyên môn:

- Trước * tái huấn luyện để luôn nghề,
- Sau đó được để đăng thân nhận vào học tại các trường chuyên nghiệp hay tại các cơ xưởng, xí nghiệp công tử.

3° Ngoài ra, có 1 số gia đình nông dân muốn được cấp một mảnh đất như để tự mình trồng theo khả năng.

e. Vấn đề Xã Hội:

Từ ngày đến đây, chúng tôi chưa hề được chính thức hướng dẫn các vấn đề tìm kiếm, thay đổi hay chấm dứt việc làm, cũng như các vấn đề thuế má, phụ cấp con cái, phụ cấp đặc biệt, hay những vấn đề loại hình khác.

Do đó đã có một số người thay đổi hoặc chấm dứt việc làm mà bị coi vi luật và mất tư cách làm tàu.

Theo tài liệu nhận được, chúng tôi thấy rằng trong thời gian đầu "các bữa ăn và tiền nghỉ miễn phí" (trung h). Thế mà hiện nay mọi người đi làm đều bị trừ vào số lương hàng tháng với một giá trị rất cao. Do đó, có nhiều gia đình gặp khó khăn đi làm lại kiếm được ít trên biển khi họ chưa có việc làm.

Đãi các lý do trên, chúng tôi xin thỉnh nguyện:

- 1° Tổ chức một buổi họp rộng rãi để hướng dẫn quyền lợi và bổn phận của người tự nguyện về các vấn đề trước khi, trong khi, sau ~~th~~ khi đi làm, về thuế má, phụ cấp, về điều lệ v.v...

- 2° Các bữa ăn và tiền nghỉ miễn phí" (tài liệu, trang 4).
- 3° Miễn thuế lương bổng cho những người tỵ nạn, nếu
đi làm, trong vòng 1 năm.
- 4° Văn phòng Xã Hội tại Wacol Hostel hoạt động trong
một năm. (Vì chúng tôi nghe nói sắp đóng cửa).

c. Wacol Hostel

Wacol Hostel là cơ quan chúng tôi tiếp xúc trực tiếp và thường xuyên trong thời gian hiện tại. Bà V. rất nhiệt tình về việc đóng thuế đã xảy ra trong gần hai tháng sống tại Wacol Hostel, chúng tôi thấy cần phải nêu ra các thỉnh nguyện sau đây:

- 1° Cần có một phòng dịch vụ tiếng Việt làm việc tại văn phòng hàng tháng Wacol Hostel. (Có thể đặt viên tại phòng Tâm Vấn, nhưng quả bán kê gây chúng tôi tại Văn Phòng Hàng Tháng).
- 2° Cần có một phòng ý tế hoạt động thường xuyên.
- 3° Cần thay đổi cách nấu ăn và thức ăn hàng ngày để thiết lập với người tỵ nạn Việt Nam, ít nhất trong thời gian đầu.
- 4° Nói rộng giờ xe đưa đón từ Wacol Hostel đến Wacol Station cho những người đi làm sớm và về trễ. (Giờ: 5:30 - 8:00; Chiều 8:00 - 6:30).
- 5° Cần loại bỏ tình trạng kỳ thị của một vài nhân viên Văn Phòng Hàng Tháng để đối xử đồng đều với mọi người.

* * *

Kính thưa Quý Vị,

Chúng tôi kính xin Quý Vị cứu xét rộng rãi các thỉnh nguyện trên đây góp để đặc biệt che chúng tôi là những người tỵ nạn, trong một qui chế rộng rãi hơn. Chúng tôi mong sẽ được sự nâng đỡ tận tình của Quý Vị nhằm vượt qua các khó khăn ban đầu để có thể sớm hòa hợp với nhịp sống của các cộng dân khác.

Chúng tôi mong sớm được ý kiến của Quý Vị.

Xin Quý Vị nhận nơi đây lòng biết ơn chân thành của chúng tôi.

Trân trọng kính chào Quý Vị.

Đại diện

Đặng Kỳ Tân :

NGUYỄN ĐỨC SÁCH

Petition of the Vietnamese Refugees at Wacol Hostel, Brisbane

English Translation

To: Federal Minister for Immigration
Minister for Social Welfare
Minister for Education
Minister for Health
Minister for Labour

Dear Sirs,

We the undersigned Vietnamese refugees temporarily residing at Wacol Hostel would first of all like to convey our sincere thanks to all of you for helping us to establish a new life in Queensland.

As refugees we have suffered very much in morale. We have lost all of our possessions, family and relatives. Moreover, we face many difficulties in establishing a new life within a totally different society. Therefore, owing to our special circumstances as refugees, we hope your Government will grant us further assistance.

In a spirit of constructive co-operation, we would like to raise the following:

A. Learning the Australian language

This is our initial concern. The majority of us are not fluent in the Australian language. Based on the experience of those who are working we consider that:

- those of us who are working have no time to study the Australian language at the place of employment;
- those who are working have no time to pursue their studies at night because they are too tired;
- those who want employment must be able to speak Australian relatively well to avoid problems with the employer, and to obtain good work results;
- in particular, we must secure a basic grounding in the language in a very short time to enable us to have contact with Australians in all levels of society, and to be self-reliant in the social life of Australia within the shortest possible time.

With the above in mind we would like to suggest that all Australian language courses run for a minimum of one year period, and that during this time no one should be forced to go to work.

B. Problem of Labour

When we were residing in Malaysia and Singapore we were advised of the following points through the documents distributed by the Australian representative Mr Gibbons:

- a number of us would have the opportunity of being retrained for a new field of employment (page 3);
- the Government would do its utmost to find work commensurate with one's skills and experience (pages 7 and 8);
- there would be a special system of tertiary education available for the study of professional subjects (page 8).

We would like to offer the following recommendations:

For People Having Professional Qualifications

- For those who brought evidence of their professional qualifications with them, it is recommended that they be allowed to work within the field of their chosen profession, and if necessary, attend training courses before commencing work;
- For those who were unable to bring evidence of their professional qualifications, it is recommended that they be tested on their qualifications and, if necessary, be allowed to take supplementary studies.

People wanting to gain professional skills

- It is recommended that tests for vocational training be taken to enable further professional training, or employment in either the public or private sector;
- A number of families who were farmers would like to be granted a small piece of land so they can once again become productive and self-sufficient.

C. Problems of Social Welfare

From the time of our arrival, up to now, we have received no official guidance on questions such as finding, changing or terminating employment; taxation; child allowance; or other special allowances. As a consequence, a number of people have terminated their employment and become ineligible for certain allowances. They were considered as having broken the law.

According to the documents we have received, during the initial period 'all meals and accommodation were free of charge' (page 4). At the present time, however, all those who are employed have to pay a high weekly tariff. As a consequence there are many families with dependants who are earning less than when they were unemployed. Owing to the above we request that:

1. A general meeting be convened to notify the Vietnamese refugees of the duties and benefits which they are entitled before, at the time of, and after their employment; taxation; allowances and laws, etc., etc.;
2. that meals and accommodation be free (page 4);

3. exemption of wage-tax for refugees, if they work, for one year;
4. the Social Welfare Office at the Wacol Hostel operate for one more year (we have heard it will cease to function soon).

D. Wacol Hostel

Wacol Hostel is the place where we permanently and directly reside at the present time. Many unfortunate occurrences have arisen in the past two months, and we believe the following requests must be raised:

1. A Vietnamese interpreter translator is required at the administration office at Wacol (there is a translator at the administrative office but he has been unable to help us because he is too busy);
2. a permanent Health Care Centre is needed;
3. a daily change in menu, and cooking suitable to Vietnamese at least in the initial period;
4. extension of the transport schedule from Wacol Hostel to Wacol station for those who go to work early and come home late (morning from 5.30 a.m. to 8.00 a.m., afternoon from 3.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.);
5. the elimination of the discriminatory spirit of some staff members of the administrative office, so that everybody can be treated equally.

Dear Sirs,

We request your consideration of these recommendations so as to enable a broader administrative system in which to operate to meet the special and peculiar needs of refugees. We ask for whole-hearted support to be given to ways of overcoming our initial difficulties so that we might blend in with the rhythm of life in Australia.

We hope we will receive your opinions in the near future.

Please Sirs, accept our sincere gratitude.

Yours faithfully,

NGUYEN DUC SACH
Representative

Unanimously Signed

Copy of the Petition received by the Department of Labor and Immigration

COPY

U
I, STUART JAMES BRADLEY, GRADUATE OF No 7 VIETNAMESE COURSE, RAAF SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, POINT COOK, SOLEMNLY DECLARE THAT THE FOLLOWING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE TRANSLATION OF THE POINTERS RAISED BY VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ON SUNDAY, 5th OCTOBER, 1975. WHERE THIS TRANSLATION DIFFERS FROM THE TEXT, IT FOLLOWS THE TAPE RECORDED REPORT.

SIGNED.....

STUART J. BRADLEY 8th OCTOBER, 1975

Naturally, as refugees, we have suffered greatly, morale wise as well as having lost all possessions, family and relatives. Even so, we are facing difficulties again here, in seeking to establish a new life, and settle in to a completely different society.

We hope the government will help us more because of the special circumstance of our being refugees. Thus in a spirit of constructive cooperation, we submit the following:

A. STUDY OF ENGLISH

This is the first concern of ours. The majority of us are not yet fluent in English. With the experience of those who have gone to work we note:

- 1/ They cannot study more at work
- 2/ At night they are too fatigued to take the evening classes.
- 3/ Only with a good grasp of English is it easy to work with high efficiency, and not cause trouble for those in charge.

4/ We need to be fluent in English as soon as possible, to be able to communicate under all circumstances, with all people, so that we can stand on our own two feet in the Australian society.

THEREFORE We suggest the following:-

- a/ English classes extended for one year, and during this period no one be forced to work.

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X. B. LABOUR

When in Malaysia and Singapore, through Mr
(Possibly Gibbons, or Florent, the latter being a Vietnamese interpreter who was in Malaysia and Singapore with the refugees, and handed out the document in question--- TRANS.NOTE) and through a document distributed, we were told by representatives of the Australian government that:

- 1/ A number of people would have the opportunity of retraining in a new trade if they so desire.
 - 2/ The government will do all it can so that we would obtain work suitable to our capabilities and experience.
 - 3/ For those who wish to study a trade, there is a special University system(Possibly Technical Colleges).
- WE SUGGEST

- 1/ For those with a trade:
 - a. If they have their certificates, that they continue in their trade, and, if needed, study for a term to make them efficient prior to taking up their profession.
 - b. If they do not have their certificates, that they sit for an examination to assess their capabilities as a tradesman, and take a special supplementary course if needed.
- 2/ For those who want to have a trade:

Vocational guidance to be given, afterwhich it would be easier for them to go to Tech School, or in the workshop, business, private or public.
- 3/ Furthermore there are a number of ^{small} farmers who would appreciate a grant of a tract of land off wich to live, according to their skill.

C. SOCIETY.

Since the time we arrived, we have not been formally shown how to solve some problems, like finding, changing or terminating employment, renting a house, child endowment, special allowances and other miscellaneous problems.

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Because of this, a number of people have changed or terminated employment, and, it appears, quite unlawfully, and lost their original allowance. According to the document we received, we see that in the initial period, "You'll have free board and lodging" (p.4). However now everyone who goes to work has a rather large amount subtracted from his weekly pay,. A lot of large families, then, receive less than when they did not work.

BECAUSE of this, we suggest:

1. Call a meeting of all to explain/direct us on our rights and responsibilities as refugees in the following circumstances: before, during, and after working; re ~~making~~ renting homes, allowances, rules and regulations etc etc.
2. Free board and lodging, according to Page 4 of the document, at least for a period of one year.
3. Free rent for one who has found work, in that initial year.
4. The Social Security Office at Wacol Hostel to continue activities for one year.

44 D. WACOL HOSTEL

Wacol Hostel is an organisation with which we have had continuous direct contact at present. In approximately two months ~~x~~ living at Wacol, many regretful events have occurred, and we feel we should make the following suggestions:

1. There is a need for an Australian interpreter who speaks ^Vietnamese to work at the Administration Office of Wacol Hostel.
2. There is a need for an active Medical Centre , at all times, at Wacol Hostel.
3. There is a need to change the way of cooking ~~xxx~~ and daily menu , more suited to Vietnamese refugees, at least in the initial period.
4. Extend the hours of operation of the transport ^{FOR} from Wacol Hostel to Wacol Station ~~so-that~~ those going to ~~wor~~

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work early and returning late. (e.g. Am: 5.30 - 8.00)
pm 3.00-6.30)

5. There is a need to remove the discriminatory attitude of a few employees at the Administration Office of Wacol, so they act equally with all people.

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 Social 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 Vietnamese 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, it 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 Vũ)

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 without money, clothes or personal belongings. Except for a few families who succeeded 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 selected 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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Appendix 5

List of Persons and Organisations who Submitted Evidence to the Committee

Persons and Organisations who Submitted Evidence to the Committee

Australian Development Assistance Agency
Bacon, Mr E.; President, Society of St Vincent De Paul, National Council of Australia; Sydney, New South Wales
Baker, Mrs M.; Secretary, The Indo-China Refugee Association—South Australia; Beulah Park, South Australia
Ballarat Vietnam Concern Committee; Ballarat East, Victoria
Bignold, Mrs C. H.; Jancourt East, Victoria
Boothroyd, Mr A. S.; Bayview, New South Wales
Brook, Mr E.; Glenroy, Victoria
Brown, Mr G. C.; Parramatta, New South Wales
Bruce, Mr and Mrs; Findon, South Australia
Burley, Mr S. P.; Heidelberg, Victoria
Byrne, Mr Wm C.; National Secretary, National Commission for Justice and Peace; Brickfield Hill, New South Wales
Canny, Miss M.; Hawthorn, Victoria
Carr, Mrs K. M.; Manangatang Catholic Women's League; Manangatang, Victoria
Chhuy, Mr L. H.; Paddington, New South Wales
Cleary, Mr K. M.; Hawthorn, Victoria
Coffield, Mr H. E.; Newborough, Victoria
Coley, Mr D. G. L.; Department of Defence, Canberra
Collins, Mr G. A.; Lilli Pilli, New South Wales
Collins, Mr W. M.; Mentone, Victoria
Commonwealth Hostels Limited
Cox, Mr D. R.; Director, International Social Service; Richmond, Victoria
Crawford, Rev. D.; St Mark's Church of England, Malabar, New South Wales
Cushing, Mr F. H.; State President, Society of St Vincent de Paul; Fortitude Valley, Queensland
Dain, Bishop A. J.; (Archbishop's Commissary) Church of England; Sydney, New South Wales
Darby, Mr M. J. A.; representative of the Australian Society of Inter-Country Aid (Children); Sydney, New South Wales
Davies, Rev. J.; Jannali, New South Wales
Davis, Mr K. C.; Secretary, Committee of National Concern for Indo-Chinese Refugees; Sydney, New South Wales
Delaney, Mr M. F.; Private Secretary to the Prime Minister; Canberra
Dempsey, Mr S. J.; Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs; Canberra
Department of Defence
Department of Education

Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
 Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development
 Department of Foreign Affairs
 Department of Health
 Department of Housing and Construction
 Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
 Department of Labor and Immigration
 Department of Social Security
 Dien, Mr N.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Donnelly, Mr A. S.; Tennyson, Queensland
 Dung, Le; Wollongong, New South Wales
 Dung, Mr N.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Dunn, Miss M.; Plenty, Victoria
 Dunn, Mr P.; Richmond, Victoria
 Duyet, Mr L. V.; Eastwood, New South Wales
 Edwards, Mr M. P.; Moe, Victoria
 Fairbairn, Mr G.; Forrest, Australian Capital Territory
 Fordham, Mr R. A.; Indo-China Refugees Association/Australian Society
 for Inter-Country Aid (Children); St Marys, South Australia
 Freeman, Cardinal J.; Archbishop of Sydney; Sydney, New South Wales
 Galvin, Father P., O.P.; Prior Provincial of the Dominican Order in
 Australia and New Zealand; Camberwell, Victoria
 Garforth, Mr F.; Immigration Officer, Anglican Immigration Office; Sur-
 rey Hills, New South Wales
 Gibbons, Mr W. J.; Secretary to the Minister for Labor and Immigration;
 Canberra
 Gleeson, Mr B. P.; Secretary, Simpson South Purrumbete Parish Council;
 Via Cobden, Victoria
 Goldsmith, Professor H. J.; Beecroft, New South Wales
 Gordon, Mr R. G.; Department of Foreign Affairs; Canberra
 Gotfield, Mr H.; Newborough, Victoria
 Grouse, Mrs M.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Grouse, Associate Professor P. J.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Ha, Mr V. D.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Hackett, Mr D.; Morwell, Victoria
 Heaps, Father J. E.; Director, Catholic Immigration Office; Sydney, New
 South Wales
 Henry, Mr R. T.; Director, Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia;
 Frenchs Forest, New South Wales
 Hicks, Mrs L. K.; Chatswood, New South Wales
 Hogan, Mrs X.; Sale, Victoria
 Honden, Miss J.; Turramurra, New South Wales
 Hramas, Mr A.; Hunters Hill, New South Wales
 Hutchinson, Mr W.; President, Canberra Branch of the Committee of
 National Concern for Refugees from Indo-China; Mawson, Australian
 Capital Territory
 Jackson, Mrs R.; Armidale, New South Wales
 James, Dr R.; Kensington, New South Wales

Johnson, Mr L. W.; Director, Australian Development Assistance Agency; Canberra
 Johnstone, Mr B.; Redemptorist Fathers; Kew, Victoria
 Jones, Dr R. K.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Junor, Mr C. W.; Secretary, The New South Wales and Victorian Associations for Immigration Reform; Petersham, New South Wales
 Kempers, H.; Northbridge, New South Wales
 Kennard, Mrs B.; Commonwealth Hostels Limited, Leightonfield North, New South Wales
 Khamseng, Mr; Randwick, New South Wales
 Klaffer, Group Captain L. R.; Department of Defence; Canberra
 Kohout, Mr P. A.; Gordon, New South Wales
 Lam, Dr B.; South Hobart, Tasmania
 Lam, H. Q.; Wollongong, New South Wales
 Langridge, Mr E.; Lugarno, New South Wales
 Lashbrook, Ms J.; Vicarage; Wee Waa, New South Wales
 Launder, Mr J. P.; Oakleigh, Victoria
 Lorenz, Mr P. P.; President, Batman Federal Electorate Council of Democratic Labor Party; Ivanhoe, Victoria
 Mai, Mr V. T.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Manh, Mrs E. A.; Hawthorn, Victoria
 Markey, Father R. D.; St Andrew's Presbytery; Simpson, Victoria
 Martin, Dr J. I.; Senior Research Fellow in Sociology, Australian National University; Canberra
 Mavor, Rev. J. E.; Secretary, Australian Council of Churches; Sydney, New South Wales
 McDonough, Mr E. G.; Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs; Canberra
 McGlade, Mr R.; Essendon, Victoria
 McKissock, Mr W. A. J.; Fingal Head, New South Wales
 McSweeney, Mr T. F.; Princetown, Victoria
 Michael, Air Commodore G. G., O.B.E, A.F.C.; Department of Defence; Canberra
 Monaghan, Mr F.; Merbein, Victoria
 Moore, Mr A. D.; Yarram, Victoria
 Morrissey, Mrs J.; West Wollongong, New South Wales
 Mulrooney, Brother C. M.; Christian Brothers; Manly, New South Wales
 Murphy, Rev. J. J.; Director, Catholic Immigration Office; Melbourne, Victoria
 Murrie, Mrs S. J. B.; Chairman for Action for World Development; Wollongong, New South Wales
 New South Wales and Victorian Association for Immigration Reform; Petersham, New South Wales
 Ngo, Mr H. P.; Kensington, New South Wales
 Nguyen, Mr J. V. C.; Indooroopilly, Queensland
 Nguyen, Q. T.; Wollongong, New South Wales
 Noller, Dr C. G.; Life Line, Brisbane, Queensland
 Nyuyen, B. H.; Wollongong, New South Wales

Nyuyen, N. B.; Wollongong, New South Wales
 Nyuyen, V. H.; Wollongong, New South Wales
 O'Brien, Mr P. J.; Traralgon, Victoria
 O'Dwyer, Mr B.; Richmond, Victoria
 O'Dwyer, Miss G.; Yarrawonga, Victoria
 Parish, Rev. G. S.; Executive Secretary, Austcare; Sydney, New South
 Wales
 Parry, Mr and Mrs A.; Paddington, New South Wales
 Phan, Mr D. B.; President of the Vietnamese Overseas Students Associ-
 ation in Sydney; Kensington, New South Wales
 Phung, B. T.; Wollongong, New South Wales
 Pickett, Ms C.; Yarrawonga, Victoria
 Price, Dr C.; Chairman, Australian Council of Churches Resettlement
 Committee; Deakin, Australian Capital Territory
 Price, Mr G. J.; Department of Foreign Affairs; Canberra
 Purcell, Rev. T. J.; Secretary, the Archbishop's Senate; St Benedict's
 Church, Sydney, New South Wales
 Pye, Mr T. W. W.; Ainslie, Australian Capital Territory
 Rativand, Mr T. D.; Bexley North, New South Wales
 Redonbach, Mrs J.; Sale, Victoria
 Rivett, Dr K.; Chairman, New South Wales Association for Immigration
 Reform; Kensington, New South Wales
 Roberts, Mr M. G.; Dulwich Hill, New South Wales
 Rogers, Mr L. J.; Kowloon, Hong Kong
 Russell, Mr A. M.; Bairnsdale, Victoria
 Saimpholphakely, Mr S.; Randwick, New South Wales
 Sarmen, S.; Frankston, Victoria
 Saunders, Mr D.; Lower Templestowe, Victoria
 Seabrook, Ms P.; San Souci, New South Wales
 Shields, Mr Z.; Richmond, Victoria
 Smith, Mrs L. A.; Hawthorn, Victoria
 Snith, Miss M.; Surrey Hills, New South Wales
 Stuart, Dr C.; Mt Lawley, Western Australia
 Sullivan, Mr M. P.; Executive Director, Australian Council for Overseas
 Aid; Canberra
 Swann, Rev. J. F.; Director of the Catholic Immigration Centre; Adelaide,
 South Australia
 Sweeney, Miss K.; Richmond, Victoria
 Synakone, Mr B.; Randwick, New South Wales
 Tenni, Mr and Mrs B.; Box Hill, Victoria
 Tran, D. P.; Wollongong, New South Wales
 Tripcony, Mrs S. M.; Balwyn, Victoria
 Vichidvongsa, Mr S.; Woolloomooloo, New South Wales
 Vo, Mr P. L.; President of the Union of Vietnamese Students in Australia;
 Kensington, New South Wales
 Vu, Mr D. L.; Brisbane, Queensland
 Walker, Father D., S.J.; St Ignatius; Richmond, Victoria

Ward, Mr R.; Commonwealth Hostels Limited, Leightonfield North,
New South Wales
Warner, Mr D. A.; Mt Eliza, Victoria
Weissenfeld, Mr P. E.; Hamilton, Victoria
Welch, Associate Professor B. J.; Kensington, New South Wales
Welch, Mrs G.; Killarney Heights, New South Wales
Weldon, Mrs E.; Mount Ousley, New South Wales
Whitelum, Mr D. L.; Secretary, Australian Society for Inter-Country Aid
(Children); St Marys, South Australia
Wild, Mr P.; Secretary, National Catholic Rural Movement; Camberwell,
Victoria
Wolf, Mr A.; Narellen, New South Wales
Yia, Mr L.; Kingsford, New South Wales