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**A 'CLIENT SURVEY' ON THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF DIMIA-  
FUNDED COMMUNITY  
SETTLEMENT SERVICES**

FINAL REPORT

Prepared for:

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## CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH .....	1
1.3 CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY - DIMIA-FUNDED SETTLEMENT SERVICES .....	1
1.3.1 Definition of Settlement .....	1
1.3.2 Settlement Support Services .....	2
1.3.3 MRCs and MSAs .....	2
1.3.4 CSSS Programs .....	3
1.4 THE STUDY LOCATIONS .....	4
1.4.1 Overview .....	4
1.4.2 Location details .....	4
1.4.3 Services included .....	4
1.4.4 Study Participants .....	4
1.5 METHODOLOGY .....	5
1.5.1 Qualitative nature of the study .....	5
1.5.2 Qualitative methods used .....	5
1.5.3 Discussion guides .....	6
1.5.4 Use of the Guides .....	7
1.5.5 Collaboration with the Department .....	7
1.5.6 Recruitment of clients .....	8
1.5.7 Recruitment of service providers .....	9
1.5.8 Recruitment of community stakeholders .....	9
1.5.9 Settlement data .....	9
1.6 SOME COMMENTS ON METHODOLOGY .....	10
1.6.1 Report structure .....	10
<b>2. CORE SETTLEMENT NEEDS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. INTRODUCTION .....	11
2.2 FINDING ACCOMMODATION .....	11
2.3 FINDING A JOB .....	11
2.4 LEARNING ENGLISH .....	13
2.5 ISOLATION .....	14
<b>3. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR MIGRANTS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	15
3.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION PRIOR TO MIGRATING .....	15
3.3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON ARRIVAL .....	16
3.4 FAMILY AND FRIENDS .....	16
3.5 ETHNIC COMMUNITIES .....	17
3.6 DIMIA-FUNDED SETTLEMENT SERVICES .....	17
3.6.1 MRCs,MSAs and CSSS Projects .....	17

3.6.2 The Adult Migrant English Program.....	19
3.6.3 IHSS Services.....	20
<b>4. SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	21
4.2 SERVICES VALUED BY MIGRANTS.....	21
4.3 MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS.....	22
4.4 REFERRAL.....	22
4.5 DUTY OF CARE.....	25
4.6 LINKS WITH MAINSTREAM SERVICES.....	25
4.7 ISSUES AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY.....	26
4.7.1 Staff expertise and turnover.....	26
4.7.2 Funding.....	27
4.7.3 Reporting Requirements.....	27
4.7.4 Training.....	27
<b>5. SERVICE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.....</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	28
5.2 COOPERATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MAINSTREAM AGENCIES.....	28
5.3 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.....	29
5.4 COMBINING CASE WORK WITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.....	29
<b>6. KEY FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>7 EVALUATION OF THE METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>32</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	32
7.2 A NOTE ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	32
7.3 CLIENT GROUP DISCUSSIONS.....	32
7.4 GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS.....	34
7.5 INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS.....	35
7.6 PRELIMINARY RESEARCH.....	35
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
A STUDY LOCATIONS	
B STUDY PARTICIPANTS	
C DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES	
D DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS	
E INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS	

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Adult Migrant English Service
CSSS	Community Services Settlement Scheme
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
IHSS	Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
MSA	Migrant Service Agency
MSS	Migrant Settlement Services
SCIS	Settlement Client Information System
TIS	Translating and Interpreting Service

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research is really two studies in one. On the one hand it is a study of how effective DIMIA-funded community settlement services are in assisting migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants as they settle in Australia. On the other, it is a pilot of a methodology for evaluating service effectiveness.

This study focuses on the migrant community service programs funded by DIMIA, which include Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), Migrant Service Agencies (MSAs) and Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS) projects. The study was conducted using *qualitative* research techniques, involving group discussions and interviews with clients, service providers and community stakeholders in four diverse locations: the ACT, Dandenong in Victoria, and Cairns and Townsville in Queensland. Clients for the discussion groups were recruited from English language classes conducted by the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), another settlement service funded by DIMIA.

Qualitative research seeks to provide a deeper insight into issues than is usually possible from quantitative studies. For instance, one of the functions of migrant community services is to provide information about core Government service agencies to individual clients. In this research, the study team spoke to the migrant community service providers about the ways in which they fulfil this information role, and to clients, asking them how satisfied they were with the help they received. Representatives of mainstream organisations were also interviewed to obtain their perspective. This three-stranded methodology, involving consultations with clients, service providers and community stakeholders, is the basis for the study. The methodology is regarded as having generally worked well however some adjustments are recommended, particularly in relation to client recruitment.

The results of this study are reported as key themes and issues emerging across the various locations for the study. Given the pilot nature of the research, it is important to note that these themes are indicative only of migrant experiences, and the views of service providers and community stakeholders.

In this study clients were asked about their experiences in settling in Australia, to help set in context their comments about their use of migrant community services. The key issues raised were the need to find accommodation, get a job and learn English. The issue of loneliness and isolation also emerged as a significant issue for newly arrived migrants, particularly for women who came to Australia as spouse migrants.

A key role of migrant community services is to provide information to recently arrived migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds on life in Australia and the services available to them. Migrant community services also provide referral, case-work and outreach services, often involving providing advocacy on behalf of clients. A common comment from service providers was that newly arrived migrants could not be treated in the same way as English speaking clients of mainstream services. Some clients need to be physically taken to locations and introduced to a mainstream provider to ensure their problems are understood and adequately dealt with. Clients may also need help with their written English, even though they speak English well – a fact not always understood by mainstream providers.

As part of exploring the information role of migrant community services, migrants were asked about the sources of information they relied on prior to migrating and the sources they used once they came to Australia. The most important sources before migrating were family and friends, and to a lesser extent, the settlement information produced by DIMIA. On arrival, family and friends remain an important and trusted source of information. In some instances this appears to have lead to misinformation about

what life in Australia is like and what settlement support will be available. Other sources of information include ethnic communities and settlement services funded by DIMIA.

In this study migrants mentioned specific needs such as help in finding accommodation or getting a job, as well as more basic information needs such as how to set up a bank account or use public transport. Where a migrant community service was able to provide information, advocacy and referral to assist in solving these needs, migrants were very positive. A key theme to emerge was that immediate practical assistance is valued, particularly that which helps migrants to address pressing settlement needs. In this regard, services such as employment assistance, childcare support and homework support were mentioned as very useful, as well as the help provided with everyday tasks such as setting up a bank account or obtaining a driver's licence. The provision of a social outlet where newly arrived migrants can meet other migrants was also valued by clients in some locations.

However, some clients were frustrated with the limitations of an information and referral role, wanting the migrant community service to instead solve their problems such as the need for affordable housing. The main area of criticism for migrants involved in the study was around the referral process because it is not always seen as an effective way of solving settlement needs. In some instances this related to the way referral is handled. It became apparent that in providing referral services, it is important for a client to feel they have been listened to and taken seriously, have been followed-up where necessary and that the person they have been referred to understands their problem and will be interested in assisting them. Criticism of referral also appears to relate to the expectations of some migrants who clearly want migrant community services to "deliver" in areas such as housing and employment. Managing these expectations is an important part of providing a referral service. Effective referral is particularly important in locations where there is a heavy demand on settlement services.

Associated with referral is the issue of "duty of care". In this study there were instances which came to the attention of the study team where migrants with issues requiring specialised advice and support, such as domestic violence, were not referred on to specialist mainstream services. This raises a number of issues around the need to articulate standards of service delivery expected from migrant community services and individual settlement workers, as well as a need for establishing protocols for dealing with sensitive issues such as domestic violence.

Evaluating services from the perspective of the client has some limitations. Clients are unlikely to have knowledge of or exposure to some of the less visible functions undertaken by settlement services, including service and community development. The three-stranded methodology was a way of exploring different aspects of the role of migrant community services. For instance one MRC was praised for providing links between local government and ethnic communities; the MRC itself though complained that too much was demanded of its service – that it was required to be 'all things to all people'.

One function of Migrant Resource Centres is community development, and an established way of achieving this is to organise cultural festivities. Yet this research shows there are innovative new approaches which are based not around organising, but *facilitating* and *supporting* communities, particularly in ways which link them with the mainstream agencies. The focus is on access and equity, with emphasis being given to empowering individuals and communities to take an active role within mainstream Australia. This can be an effective means of ensuring they can move on and make use themselves of mainstream services. It also puts pressure on mainstream Australia to accommodate migrant needs in service delivery.

Although the AMEP was not the focus of this study, it became apparent that it plays a pivotal role in the settlement process for newly arrived migrants, far beyond the function of teaching migrants English. Providing orientation information is an important component of AMEP classes. This often includes inviting migrant community service providers to talk to students and explain to them what services they provide. In addition, classes fulfil the function of facilitating social interaction between people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The teachers are regarded as more than educators: they are authority figures who can be trusted, able to offer advice and support. The issues of the overlap between the role of the AMEP and the information role played by migrant community services is raised in this study.

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In May 2002, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) commissioned a qualitative research project on the effectiveness of DIMIA-funded community settlement services directed towards helping migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants participate equitably in Australian society. The research focussed on services provided by Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), Migrant Service Agencies (MSAs) and community organisations funded under the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS).

The project was an exploratory study of perceptions, opinions and experiences of the people who use and deliver these services, as well as those who work closely with them in the community. This three-stranded methodology had not previously been used by DIMIA. In this sense the research project was a pilot study.

The objectives of the research were:

- To gain a better understanding of how useful these services are in assisting migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants as they settle in Australia; and
- To evaluate the methodology used with a view to understanding how best to approach evaluations of this type in the future.

### 1.2 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The exploratory nature of this pilot study meant that it was conducted on a small-scale only. It involved obtaining feedback from clients, service providers and community stakeholders in four locations: Dandenong in Victoria, the

ACT, and Cairns and Townsville in Queensland.

These locations were chosen by DIMIA for this initial study with the aim of reflecting large and small metropolitan and regional centres, and the diversity of services provided by MRC/MSAs and CSSS funded community organisations.

The research sought to gather views and perceptions on:

- The experience of migrants and refugees using these services, including frequency of use, the appropriateness of the services provided and levels of satisfaction with them;
- Aspects of the services provided which have been of most assistance in equipping clients to participate equitably in Australian society; and
- Suggestions for where value could be added to improve outcomes for clients.

The research also sought to test the appropriateness of the methodology for examining settlement service effectiveness, with a view to making recommendations on how best to proceed with evaluations of these types of services in the future.

### 1.3 CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY - DIMIA-FUNDED SETTLEMENT SERVICES

#### 1.3.1 Definition of Settlement

*The Settlement Services Guide*, sponsored by the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council and produced by DIMIA in 2000, outlines the history of settlement services and current settlement policies and planning mechanisms. The Guide defines settlement as 'the period of adjustment migrants and refugees experience before they can fully participate in Australia's culturally diverse society' (p 8, *The Settlement Services Guide*, 2000). It notes that:

'During the settlement period migrants may need help to access basic services such as housing, employment, health and medical services. The length of time it takes a migrant or refugee to settle depends on such factors as his or her skills or qualifications, English language ability, and familiarity with Australian culture and institutions'.

Current Government policy is that migrant needs during the settlement period are best met through a coordinated mix of responsive:

- mainstream services, which are services available to the broader Australian community; and
- settlement services, which are services specifically targeted to meeting the needs of migrant, refugee and humanitarian entrants.

Access and equity principles are the impetus for ensuring that mainstream services are responsive to migrants and humanitarian program entrants.

### 1.3.2 Settlement Support Services

The settlement services funded by DIMIA to support migrants and humanitarian entrants during their period of settlement fall into two categories:

- **General settlement services** necessary to help migrants and humanitarian entrants establish themselves in Australia during their settlement period. These include the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and migrant community service programs, encompassing the MRC and MSA network, and projects and programs delivered under the CSSS.
- **Specialised humanitarian settlement services** provided under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). These services provide specialised support for eligible refugees and

humanitarian entrants in such areas as accommodation support, health services such as torture and trauma counselling, and individualised assistance in accessing government and community services.

The focus of this research was *migrant community service programs*, although by its nature, the research also touched on the settlement services provided by the AMEP and specialised humanitarian services.

Broadly, migrant community service programs are designed to assist settlement for people who have recently immigrated and are from non-English speaking backgrounds. Significant barriers to settlement for this target group may include limited English language skills, difficulties with adjusting to a new culture and way of life, and difficulties with gaining access to services available to the broader Australian community.

### 1.3.3 MRCs and MSAs

Currently DIMIA funds a national network of 29 MRCs and four MSAs across all States and Territories. These provide a base from which to deliver, support and attract services which assist migrants in local areas to settle and participate equitably.

MRC/MSAs receive core funding through individual service agreements with DIMIA. DIMIA funds contribute to salaries of core staff, rental of premises, and operational expenses.

MRC/MSAs are expected to carry out four functions in relation to:

- **Service delivery**, which involves providing information, referral and outreach services to assist migrants to settle and participate in the social and economic life of the community. This includes providing information to clients, if possible in their own language; assisting clients to get access to mainstream services, including through brokerage and liaison with relevant agencies; and delivering special

orientation programs about the Australian community, its structure, culture, services, opportunities and obligations for migrants.

- **Service development**, which involves an agency acting in an advocacy role by initiating and engaging in planning forums and networks in the local area to promote and implement access and equity and the benefits of cultural diversity. This may include representing local settlement needs in planning forums; convening local government and service agency networks; and coordinating and liaising with relevant service providers to promote *The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*.
- **Community development**, which involves supporting the settlement, establishment and participation of ethnic-specific communities in the wider community. This may include assisting community groups to prepare funding submissions; assisting and providing facilities to establish cultural, welfare and community associations and networks; and producing and disseminating relevant settlement information to community groups on a regular basis.
- **Management**, which involves ensuring that MRC/MSA funding is expended in accordance with the MRC/MSA service agreement.

MRCs/MSAs are encouraged to attract other sources of funding so that they can deliver a diverse range of services to meet the particular settlement needs in their area. Some of this additional funding may come from DIMIA in the form of grants for discrete projects under CSSS, or funding to deliver IHSS services. Other sources of additional funding include grants from local, State or Commonwealth agencies.

Under the terms of the MRC/MSA Service Agreement with DIMIA, agencies are obliged to provide settlement services to a high standard

and in accordance with generally accepted professional, technical and ethical principles, work place standards and relevant best practice.

#### 1.3.4 CSSS Program

The CSSS funds not-for-profit community based organisations to deliver settlement assistance in the local area. Grants are provided to support discrete projects, with work programs of between one and three years. Funded organisations agree to develop an approved work program in conjunction with DIMIA for each year that a project is funded. They must ensure that the roles and responsibilities of CSSS funded workers are clearly delineated and effectively managed, and that employees possess and maintain the competence to implement their roles and responsibilities.

As for MRCs/MSAs, CSSS funded organisations are obliged to provide settlement services to a high standard and in accordance with generally accepted professional, technical and ethical principles, work place standards and relevant best practice.

In deciding which organisations to fund, DIMIA gives priority to projects designed to assist:

- Refugee and humanitarian entrants (except those in the immediate post-arrival period who are eligible for specialised services provided under the IHSS);
- Recent arrivals whose communities are small and emerging;
- Migrants settling in rural and remote areas, and
- Migrants with specific, clearly identified, additional settlement needs such as difficulties arising from poor English proficiency.

In October 2001, there were 236 agencies undertaking 318 DIMIA-funded CSSS projects.

## 1.4 THE STUDY LOCATIONS

### 1.4.1 Overview

The four locations covered in this pilot research study were chosen by the Department in order to reflect:

- a mix of large and small metropolitan and regional locations, and
- the diversity of community services provided by MRCs, MSAs and CSSS funded community organisations.

This provided the study team with the opportunity to explore issues from a range of perspectives. Experiences that were common to all or most locations could be drawn out, as well as those that appear to be particular to some services and/or some locations. This also allowed for the methodology to be tested in a variety of circumstances.

### 1.4.2 Location details

Details of the specific locations were as follows:

- Dandenong is located in a major population growth corridor in Melbourne's south-east. Data from DIMIA's Settlement Database indicates that in the two years to the end of June, 2002, 2,610 migrants arrived in Dandenong.
- Canberra/Queanbeyan are two small urban areas encompassing the ACT and adjoining rural areas. In the two years to the end of June, 2002, 1,984 migrants settled in this region.
- Cairns is a tourist and service centre in the far north of regional Queensland. In the two years to the end of June, 2002, 440 migrants settled in Cairns.
- Townsville is a regional service centre in north Queensland. In the two years to the end of June, 2002, 260 migrants settled in Townsville.

### 1.4.3 Services included

The migrant community services included in this study were the MRCs in Dandenong, Canberra and Townsville and the MSA in Cairns. Each of these organisations receives core funding from DIMIA but, at the time of the study, was also the recipient of funding from other sources, including DIMIA CSSS grants, and local, State or Commonwealth government funding. In two instances – Dandenong and Cairns – the MRC/MSA was also the recipient of IHSS funding.

In the two bigger locations (Dandenong and Canberra), other organisations which receive CSSS funding from DIMIA were also included in the study. In Dandenong three additional organisations which receive CSSS funding were included: a Community Aid and Advice Bureau, and two ethno-specific organisations. In Canberra, four additional organisations were included: two community service organisations funded by local government; a multilingual service and an ethno-specific organisation.

### 1.4.4 Study Participants

While termed a 'client survey', people included in this study represented three different groups, each of which has a stake in ensuring that the particular types of DIMIA-funded settlement services being examined in this study work effectively:

- **Clients** of the migrant community services in the study locations;
- **Service providers** from the migrant community services included in the study, including managers, paid staff and volunteers; and
- **Community stakeholders** in the study locations, including representatives from mainstream services and other DIMIA-funded settlement services, as well as DIMIA officers whose areas of responsibility cover the migrant community services in the study locations.

In the course of this research, the study team had discussions with more than 70 recently arrived migrants and 50 staff and volunteers from 11 different migrant community services. A total of 25 community stakeholders from 16 different organisations were also interviewed. They included representatives from mainstream agencies at Commonwealth, State and local government level; other settlement services providers such as the AMEP; and DIMIA officers.

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

### 1.5.1 Qualitative nature of the study

This study is not a sample survey, and should not be interpreted as such. Qualitative research is less concerned with how many people are interviewed than with conducting consultations according to a methodology appropriate to the task at hand. This research involved group discussions and interviews with people representing the three stakeholder groups. This not only enabled the perceptions of individuals and groups of participants to be reported; it also enabled the triangulation of results, meaning that what was discovered from consultations with people from one group could be cross-referenced with statements made by others. This enabled particular themes or issues to be highlighted and explored in a way that is not possible with quantitative research.

Recent DIMIA studies of settlement services have relied on quantitative data from the Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA). This major study involved a large number of migrants (more than 11,000) and provides a valuable overview of services used by a broad group of migrants, including many who would not be the target client group for settlement services. The LSIA indicates a very high level of satisfaction with the service provided by Migrant Resource Centres (90 percent of clients were satisfied), and satisfaction with other organisations offering

services to migrants ranging from 75 to 100 percent.

In this pilot study, DIMIA chose to use qualitative research techniques as a means of providing depth to an understanding of how useful migrant community services (such as MRCs and CSSS projects) are in assisting the settlement target group.

There is a range of data that can be collected by qualitative means in order to gain a deeper insight into how migrant settlement services function. Qualitative research has the potential to explore the reasons behind what are perceived as strengths or weaknesses of various services. It is most appropriate where there is a need to explore issues in a flexible manner and where the researcher must be ready to respond to matters that respondents want to raise. This flexibility enables issues to be teased out and explored in a way that is not possible with quantitative studies. In the past, both qualitative and quantitative techniques have been used by Urbis Keys Young to examine settlement processes.

### 1.5.2 Qualitative methods used

There were three strands to the research: group discussions with migrants, group discussions with service providers and one-on-one interviews with community stakeholders. Different discussion or interview guides were developed for each of these three groups.

It was felt that the views of clients would be important in identifying what they valued about settlement services. The service providers themselves could potentially provide useful insights not only into the settlement services they provided, but also into issues associated with service delivery. The community stakeholder interviews included in-depth consultations with representatives of key government departments such as Centrelink and other organisations in contact with either the service providers or the client group for this study. It was felt that the opinions of community

stakeholders would be of particular value in providing perspective on and context to specific settlement services, as well as to broader issues of how settlement services function in a particular location.

This three-stranded methodology, combined with the flexibility of qualitative research, enabled issues to be explored as they arose. It was possible to pursue particular lines of inquiry in some depth where this was appropriate to the study objectives. For instance, the community stakeholder interviews were a particularly useful source of information about perceived strengths or weaknesses of services. Comments were often deserving of follow-up either with the service providers concerned or with other stakeholders.

### 1.5.3 Discussion guides

The discussion guides were designed to give a shape to consultations, ensuring that major areas or issues were canvassed and that there was a natural or easy flow to discussions. Special emphasis was given to ensuring that the discussion guide for migrants was appropriate to this client group. This meant ensuring that the way in which questions were asked, and the language used, would be easily understood and relevant. The discussion guides were developed by Urbis Keys Young on the basis of briefings from the Department, reviewed by DIMIA and then distributed to service providers involved in the study and to DIMIA contacts in State and Territory offices to ensure they felt questions were appropriate, relevant and thorough. On the basis of the feedback received, the drafts were refined.

The approach taken in each of the discussion/interview guides was as follows:

#### Clients

The discussion guide for clients was designed with the aim of encouraging them to tell their individual stories as well as contribute to a more general discussion about settlement experiences. Whilst it included specific

questions on particular settlement services, the overall intention was to obtain a picture of their own backgrounds and the resources they had drawn upon in managing their own settlement process. This was intended to give a context for their comments about which particular services they used and whether or not they found them to be of value. It is important to note that not all the functions carried out by migrant community services are visible to clients and that clients are generally only in a position to comment on direct client services, ie only on one aspect of the role of an organisation. Clients would not have an appreciation of other activities such as brokerage and liaison with other agencies, or of how well an organisation fulfils its service or community development functions, although these functions also contribute to assisting clients to settle.

#### Service Providers

Service providers were asked to discuss the nature of services their organisation provided and their opinions about the effectiveness of migrant settlement services, including possible ways of making improvements. Areas canvassed included service delivery, service development and community development. This enabled these three areas to be discussed whilst also ensuring that appropriate weight was given to any particular emphases of specific services (for instance, a focus on information and referral, or on community development). The discussion guide also sought the opinions of providers on ways to improve service quality, providing them with an opportunity to express their views anonymously to the Department. Because different types of service providers were included, the nature of the discussion was general rather than concentrating on specific services. The emphasis was on broad service issues, and on obtaining different perspectives on these issues.

## Community Stakeholders

The interview guide for community stakeholders was more targeted, seeking to find out the nature of their contact with specific settlement services, how referral processes were working and opinions about particular services.

### **1.54 Use of the Guides**

The same discussion and interview guides were used for each location. Copies of the guides are included in the appendix to this report.

The discussion guides aimed to provide a structured framework for canvassing issues regarded as important by the researchers and the Department. However, the actual order in which questions were asked and the actual phrasing of the questions needed to support the natural flow of the discussions and so did not necessarily follow the exact structure as outlined. In some instances, additional questions were asked in order to clarify and explore particular responses. Similarly, certain questions were left aside if they were seen to be inappropriate or not relevant in a particular circumstance. Time with participants was obviously limited, therefore priority had to be given to certain areas and not others. Given that this research project was a pilot of the methodology, flexibility was vital.

## Clients

Generally the discussion guide for migrants worked well and the consultations followed the flow of the questions in the order that they appeared.

## Service Providers

A more flexible approach was required with service providers. In particular, different providers had different interests and raised different issues. It became a matter of judgement as to whether to pursue particular areas of interest in more depth. In some groups

this was the approach followed because it was felt that this would not only give a more detailed insight into these areas, it also reflected on what the service providers themselves saw as priorities. An example is the question about community development. In one service provider group, this question generated considerable discussion about the nature of the community development work this provider was currently doing, particularly in relation to outreach services. The researcher made a decision that it was valuable to devote more time in this group to discussing community development, and hence probed further on this issue.

## Community Stakeholders

With the community stakeholder interviews, there were several instances in which the information provided warranted further investigation and led to supplementary interviews being done, either with other community stakeholders or with service providers themselves. These supplementary interviews were not conducted using the prepared interview guides, but were targeted at specific issues which warranted further investigation. For instance, one Centrelink multicultural officer mentioned that an organisation other than the local migrant settlement service provider regularly contacted him for help with non-English speaking clients. The researcher then contacted this organisation – a women's refuge - and asked a range of questions related to the nature of their contact with migrants falling within the client group. This led to a further series of questions on the issues raised being put to the settlement service provider.

### **1.5.5 Collaboration with the Department**

Given that this study was a pilot, the consultants worked closely with the Department in setting up the research. The Department was keen to observe closely the value of the methodology and what issues might prove problematic.

Key tasks undertaken included:

- Designing suitable research instruments and processes for use in the focus groups and interviews. This involved working with the Department and service providers in the design process, and ensuring the research processes reflected the different types of services provided in the various study locations;
  - In consultation with the Department, organising focus group discussions and interviews; and
  - Collating and analysing the results of the study processes in several stages, thereby allowing for relevant Department officers to have input and provide feedback.
- arrived in Australia 12-18 months before the date of the survey; and
  - used the services of a MRC, MSA or a CSSS project, in the locations for the study.

It was felt that clients who were most proficient in English would be more likely to be able to take part in a group discussion. Funding was set aside for interpreters, however it was felt there was advantage in using a common language so that the clients could discuss shared experiences.

In the course of recruiting clients, it became apparent that the time of arrival in Australia, as defined, was too narrow and that it should be broadened to between six and 24 months in order to get enough clients willing to participate.

### 1.5.6 Recruitment of Clients

It should be noted that the actual numbers of clients using migrant community services is difficult to establish. Data on client numbers is collected and entered into the Department's Settlement Client Information System (SCIS) by MRCs/MSAs, but this data is not reliable for a range of reasons, including the fact that data does not exist for all quarters and for all services.

Broadly speaking, the client groups for migrant community programs are recently arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants from non-English speaking countries.

The Department proposed that clients be recruited from English language classes conducted by the AMEP at each of the four locations. This was based on the assumption that the client group for migrant community services was much the same as that for AMEP enrolments. This was seen as a practical and objective way to set up the client discussion groups. It also ensured that the discussion groups involved recently arrived migrants.

In recruiting clients for discussion groups, the Department sought migrants who had:

Recruitment for the client discussion groups was carried out by AMEP providers in discussion with both the Department and Urbis Keys Young. The Department contacted the AMEP coordinators in each of the locations for the survey to seek general agreement to discussion groups being conducted with AMEP students. AMEP coordinators were provided with a letter for teachers which explained the aims of the research, the selection criteria and asked for their assistance in recruiting students for the discussion groups. Teachers were asked to give students a letter from the Department inviting them to participate in the survey. Urbis Keys Young then finalised the arrangement for the discussion groups with the AMEP coordinator.

In the course of the study, it became apparent that recruitment of clients would not be as straightforward as hoped for. While always cooperative, AMEP providers varied in their capacity to recruit appropriate people, and in some locations there were very few students in the higher level English classes who had used the settlement services being studied.

In each location the plan was to set up at least two discussion groups with clients. In

Dandenong a decision was made to set up a third group at Springvale AMEP as a means of ensuring that the study team spoke to sufficient clients using services in the Dandenong area.

In Cairns and Townsville, where migrant numbers are smaller, a shortage of AMEP students who met the study requirements meant that additional client discussion groups were recruited by the Townsville MRC and Cairns MSA. In Cairns, the researcher also met with a group of AMEP students who met the settlement period criterion but who had not used the local migrant community service. This provided the study team with an opportunity to explore the settlement needs of this particular group and to ask whether or not these needs could have been met by the local migrant community service.

The combined effect of these recruitment problems was that around a third of the migrants involved in the discussion groups were not people who had actually used a migrant community service in their area. The value of qualitative research is its flexibility, and as soon as these problems became apparent the study team set up supplementary interviews to explore why client recruitment from AMEP classes was proving difficult in some locations. Interviews were conducted with four AMEP staff from three locations and these shed light on some factors influencing whether or not migrants use settlement services. A key finding was that certain groups who fall within the settlement target group appear not to make use of migrant community services. Of particular note here are spouse migrants from non-English speaking countries. Visa category then becomes to some degree a predictor of whether migrant community services are used.

The 'client group' in this study therefore consists of two groups: existing clients of migrant community services and potential clients. The latter group consists of people for whom migrant community services are intended but who do not currently use these services.

### **1.5.7 Recruitment of service providers**

The Department provided Urbis Keys Young with lists of migrant community service providers to be included in the research and key contacts within these organisations. In each location, contact details were provided for DIMIA settlement officers, who were spoken to prior to the discussion groups being set up. Urbis Keys Young sought their advice on the best combinations of organisations and personnel for each group.

The Department forwarded letters of introduction to each service provider in the relevant areas. Urbis Keys Young spoke to each provider and asked them to nominate managers, employees and voluntary workers willing to participate in a focus group discussion.

Two discussion groups with service providers were conducted in each location, with the exception of Cairns, where settlement services are all delivered by the one organisation. In Townsville, IHSS services are provided by a second organisation and it was decided that a discussion group with members of this organisation would usefully supplement discussions with MRC representatives.

### **1.5.8 Recruitment of community stakeholders**

Lists of community stakeholders were also supplied by the Department. These were drawn up by departmental officers and service providers. The researchers included other names where these seemed appropriate. In particular, AMEP teachers proved a valuable additional source of information about clients and the services in question.

### **1.5.9 Settlement data**

The Department supplied data on migrant intake numbers, countries of origin and settlement services in each location. This was supplemented in some locations by data on AMEP students and information from service

provider records. Selected data of this kind has been used to help put the qualitative material collected in this study in context.

## **1.6 SOME COMMENTS ON METHODOLOGY**

The three-stranded qualitative methodology (working with clients, service providers and other community stakeholders) generally worked well, allowing the services provided by the MRCs/MSAs and CSSS funded organisations involved in the study to be viewed from diverse perspectives. Conducting the study in four locations also gave an insight into the different approaches and issues for migrant community service providers in large and small metropolitan and regional locations.

Of the three groups the clients proved most difficult to obtain detailed input from. Recruitment of clients through AMEP meant there was some independence in the process because it was one step removed from service providers. The discussion group approach was appropriate for this particular target group, and clients were willing to discuss aspects of their or their families' experience. Because the research was organised through AMEP, and discussions were held in classrooms, clients were familiar with the location and with other participants. The discussion groups often took the form of an English conversation class, so that people felt comfortable talking about subjects that were reasonably familiar to each of them.

However it needs to be remembered that clients themselves may have only a limited view of how a service operates and the functions it serves. For instance, they may be familiar with some aspects of direct client services but are not likely to be aware of community development tasks also undertaken.

This research was aimed partly at evaluating the methodology used and its suitability for use

in future evaluation projects. These issues are addressed later in this report.

### **1.6.1 Report Structure**

The settlement experiences of recently arrived migrants are influenced by many factors, including English language proficiency, family or community support, access to housing, and success in finding a job. The extent to which migrant community services help migrants and humanitarian entrants in their settlement in Australia is explored in this report. However, because client perceptions tell only part of the story, reporting is structured in a way that maximises use of the three data sources: clients, service providers and community stakeholders.

In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, the outcomes of this initial study are reported as key themes and issues emerging across the various locations for the study. Given the limitations in scope and methodology of this initial survey, it is important to note that these themes are indicative only of migrant experiences.

The key themes are reported in the following sections:

- Core Settlement Needs
- Sources of Information for Migrants
- Service Delivery
- Service and Community Development
- Key Findings
- Evaluation of the Methodology

## 2. CORE SETTLEMENT NEEDS

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Migrants from both cohorts in the recent LSIA study *The Settlement Experience of New Migrants* (National Institute of Labour Studies, 2002) said the areas where they most needed assistance in settling in Australia were looking for work, help with financial matters, learning English, finding housing and accommodation and help concerning health services and health insurance.

In this qualitative study, migrants were asked about their experiences settling in Australia, and the things they found to be most difficult. This was intended to set in context the comments they made about their use of migrant community services.

Issues relating to finances and health were not raised by the migrants involved in this study, but the other areas identified in the LSIA study were the same: the need to find accommodation, get a job and learn English. These issues emerged in discussion groups across all four locations for this study.

One other issue also emerged as significant in this study – loneliness and isolation. This was mentioned by the women who came to Australia as spouse migrants, and emerged as a significant theme across locations.

### 2.2 FINDING ACCOMMODATION

As might be expected, finding somewhere to live appears to have been less problematic for the spouse migrants involved in the discussion groups than for humanitarian entrants, many of whom were concerned about their accommodation and said they experienced difficulties in finding accommodation. This is partly because some had been sponsored by relatives, and wanted to move on into their own

accommodation as quickly as possible. Also, humanitarian entrants are likely to be more dependent on social security and have lower levels of income, and as such are more likely to find it difficult to find affordable accommodation (*The Experience of Recent Migrants to Australia*, DIMIA, 2002).

The issues identified in discussion groups with migrants and humanitarian entrants were:

- Difficulty obtaining appropriate and affordable housing.
- Overcrowding in houses, especially in the case of humanitarian entrants living with sponsors.
- Unsatisfactory public housing, including issues of safety for family members.
- Discrimination against some migrants. This was an issue for humanitarian entrants from Africa in one location. One service provider said Serbian refugees, as white Europeans, are given priority over African families wanting housing.

For some client groups, a number of difficulties appear to be compounded. For instance, the situation of sponsored African humanitarian entrants may be worsened because many have big families and there is a shortage of four or five bedroom houses for rental. This, coupled with social discrimination, and pressures on the housing market in a rapidly growing urban area, leaves some clients feeling frustrated. The issue of finding large houses for rental also appears to be a problem experienced by the Hmong community living in a regional hinterland. On the private rental market large houses are expensive and on the public market almost non-existent.

### 2.3 FINDING A JOB

For several migrants, the key factor in making them feel settled in Australia was whether or not they found a job.

*Get a job, then you are settled - the rest will manage itself.*

These people said settlement could take two, three or 15 years, depending on when they got work.

*To get a job is the big problem. Some people are eligible to work and are able to work hard, but just can't get a job. Instead you have to depend on a Centrelink benefit, when it would be so much better to get a job so you can handle things yourself.*

Clearly, finding employment is seen as the key to becoming settled in Australia and to being able to contribute to and participate in Australian society:

*I really want a job; I need to be responsible.*

A range of barriers to obtaining a job were mentioned by clients, including the need to have:

- Australian work experience
- References from an Australian employer
- Information about whether qualifications gained overseas are recognised in Australia
- Information about how to upgrade these qualifications to enable skills to be officially recognised.
- Information about how to go about finding a job, including preparing resumes and writing job applications

*I suggest they give us a course for the job before we got a job. I need more high level advice on how to break into areas.*

- English language instruction in the technical words needed for particular jobs. One person with professional qualifications said that while he needed to improve his day-to-day English, he had another issue – to work

in his field he needed to know technical words in English.

*How can I start to get some experience in my field? Special English courses designed for professions – is that available?*

Some migrants were concerned that they would be seen as too old, and that their age would stand in the way of them getting work.

The need for work experience in Australia was a pressing issue for many people. Several participants asked to be given the opportunity for work experience.

*I need to know how I can start to get a job. If my experience in my own country doesn't apply I need help.*

*I can't work now because I have no experience in Australia. I don't know how to get it. English is the first problem, then I must start somewhere but I don't know how. I have the credentials. If you got a job to take you on, that would get you in the door. But how do I get work to get experience?*

*I want more opportunities for work experience so that I can get references.*

A number of migrants spoke of having to do mundane and manual work as they did not need experience for this type of work. However this work was insecure because it was mostly casual and all were looking for permanent, long-term work.

Allied with these issues is the fact that some people felt pressured by Centrelink to get a job.

*Centrelink always say, you must get a job. You get a letter saying you must get a job. But I need to continue my English classes. So how can I get a job until I have my English?*

*Centrelink's pressure on getting jobs, slows down English learning.*

## 2.4 LEARNING ENGLISH

Ensuring that migrants and refugees acquire English language skills is a critical settlement issue. A lack of English language skills was mentioned by many migrants involved in the discussion groups as the cause of many difficulties when they first arrived in Australia. Everyday things like opening a bank account or obtaining a driver's licence were difficult. Some migrants spoke of feeling useless because they didn't know how to go about getting things like this done and they couldn't explain their needs.

Almost every service provider consulted said they had contact with migrants who had been in Australia for a long time (for 20 or 30 years) and were still experiencing 'settlement difficulties'. These problems were said to exist *because* these people had not learnt English 'as part of their initial settlement'.

A reasonable level of proficiency in English is clearly an essential criterion for full participation in Australian society, but there are barriers to learning English soon after arrival. Issues which emerged in this study include:

- Economic pressures
- The social position of some women.

Currently one quarter of the migrants and refugees who arrive in Australia without being proficient in English do *not* take up their AMEP entitlement. One reason is that people look for a job first. But whether or not employment is more important than English is something of a chicken-and-egg argument:

*There are many ways to learn English; not only through schools. You can learn through your place of work.*

*No you can't. If you are a cleaner, no, you can't learn.*

Given the importance of learning English as part of the settlement process, it would be valuable to explore whether there are factors particular to some communities or groups which

are likely to make them less likely to take up their English tuition entitlement.

For instance, one service provider said there was enormous pressure on sponsored humanitarian entrants to get work. Many of these entrants had large debts because they had to repay the sponsor who had borne the costs of them coming to Australia. It was not unheard of for a family of eight to arrive from Sudan with a debt on arrival of \$20,000. And while many Sudanese do have good English language skills (in one discussion group a number of Sudanese indicated they had been educated in English at university level), not all are this proficient. By seeking work first, studying English is delayed – sometimes permanently.

One service provider also expressed concern that Sudanese *women* were missing out on services including English instruction. This provider went so far as to say:

*Women from the South Sudanese community are not visible at all.*

*We see the men and meet their needs, but we need to take information out to the women because they don't come in.*

That women from particular communities do not attend English classes should be seen as a warning sign. Service providers spoke of the difficulties experienced by communities years down the track because the women did not learn English.

A point of comparison is provided by the Hmong community. They came here as refugees, and now, as the community ages, the husbands are dying first.

*The women don't drive, they haven't had the benefit of literacy classes or learning on the job and are now socially, culturally and geographically isolated.*

This not only meant these women were needy; younger generations were also disadvantaged

because their community was isolated and lacked connections and access to mainstream services.

## 2.5 ISOLATION

Many of the women in the discussion groups came to Australia as spouse migrants. Without exception, they relied on their husbands for information and support when they arrived in Australia. Generally their husbands worked – and the women found themselves socially isolated.

One young Chinese woman said she had lost confidence and was unable to express herself in English in the same way as she did in Chinese. She felt as if her personality had changed. This was how she described her situation:

*I complain all the time and feel as if I am not in control. Before I came to TAFE I just wanted to sleep all the time.*

The women in this group all spoke of experiencing loneliness. Coming to English classes was one way of making contact with others, and reducing isolation.

When a person's self-confidence is reduced, he or she may find it more difficult to get work. These difficulties may be amplified if your first language is not English. In one location, the hospitality industry was a major source of work. But to work in this industry, one generally requires good English. The young woman quoted above also told of her experiences of working in a duty free shop:

*There were lots of Chinese customers, but there were also lots of Japanese. The Japanese staff said they did not like Chinese customers. My supervisor was Japanese. She talked in Japanese, and that made me feel bad.*

*The personnel manager said my English was okay, but the supervisor said my English was bad.*

*I wanted a job with a good team, and so decided to resign.*

Another woman who had migrated from Japan experienced a loss of confidence because of how people judged her English:

*I was working in a Japanese wedding company. When I talked to people in English I felt they looked down on me.*

*People were asking for other assistants.*

*I felt useless.*

### 3. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR MIGRANTS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

A key role of migrant community services is to provide information to recently arrived migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds on life in Australia and the services available to them. Such information is important in helping to overcome the barriers to settlement experienced by migrants. These barriers include limited English language skills, difficulties with adjusting to a new culture and way of life, and difficulties with gaining access to services available to the broader Australian community.

Migrant community services are only one of the information sources available to migrants. Whether these services are called upon by individual migrants will be influenced by how much they know about Australia before they come here, their English language skills (written and spoken) and how much family or community support they have once they arrive here.

As part of exploring the information role of migrant community services, migrants involved in the discussion groups were asked to identify the sources of information they relied on prior to migrating and the sources they used once they arrived in Australia.

#### 3.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION PRIOR TO MIGRATING

Consultations across the four locations revealed that the most important sources of information for many of the migrants in the study group were:

- Family and friends, and, to a lesser extent,
- The DIMIA settlement kit.

Only one person had used the internet to obtain information. This did not appear to be a medium this client group regularly used and/or had access to.

To some extent, the resources that migrants and humanitarian entrants are most likely to use are reasonably predictable. Two factors that influence choice of information sources are:

- Visa category, and
- Access to DIMIA offices or representatives overseas.

##### Visa category

Family stream entrants and sponsored humanitarian entrants appeared to be better informed than other migrants. They were more likely to have made contact with people in Australia beforehand and may even have visited prior to migrating.

*My family member write us letter and tell us lots.*

*My wife's sister came first. She sent letter and gave information that people are kind and the economy is good, so we came too.*

At the other end of this spectrum were the refugees without connections in Australia, some of whom seemed to have surprisingly little information about Australia prior to arrival here. One refugee said she was so desperate to get out of Africa she had no interest in obtaining information.

*I just wanted to leave.*

##### Access to DIMIA offices or representatives overseas.

Comments from service providers indicated that some migrants and humanitarian entrants may be experiencing difficulties obtaining information from DIMIA posts overseas, including getting hold of the DIMIA settlement

kit, and that some information provided might be outdated.

This is supported by comments from some migrants. For example, a number of humanitarian entrants from Africa spoke of difficulties in getting access to DIMIA offices in order to get information. It is reportedly more difficult for humanitarian entrants from Africa to get information from DIMIA posts than it is for those from Europe (particularly former Yugoslavia). The Belgrade and Vienna posts were named by some service providers as delivering a better service than DIMIA offices in Africa and Asia. This observation is supported by the fact that DIMIA has trialed a pre-embarkation program in these two European cities.

One service provider pointed out that providing migrants and humanitarian entrants with accurate information before they arrive in Australia is particularly important. If people weren't properly briefed about their entitlements they were likely to have inappropriate expectations. This is often compounded by relying on friends or family for information:

*Some expect to get a house or a job or cash. None of that comes from the MRC or from Australia. We can't do much about word of mouth, but the posts need to do better.*

When people have false expectations, they can place unrealistic demands on service providers once in Australia. It can be difficult to correct misunderstandings and blame can be wrongly laid on a provider who has tried to respond to client needs appropriately.

Another provider commented that some of the information people were getting overseas was incorrect. For example, people were being told that all telephone interpreter services were free, when this was not the case. Service providers found themselves having to argue with clients about what services were available.

Finally one person commented that people should not be shown videos idealising life in Australia. They should be told 'warts and all' what migrating was really like. Nothing would be lost, he said, by painting a realistic picture.

### 3.3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON ARRIVAL

Once in Australia, the main sources of information for migrants and refugees in the study group were:

- Family and friends
- Ethnic communities
- Settlement services, in particular MRCs, MSAs and CSSS projects and the AMEP.

### 3.4 FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Consultations across the four locations indicated that once in Australia, family and friends remain an important and trusted source of information and assistance for migrants, particularly family stream entrants and sponsored humanitarian migrants.

About one-third of the migrants involved in the discussion groups were women sponsored as the spouses of Australian men (either permanent residents or Australian born). With this group, the reliance on spouses for information in particular was high. In some instances however, this was insufficient, particularly if the husband's work commitments meant he was often unavailable.

In the case of sponsored humanitarian entrants, contact is made by IHSS service providers with the proposer/sponsor. Up to date information is provided to this person, who is responsible for passing it on to the humanitarian entrant.

Although there are clear advantages to having sponsors supply information to new arrivals, several service providers who took part in this

study expressed concern that the sponsorship system was deficient in the case of humanitarian entrants.

This was for two reasons:

- The proposer/sponsor is not in a position to provide the new migrant with the level of assistance he or she requires.
- The proposer or sponsor may sometimes perform an inappropriate gate keeping role.

One service provider commented that some proposers did not speak English, had full-time day jobs and were unable to take the new arrival to the places he or she needed to visit in order to establish themselves.

*Often the proposers here don't speak English. Some families work full-time, and they cannot take people to Centrelink.*

Another concern expressed was that DIMIA relied too heavily on proposer/sponsors to provide humanitarian entrants with certain sensitive types of information, in particular information relating to trauma and torture counselling. It was claimed that the proposer/sponsor might be too embarrassed to discuss trauma and torture issues with a relative. The proposer also might not pass on information because they did not want their own family to know or be upset by what had happened to the new arrival. The proposer might then take it upon himself to decide whether or not a person required this kind of counselling. In the long term, this could have repercussions. If humanitarian entrants are not told they are entitled to trauma and torture counselling, they are unlikely to seek assistance – and this could have consequences for their health and well-being some years down the track.

### 3.5 ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

The role of ethnic communities in providing information and assistance is similar to that of family members. Some communities appear to be quite ready to perform this function.

*Your friends and the (Sudanese) community know the services – accommodation, health.*

However it should not be assumed that all communities are equally capable when it comes to providing support to new arrivals. There are times when particular communities are under stress. Several service providers commented that the Sudanese and other communities of African migrants offered enormous support to new arrivals, but may have currently reached 'capacity'. Whereas sponsor/proposers used to wait 12 months before their relatives arrived in Australia, the processing time for applications had been reduced. Now there is just a three month wait – and the faster processing is placing enormous strain on this particular community.

### 3.6 DIMIA-FUNDED SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement services funded by DIMIA were also identified by the migrants involved in this study as a source of information on their arrival in Australia. These services include migrant community programs (ie. MRCs/MSAs and CSSS projects) as well as the AMEP and the IHSS.

#### 3.6.1 MRCs, MSAs and CSSS projects

The provision of information to assist migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to settle in Australia is a primary function of migrant community programs. All of the migrant community services included in this study provided assistance in the form of information designed to help overcome the barriers to settlement experienced by migrants.

This included provision of information to individuals on a drop-in basis, or as part of a case work approach, as well as group information sessions. In many instances, the provision of information is coupled with a referral to another service or agency for a specific need or problem to be dealt with. This may also involve playing an advocacy role on behalf of a client. One service provider noted that they avoid the use of the term “advice”:

*We cannot tell people what to do but we provide them with information and options.*

Other service providers noted that their role is to help individuals become self-reliant:

*They present to you what their needs are and you respond to those needs. At the same time you empower them.*

*The end goal is to become self-sufficient.*

A common theme to emerge in discussions with service providers was the view that this client group could not be provided with information in the same way as English speaking clients of mainstream services. It was not just a matter of providing a pamphlet and then sending people on their way. For the information to be effective in assisting migrants to gain access to services, two factors were mentioned:

- Quite often there is a need for clients to be *physically* taken to locations and personally introduced to mainstream service providers who could help them (eg Centrelink). This can be intense and time-consuming work.
- Many clients have reasonable or good spoken English, but not *written* language skills. Because they could speak English, mainstream providers often assumed they could also write it when this was not the case. Again, service providers noted that this may require a settlement worker to be physically present to ensure that the client's needs are addressed.

A range of information was sought from migrant community services by the migrants involved in this study. This included:

- practical information and assistance on how to get everyday things done in a new country;
- information to help in addressing immediate settlement needs such as housing, employment and learning English.

Migrants mentioned some very basic information needs such as how to set up a bank account, use public transport or obtain a driver's licence. These types of things may have been simple to do “back home”, but in Australia, solving such tasks can be enormously frustrating. For some migrants, these types of tasks were new in themselves.

Where a service was able to provide information and advocacy to assist in solving these needs, migrants were very positive. For instance, one migrant spoke of his difficulties in not being able to get his driver's licence. Each time he visited the Department of Transport he spoke to a different officer and had to go back to ‘stage one’. The local MRC helped him break this cycle. A volunteer at the centre was able to listen to him, make a phone call on his behalf and make sure he filled in the right documents so that that he could get what he wanted. He was full of praise for this MRC, which he described as being pro-active.

Migrants also mentioned specific needs for information on how to find accommodation or register for social benefits or get a job. Migrant community services generally play a “go-between” role in which they provide information to their clients and act as their advocates, helping them make contact with mainstream services such as Centrelink or the local housing department or agency. In this study it was clear that most of the service providers had built links with mainstream providers of these services, and were able to access help quickly.

However, some migrants were frustrated with the limitations of an information and referral role, wanting the migrant community service to instead *solve* their problems such as housing:

*I am afraid to say that many things begin and end only with words at the MRC.*

Some migrants also mentioned being given inconsistent or inadequate advice. It was claimed by one migrant that he had been given poor advice by a migrant community service provider and had been knocked back for priority housing. A second service provider appealed on his behalf and was successful in getting him a house.

In contrast, other migrants reported the valuable information role played in areas such as employment. Some migrant community services have succeeded in attracting funding to pay for a dedicated employment officer and this person seemed to perform a highly valued role for clients. It was claimed that the type of information many migrants need may not be available in mainstream employment agencies. For instance, a curriculum vitae means a different thing in India to what it does here. Migrants may need to be shown how to write up a resume, write a job application and to find their way around the employment agencies, so that they are more comfortable accessing them on their own. The employment officer may also take on an advocacy role, liaising with agencies on the client's behalf.

These issues around service delivery for migrant community services are explored further in the next chapter.

### **3.6.2 The Adult Migrant English Program**

The discussion groups for this study were conducted with migrants attending AMEP classes. A key theme to emerge from the discussions is the very important and perhaps unrecognised information role played by the

AMEP. One migrant went so far as to describe the AMEP as:

*They are the only source of information on the system.*

In addition to its core function of providing English language tuition, the AMEP offers orientation information to students about services available in Australia, the Australian way of life and system of government.

Clearly the type of orientation information provided by AMEP is not the same as the *individual* assistance given to migrants by migrant community services. However, although not providing case work support, the AMEP does provide a broad range of information about everyday life and about mainstream services and in some localities at least, physically takes the students (in a group) to various local services. The teachers are familiar with the individual circumstances of students, and because they are known personally to the students the teachers may become confidantes. In the event of individuals needing attention, the teacher is able to refer them on to an AMEP counsellor. And, because English language learning takes place over time and the contact with teachers and other students is likely to be on-going, there is the opportunity for students to raise issues as they arise.

AMEP is a major point of 'capture' for the settlement target group. Enrolments come from ranks of newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have a 'functional' level of English. These people are entitled to up to 510 hours of English tuition with the AMEP. Nationally AMEP has a reach of about 75 percent of eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants. Eligible clients register within three months of arrival or grant of permanent residence, and start tuition within one year of registration.

In this study, the AMEP appears to play a particularly significant information role for spouse migrants, many of whom had had no

other contact with settlement services. One AMEP provider commented that in the process of trying to recruit clients for this study she found few students had used the migrant community services in the region. She attributed this to the fact that many of the more proficient English speakers tended to be married to Australians and relied on their husbands for help.

*A lot of our better students are spouses, and do not use the services.*

The importance of AMEP to this group cannot be over-estimated, if the migrants in this study are a guide. One young woman spoke of being depressed and isolated at home. It was not until she started studying English at the AMEP that she was able to make friends, share experiences and gain a glimpse at what her new life in Australia could really be like.

*It's like a window.*

*Our life is only two people. Sometimes my husband is tired; he does not want to talk to me.*

*I want to find people who are interested in what I talk about. R (an AMEP teacher) tells us we are special. I think R is special.*

In several discussion groups, migrants said that they had not heard about their local MRC, MSA or CSSS services until they had been told about them during an AMEP class. Often staff from these services are invited to address students as part of orientation activities.

The reliance on the AMEP may not be the same in all locations. The young woman quoted above came from a location where the local migrant community service provider is in cramped quarters on the first floor of a building with poor street signage. An AMEP teacher said this particular settlement service was not the sort of place people would drop in on.

*You would only go there if you have an appointment.*

It would appear that if migrant community services are to perform their information function adequately, they need to be accessible to potential clients. It was claimed that this particular service was not, in large part, because it was poorly located in premises that did not allow for social interaction.

In summary, the feedback from discussion groups suggests that the AMEP performs a pivotal *information* role for the migrants involved in this study. This would suggest that, in the context of the present study, the following questions deserve to be addressed:

- To what extent do the AMEP and migrant community services (MRCs/MSAs, CSSS) offer *complementary* and *parallel* services?
- To what extent do AMEP and migrant community services *compete* with each other in relation to providing information to clients in the settlement target group?

### 3.6.3 IHSS services

Some humanitarian entrants in the study group were eligible for intensive support provided by IHSS services, and these services were noted as being a very important source of information and support on arrival in Australia. Although this study did not encompass IHSS services specifically, an issue emerged in some locations around some clients becoming dependent on IHSS service providers, and failing to move on to other sources of information and support at the end of their period of intensive assistance. This is an issue that may require further exploration.

## 4. SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The service delivery functions of migrant community services include information provision, referral, case-work and outreach services, often involving providing advocacy on behalf of migrants. These services are intended to assist migrants to settle and participate in the social and economic life of the community as quickly as possible. Services are directed towards facilitating access to mainstream services and helping migrants become self-reliant.

The information role of migrant community services has been explored in the previous chapter. This chapter explores other aspects of the service delivery role. It begins by highlighting the ways in which migrants involved in this study found migrant community services to be of value to them. It also explores some of the issues around service delivery which emerged from the discussions with migrants, service providers and community stakeholders across the four locations for the study.

### 4.2 SERVICES VALUED BY MIGRANTS

A theme to emerge from discussions with migrants is that immediate, practical assistance offered by migrant community services is valued, particularly that which helps migrants address pressing settlement needs. Some specific examples of services mentioned by migrants as valuable include:

- Employment support, because it helped migrants find out about and prepare for the Australian job market. Resumes and other aspects of applying for a job can differ in different countries, and the expertise of a dedicated employment support officer helped provide migrants with information

about the expectations of Australian employers.

For example in one location, an employment support service is provided out of the migrant community service. The employment officer is in regular contact with most of the 30 job agencies in the city and acts as a bridge for recent arrivals wanting to enter the job market. Mainstream organisations like Centrelink refer migrants to him, as do other settlement officers working within the migrant community service. This officer's salary is paid for by the local Department of Employment. Services spoken of as particularly useful included help with writing resumes and job applications and advocacy of behalf of clients.

- Accessing quality childcare can be a difficulty, particularly for migrant women who would like to attend English classes or take up employment. This was raised as an issue in several locations.

At one migrant community service, a child care support worker is employed on a State Government grant. This has advantages for clients because it means the worker can also assess and help solve other problems related to their having migrated to Australia. For instance, one woman on a spouse visa had two young children and her husband travelled extensively. The child care worker was able to find childcare for the woman's younger child close to her other child's school, as well as advise her on transportation and help her obtain a driver's licence.

- Homework assistance was also mentioned as a valued service by migrants in one location. One community stakeholder commented that these classes helped bridge the gap for parents between home and school. This service is funded by a local government grant.

### 4.3 MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS

The issue of isolation was identified as a key settlement issue for many spouse migrants who were involved in the discussion groups for this study. The role of the AMEP in meeting some of these needs for social contact has already been discussed. In some locations it is apparent that migrant community services also fulfil a social need for these women.

For example, in one location the migrant community service had succeeded in attracting funding to organise activities for women. Groups of women attended regularly to do sewing, cooking and other classes, and through these activities, make contact with other migrants. However in one other location the migrant community service appeared not to be set up in a way which facilitated social interaction. Its premises were cramped, and one service provider described it as not being the type of place that people would drop in.

In a third location, women said they were regular clients of the local MRC. They had not been there to get information or help (their husbands fulfilled this role for them), but to take part in drama, cooking and other classes. The MRC was a social outlet for them, and they visited it on a daily basis.

The AMEP provider in this location noted that she saw the MRC as a place where migrants feel safe to practice their English and meet others.

*That's what it is. It's a non-threatening meeting place.*

### 4.4 REFERRAL

A key function of migrant community services is to link migrants in to the range of mainstream services available to all Australians. The goal is for migrants to become self-reliant. At the organisational level a migrant community service forges links to mainstream services through its involvement in local settlement planning forums and networks.

At the individual level, migrant community services assist migrants to access mainstream services by providing information on those services and referral to them, and by advocating on behalf of migrants using those services. As outlined in the discussion on the information role of migrant community services, where a service was able to provide information, referral and advocacy services that assisted in solving settlement needs by creating a pathway to mainstream services, migrants were very positive about the role of the service.

However, it became clear that referral was also a key area of criticism for some migrants involved in the study because it was not seen as an effective way of "solving" their problems. In part this related to the way in which referral was being handled; it also related to the expectations of some of the migrants themselves who clearly wanted services to "deliver" in areas such as housing. Issues around referral are explored in this section.

#### Types of referral

It appears that referral is occurring across the various layers of services available to migrants. This includes:

- Referral of a migrant to a settlement worker in a migrant community service. An example would be where a Centrelink officer or an AMEP teacher refers a client on to a settlement worker for specific settlement assistance; another example might be where a client receiving IHSS services is referred on at the end of their period of intensive support to a migrant community service;
- Referral of a migrant by a settlement worker within a migrant community service to another worker within that service. An example would be where a migrant is referred to an employment officer within a service;
- Referral of a migrant by a settlement worker within a migrant community

service to a mainstream agency, such as Centrelink or the Department of Housing.

#### Referral to migrant community services

There are several issues that emerged in discussion with community stakeholders and service providers around referral from other agencies to migrant community services. Some of these highlight the difficulties experienced in busier locations in handling the demand for services, which can fluctuate and be unpredictable. In one location, a community stakeholder said she was surprised at how long it took sometimes to book a migrant in to see a settlement worker at the local MRC. In another location, some migrant community service providers noted that they had had to refuse some referrals from a torture and trauma counselling service as they could not provide the level of support required for these clients.

An IHSS service provider mentioned that workers funded under the CSSS program in her area were overworked and sometimes could not take referrals. She had sometimes to 'shop around' to find which CSSS worker in the area was able to take clients on.

Another issue also emerged in relation to clients **not** being referred on to migrant community services at appropriate stages in their settlement. There appear to be some instances where refugee and humanitarian entrants who are eligible for intensive initial settlement support under IHSS can become reliant on IHSS service providers. If they are to 'move on' and be introduced to mainstream support mechanisms, it is crucial that referral on to migrant community services, in particular CSSS workers, is done appropriately. CSSS workers may have a brief to case manage these clients, as required. In one location clients were not being formally referred on from the IHSS provider. This lessens the possibility that the client will be supported to 'move through the system' with the support of the CSSS worker. It also increases the likelihood

that the client will remain dependent on these intensive services.

#### Referral from migrant community services to mainstream agencies

In relation to referral from migrant community services to mainstream agencies, the study found that the referral process appears to vary between locations and between different services in the same location. At its most basic, a migrant may simply be given a card with an address of a mainstream provider and a phone number. Alternatively, a settlement worker might write a letter of introduction or make a phone call to the person to whom the migrant is being referred. Where the issue is more complex, or the migrant more needy, the settlement worker might take the migrant to the place where they are being referred to.

#### Issues raised about referral

There were a number of issues raised about the process of referral in the course of this study. These include:

- The need of clients to know that their problems are being taken seriously and that they are not being "fobbed off" when they are referred on.
- The need for service providers to follow-through with clients and ensure their issues have been adequately dealt with.
- The need to ensure that the service provider who a client is being referred to is adequately briefed about that person's requirements. One mainstream organisation said it was less than satisfactory when a client turned up with just a name on a card, and had to explain their problem a second time round.
- The need to clearly articulate to clients what level of service to expect, ie to manage expectations. Clients need to be clear about the role of migrant community services and what can realistically be delivered.

These issues are explored in more detail below.

#### Adequacy of referrals and follow-up

The question of the *adequacy* of referrals emerged in several locations. Despite the views of service providers that ideally some clients should be physically accompanied as part of the process of providing information on and referral to another organisation, in reality, the level of individual attention provided to clients varied across services and across locations.

Some clients spoke of being passed on from one service provider to another, without any one person appearing to take responsibility for assisting with their problems.

*I have complained in the MRC about my accommodation situation, and they've sent me to the Department of Immigration. You are just passed on.*

*I have already been to Centacare, Centrelink, to different agencies. They say "Wait for my call". It's better to do things on your own.*

Others claimed that that there had been a lack of follow-up:

*They had a program for employment. They said if I want, I can apply as a volunteer. They not reply for ages... (been waiting) months. I filled in a form to work as a volunteer and they didn't answer at all.*

*Wait for a long time (at the MRC), and there is no answer. Come tomorrow, again no answer. Time is going, I keep asking about the Housing Commission.*

A second client had a similar experience in response to an inquiry he had made about getting help to find a job:

*I met the social worker there but never heard from them again. They were not helpful.*

It would appear that for a client to feel satisfied with the help received, they need to feel they have been listened to and taken seriously. They also need to be given practical information to assist in addressing a problem or offered direct assistance. They also need to feel that the person they have been referred to understands their problem and will be interested in assisting them.

By way of contrast with the previous examples, a client who received help in setting up a bank account and getting a driver's licence was particularly pleased with the assistance he received from a migrant community service:

*It's not one of those departments which says: Here is a phone number, give them a ring. They have an answer for every question. They follow up and check that all has worked for you.*

#### Managing expectations

It is, of course much easier for a service provider to be successful in providing assistance with something like getting a driver's licence than obtaining a job or an affordable house.

For example, in one location a service provider has been under considerable pressure from clients with large families seeking four or five bedroom houses. There is a shortage of houses of this size in the area. Providing any housing, let alone very scarce large houses, is beyond the power of the migrant community service to solve. In this location, some migrants had difficulty in accepting that referral was the role of the service – they wanted immediate help in having their needs for affordable housing addressed.

For these types of needs, migrant community services often can do no more than play a 'go-between' role, in which they provide information to clients, refer them on to appropriate mainstream providers, and act as their advocates. The power to deliver often lies with other agencies, although these too may not be

able to “solve” a client's problem by providing a house, or a job. In this respect, managing a client's expectations becomes an important part of providing an information and referral service.

It became apparent to the study team that this is more of a problem for the larger centres, where there is a heavier demand for settlement services, and often more pressure on the housing and job market.

#### Referrals not occurring

In the course of the study it also became clear that there were instances where referrals were not occurring for some of the more specialised and sensitive issues that a migrant might seek information or advice on from a migrant community service, for example, domestic violence.

In summary, the criticisms made around the area of referral suggest that the nature of the referral process deserves closer attention. In particular, there may be a need to establish standards and protocols for referral practices in migrant community services.

### **4.5 DUTY OF CARE**

Associated with referral is the issue of ‘duty of care’. As noted above, there were instances which came to the attention of the study team where migrants with issues requiring specialised advice and support were not referred on to specialist mainstream services but were dealt with by settlement workers themselves.

It appears that in some instances the ‘duty of care’ to clients was not understood by settlement workers and quite possibly, the level of supervision and monitoring of workers was not adequate.

For example, in interviews with community stakeholders in one location it was claimed that a local settlement worker funded under a CSSS grant had inappropriately dealt with a domestic

violence issue, with some adverse results for a client. While it would be inappropriate to pinpoint the details of this case, at the broadest level it raises questions about the quality of the advice given to this woman, whether the level of risk had been adequately and appropriately assessed, and the level of supervision and guidance being provided to the settlement worker. Of interest also was the decision not to refer the woman on to other services available in the community that specialised in domestic violence issues.

This example raises a number of issues which deserve further consideration:

- There is a need to more clearly articulate standards of service delivery expected from migrant community services, and from individual settlement workers;
- There may also be a need for protocols to be established for dealing with issues such as domestic violence; and
- It is possible that more training/education in issues around duty of care is required for both migrant community services and individual settlement workers.

### **4.6 LINKS WITH MAINSTREAM SERVICES**

Also associated with referral is the quality of the links between migrant community services and mainstream services. This study found that the quality of the links varied not only across locations, but also between settlement services and *different* mainstream agencies in the same location.

Strong links appear to occur for a range of reasons:

- A mainstream provider may have a dedicated multicultural officer, whose responsibilities include maintaining links with migrant community service providers.

- Migrant community service providers may have organised information sessions for staff from mainstream agencies and may play an active role in the local settlement planning networks.
- Settlement workers may be in daily or weekly contact with particular providers.
- In smaller communities, a settlement worker may be widely known for having particular expertise.

In one location, a service provider explained that the emphasis of the migrant community service was on *advocacy* and *facilitation*. If a mainstream organisation was not attuned to the needs of migrant clients, the migrant community service could help it understand these needs. Conversely, the migrant community service should not purport to have expertise in areas that it does not.

Assisting clients to get access to mainstream services requires cooperation on the part of mainstream providers to recognise and meet the needs of migrants. It also means that migrant community service providers need to be able to recognise where their role begins and ends. This is not necessarily straightforward.

In some locations, opportunities exist for cross referrals which are not developed. For example, a community stakeholder in one location mentioned that there was one service other than the local migrant community service which regularly contacted him. This service was a women's refuge, which contacted him every three to four weeks for assistance in addressing the needs of non-English speaking women who had been victims of domestic violence.

On making further inquiries it was discovered that there was virtually no cross-referral between this refuge and the migrant community service. In the 12 months to June 30 this year, staff at the refuge saw 33 migrant women, none of whom had been referred by the local migrant community service provider.

This did not mean that the provider had not dealt with domestic violence – to the contrary. One settlement worker was known as ‘the person to go to’ if a non-English speaking woman experienced these problems. This worker then dealt with these problems as she saw fit.

The manager of this migrant community service has since taken a number of initiatives, including setting up a meeting with refuge staff. This has helped to create stronger links between the migrant community service and the refuge. The manager has also written new procedures for dealing with domestic violence issues. These put the onus on settlement workers to physically accompany women experiencing domestic violence to the refuge and to introduce them to staff there as a means of ensuring they feel comfortable accessing these specialised mainstream services on their own.

## 4.7 ISSUES AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY

A number of other issues which may affect service delivery were raised by service providers and community stakeholders in discussions and interviews conducted as part of this study. These are summarised below:

### 4.7.1 Staff expertise and turnover

In one location a community stakeholder observed that migrant community services with long serving staff were valued for their consistency and professionalism. Conversely, a high staff turnover was identified as contributing to poor service delivery.

One service provider was described as having a policy of specifically recruiting people from non-English-speaking backgrounds which reflected changes in the immigration intake. These people were often employed on a casual basis, meaning that the provider's workforce could be flexibly managed. The downside,

however, was that these staff tended not to stay long, because they needed to find full-time jobs.

One community stakeholder disagreed with the approach taken by this provider, arguing that it was a mistake to presume clients wanted to see someone from their own language group. Often clients wanted to be able speak with someone who would respect confidentiality and was not part of their ethnic community.

#### 4.7.2 Funding

A number of service providers raised issues around the nature of funding and its effect on their ability to employ staff and deliver services.

Service providers noted that some workers in their organisation were employed part-time on a CSSS grant and were only able to work full-time by having grants from two or three different organisations. This meant they had to work across a range of areas. It was suggested that it could be very difficult for one worker to be an expert in and perform adequately in all areas. Such workers would also need strong support from management in terms of setting priorities and allocating their time, as well as clear lines of supervision.

This was sometimes not provided easily within the structure of community-based organisations run by volunteer management committees.

One provider commented that career development was a problem for settlement workers. Many are employed on short term funding and managers may not see the value in giving them career development opportunities. This could affect the level of expertise they could offer to the job.

Two service providers said they had to reduce the number of hours that settlement workers worked because the level of CSSS grants had not been increased to cover award wage rises.

Most service providers expressed concern about the insecurity for staff related to short-

term funding. One worker said this was not only a problem for individual staff; it also affected their ability to plan programs for the long-term:

*You put together a 12 month plan not even knowing whether you'll still be here to see it through.*

#### 4.7.3 Reporting requirements

Several service providers commented on the reporting requirements that are imposed as part of the service agreement with DIMIA. They wanted more guidance on how to deal with reporting of milestones or performance measures. In the absence of firm guidelines, staff tended to copy the style of previous reports, knowing that these were what had been accepted previously.

It was also suggested that the performance measures be improved. One provider said that theoretically at the end of a year a service could simply list the number of workshops run to meet the performance measure, and this was not a sound basis for assessing performance.

Other issues centred on the Settlement Client Information System (SCIS) set up by the Department. Some service providers spoke of poor training and of being unclear about what was wanted in terms of reporting on SCIS. Generally it was noted that the unreliability of the data makes it a questionable tool for planning services or assessing needs.

#### 4.7.4 Training

Service providers in some locations also felt that better training could be provided on the role of migrant community services, including a focus on the development of standards and best practice and on the outcomes expected from settlement services.

## 4 SERVICE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Apart from the direct delivery of services to migrants in the form of information, referral and advocacy services, migrant community services also perform a service development and community development function in the local community.

This involves initiating and engaging in planning forums with other service providers to promote and implement access and equity. It also involves supporting the settlement and participation in the wider Australian community of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In this study, it appears that the extent to which the service development and community development functions are given emphasis varies according to the migrant community service provider. Three particular initiatives are highlighted here which illustrate the different ways that migrant community services seek to deliver against these functions, as well as some of the pressures placed on them.

### 5.1 WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MAINSTREAM AGENCIES

It appears that some service providers give priority to their coordination, liaison and advocacy role. They become recognised within their local communities as the organisations with expertise in migrant settlement issues, and as such are highly valued.

For instance, a major Commonwealth agency relied heavily on the local migrant community services to provide it with the information needed to ensure services were delivered appropriately. These organisations were described as being culturally sensitive and were relied upon where there were gaps in service delivery.

A local government body in the same area described itself as having a close working relationship with the MRC, describing it as:

*A strong advocacy and service delivery body that is very active in the region.*

By the same token staff from this particular MRC felt that in the last four years the general community has demanded much more from it as an organisation. Potentially, the MRC could be involved in every facet of the community: in drugs, mental health, policing etc.

*There is no focus. It is everything and everywhere.*

Clearly the broader community valued the MRC. This organisation however felt a huge pressure to be involved 'with everything'. Government departments and other providers came to the MRC and wanted to know how to connect with migrants so that they could better meet their needs. While this was a healthy move, the MRC could not handle the demand, particularly as it was also located in an area where there is a high demand for direct client services.

In another location the emphasis is on facilitation, with the migrant community service facilitating meetings and sessions between migrants, community groups and mainstream providers so that contacts can be established and needs and services can be discussed directly.

*To my mind it makes much more sense if we facilitate, promote, get the people together and do the administration, but we use the experts in that area to actually run it. We bring in the mainstream service provider.*

*If we sit here forever organising things ourselves, the mainstream providers are never going to get involved. Once we show them it's an easy process, maybe they might start doing it themselves.*

## 5.2 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

One MRC particularly emphasised promotion of cultural activities as a means of maintaining a positive and high public profile, and as a way of fulfilling its community development function. With the initiatives of this centre, an annual festival of cultural activities is held which has become an event on the community calendar. Preparations for this occur throughout the year, and involve a wide range of community organisations who are able to meet on the premises of the migrant community service.

## 5.3 COMBINING CASE WORK WITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development has many facets. It involves many different types of activities, ranging from cross-cultural training, to assisting new and emerging communities to access funding. In this study, an outreach program in a rural area provides an example of how case work can be combined with community development as a means of trying to link isolated individuals and communities with mainstream organisations.

As part of this program a worker funded under the CSSS travels to various community centres in the region to hold regular sessions, involving meetings with individual clients, service providers and ethnic communities.

During one session conducted recently with clients, the issues raised ranged from terminal illness and domestic violence to petrol sniffing. In each instance, there were issues to be followed through with other service providers and people in the community to ensure that migrants could access the appropriate services to assist with these issues.

The CSSS worker with responsibility for this outreach service recently made a decision in conjunction with her manager to try to refocus resources. Intensive effort is now being directed to particular communities in order to link them in with mainstream agencies and the

wider Australian community. Once these people are better able to help themselves, the worker moves on to a different project.

In the last nine months, an 'emerging' Hmong community has been the focus of this outreach service, with efforts directed towards helping this community to develop access to mainstream services. A considerable time has been spent linking community members in with services like the 'Work for the Dole' program and the local library. The outreach worker said she had helped the Hmong women to get a grant to support their weaving work. This was not just a matter of helping them to fill out forms but rather part of a strategy aimed at linking up Hmong women, who are often marginalised. The worker took the women to the library for meetings and to local shops where they costed the materials needed for the weaving project. This information was used to support their grant application.

*Once we bring people together we can feed them information. Once they know your face and trust you, they will identify their issues.*

A relationship of trust was vital to delivering services.

In a separate project, a multicultural advocacy committee was convened to lobby to get a multicultural officer appointed to the local council. The outreach worker has worked with local service providers and community leaders to get this initiative off the ground.

Community development work, especially in rural and remote areas, can be resource hungry. There are currently no funds for this outreach worker to make overnight visits. The worker recently had to travel for two-and-a-half hours, stay in the location for three hours, and then turn around and drive back again.

*It's not a very satisfactory experience. There is no money to stay overnight, and I'm on nine to five. It is only by staying overnight that you really find out what is really going on.*

## 6. KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of this research are as follows:

- The core settlement difficulties experienced by migrants in this study were finding accommodation, getting a job and learning English. Isolation also emerged as a theme across the locations for the study.
- Problems experienced by clients in finding accommodation included a lack of appropriate housing, overcrowding, unsatisfactory public housing and inconsistent or inadequate advice. Some clients were also concerned about the failure of settlement service providers to 'come up with the goods' and find a house.
- Obtaining work was regarded as critical to successful settlement. Clients said there were a number of barriers, including the need to have Australian work experience, references from an Australian employer, information about whether qualifications are recognised and what needed to be done to upgrade them, and information about the job market. Where migrant community services staff include an employment officer, this person was particularly valued by clients. They could help with writing job applications, shaping resumes and in putting clients in contact with local employers and employment agencies.
- Currently around one quarter of eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants do not take up their English language tuition entitlement. This fact deserves investigating. In this study it appeared that some migrants prioritise finding employment ahead of learning English, but this may have repercussions some years down the track, especially as they age and if women in the community have not learnt English. Several service providers mentioned that they had older migrants as clients. These often were people who had not learnt English as 'part of their initial settlement'.
- In this study, family migrants and sponsored humanitarian entrants tended to rely on family and friends to provide them with information about Australia before they arrive. On arrival, family and friends continue to be a major source of settlement support for these people. However, concern was expressed that sponsors may not be able to give migrants sufficient support, especially if they did not speak English, worked fulltime and were not available to take new arrivals along to services. While ethnic communities often provided significant support, some were under pressure. The Sudanese and other communities of African migrants may have currently reached capacity for providing support to new arrivals.
- Migrant community services perform important functions for recently arrived migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds and humanitarian entrants. The information role of these services is valued, both in terms of meeting immediate everyday needs (such as setting up a bank account) and in providing assistance with such tasks as finding accommodation, employment and registering for social security. Clients were most satisfied when service providers listened to their problems, referred them to the appropriate person, and then followed up to ensure their problem had been solved. There may be a need to consider and perhaps provide clearer guidelines about the nature of the referrals expected from migrant community services.
- Satisfaction with direct client services was not uniform. The main area of criticism appears to be the nature of the referral process. Clients of a migrant community service need to know that their problem has been taken seriously; equally, service

providers need to manage client's expectations about what can reasonably be delivered.

- Migrant community service providers said their client group could not be treated in the same way as English speaking clients of mainstream services. Some clients needed to be physically taken to locations and introduced to service providers. Many had reasonably good spoken English but not written language skills. Again this may mean that a provider needs to be physically present when the client meets with a mainstream service provider to ensure details are adequately explained and that problems are addressed.
- A high proportion of the AMEP students with good English language skills in two of the four locations visited were women who have migrated under the family stream. MRCs in two locations appeared to offer these women support in the form of social contact and a social outlet. This may be important for reducing the loneliness and isolation some women experience when they migrate to Australia as spouses of Australian men. In one location, the local migrant community service provider was not seen to be facilitating this type of social interaction. In this instance, the women spoken to regarded the AMEP as particularly important for providing them with a social outlet.
- A range of issues arose in relation to the quality of services delivered by migrant community services. In addition to questions about the quality of referrals, the issue of duty of care was raised. It is important that settlement workers know how to exercise duty of care appropriately. In this area, there appears to be a need to more clearly articulate standards of service delivery including protocols for dealing with sensitive issues such as domestic violence. Settlement workers also need to be familiar with duty of care issues and receive appropriate supervision and guidance in their role.
- The AMEP sits alongside migrant community services as one of the general settlement programs DIMIA funds. It is a major point of contact for migrants in the settlement target group and its role may have been underestimated. The AMEP provides a broad range of information about everyday life and about mainstream services. In some cases it is also where migrants first hear about migrant community service programs. The role of the AMEP in relation to information provision is such that it is worth investigating the extent to which the AMEP and migrant community services offer complementary and parallel services, and the extent to which these services compete.
- A high staff turnover may be contributing to poor service delivery in some locations. Issues relating to staff retention should be examined further, including the impact of employing workers on a part-time, casual basis.
- Mainstream organisations often value the expertise of migrant community services. Links are forged between these organisations for a range of reasons. However the demands associated with providing assistance to mainstream organisations may be onerous for migrant community services. This is particularly the case in areas of high demand for direct client services.
- The community development function of migrant community services can be used as a valuable adjunct to case work. An example was cited in which resources were focused on developing contact with an isolated community and helping community members build links with the broader Australian community.

## 7 EVALUATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The three-stranded qualitative methodology used in this study - involving consultations with service providers, clients and community stakeholders - enabled the study team to examine the client perspective on migrant community services, without restricting the research to a narrow focus. The three strands of research meant that the opinions of service providers and community stakeholders could be taken into account, contributing to a broader overview of issues involved in evaluating settlement service effectiveness.

One objective of this study was to evaluate the methodology used with a view to understanding how best to approach evaluations of this type in the future. It is the view of the study team that the general methodology was appropriate for this purpose, however some shortcomings emerged during the course of the research – particularly in relation to client recruitment. These are examined in detail in this section and suggestions are made on ways of improving the methodology.

### 7.2 A NOTE ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Section 1.2 of this report on the scope of this research project identified that the study would seek to gather views and perceptions on the experience of migrants and refugees using these services, including *frequency of use* and *levels of satisfaction*. It is important to reiterate that this was not a quantitative study and that the gathering of statistics was not a research aim. Statistics on frequency of use were in fact supplied to the study team, but it was decided that these were so inconsistent and unreliable that it would be inappropriate for them to be reported. In any case, the value of qualitative research is in identifying themes and issues. As

the previous section demonstrates, the data have enabled the study team to identify the need for DIMIA to address fundamental questions such as the nature of referral processes and duty of care issues. Quantitative surveys are unlikely to be able to identify issues such as these; this is the realm of qualitative research.

### 7.3 CLIENT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As noted in the introduction, there were some difficulties in recruiting clients for this study through the AMEP. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Some AMEP providers were less effective than others in recruiting clients according to the study specifications. In one discussion group for instance, all of the participants in one group had heard about the services in their area because a local service provider had spoken to their class the previous week. However very few of the group had actually used the service.
- The ‘match’ between AMEP students and clients of migrant community services may not be as close as DIMIA had expected. Although the client group for both is similar, those migrants and humanitarian entrants with strong family or community support appear less likely to seek assistance from migrant community services. Their sponsors or support networks are likely to have helped them find a house and register for social security; and their levels of English are such that attendance at AMEP is a priority. They are less likely at this stage to seek outside help in finding a job. It is also possible that AMEP may have soaked up some of the demand for information services from non-English speaking migrants. By taking on an information provision role, the AMEP is possibly providing a service which parallels and competes with that undertaken by migrant community services.

- Recruitment from the higher level English classes may have skewed recruitment in favour of women who come here as family stream migrants. In three of the AMEP centres visited, a significant proportion of the more proficient students were women who came here as family stream migrants.
- Recruitment from the higher level English classes may have excluded some clients who had made great use of migrant community services. One AMEP provider commented that:

*When I knew that I was looking for people who have used the centres, I thought of one Vietnamese family who I know have used the centre at 'X'. They have had a lot of problems with housing. But their level of English is not sufficient for them to be put in the focus group. I have another family who are Arabic speakers who have big problems but they are in the lowest English groups.*

In the client groups where most or all of the participants had used a local migrant community service, their contributions were valuable.

The fact that the discussions took place in a location and with a group of people that was non-threatening worked, in the sense that participants felt comfortable to talk about very basic, everyday, difficulties they experienced (such as not knowing how to set up a bank account). Helping migrants through these difficulties is an important role of settlement services, and being able to tap into open and honest responses is important.

In two instances, the study team spoke to clients who had been recruited by service providers. Although these groups were useful in the sense that clients were able to articulate the assistance found to be useful, they were of less value than the client groups recruited by the AMEP. The clients recruited by service providers were likely to speak of the services in

glowing terms. This is not surprising because the service providers *had* helped them, often in significant ways. For instance, a provider may have helped a migrant family find a house and access social security benefits. Recruitment in this way is likely to skew the data towards those who are happiest with the service provided.

The view of the study team is that recruitment through AMEP is preferable. It has the obvious benefit of being at arms length from the service providers which is essential. However to maximise the success of recruitment through the AMEP, some refinements in approach are suggested, as well as the use of a combination of different types of groups.

In this pilot study, the initial approach to AMEP involved DIMIA sending a letter which outlined the study aims and asked for assistance in recruiting clients according to the study requirements. This was then followed up by researchers to establish the numbers for the discussion group, and the final arrangements.

In light of how recruitment proceeded, a better approach might be for AMEP to be approached in two stages:

- In the first instance, AMEP providers could be asked to canvas students across classes (at all levels of English proficiency) and determine the *numbers* of students with differing levels of proficiency who had actually *used* local migrant community services.
- Secondly, the AMEP provider could be asked to name any *identifiable groups* of students, regardless of English proficiency, who had made use of migrant community services. For instance, African migrants emerged as a significant group within the migrants recruited for this study.

Based on the experience of conducting this pilot study, there should be no difficulties in recruiting at least one general "mixed" discussion group in each location. If there are sufficient clients in the higher level classes for a

discussion group of between eight and ten people, the AMEP provider should be asked to check to see if these people will participate.

It is then suggested that some small discussion groups be set up with people from identifiable groups, who share a common language. The groups should consist of five or six people, and are likely to require the presence of an interpreter. These groups would offer some advantages over the mixed groups in terms of being able to more easily explore any systematic themes common to that group.

It would be important for a DIMIA representative to be made available to assist in deciding which group consultations to conduct. A DIMIA officer who is abreast of settlement trends and current issues would be in a position to help identify particular groups of interest, particularly those who represent groups of high need or representing settlement 'hot spots'. The same type of discussion guide should be used, with the emphasis being on broad settlement experiences and not just on strengths or weaknesses of settlement services. This is because a broader approach opens the door to discovering unexpected factors.

One of the concerns expressed about setting up this type of research is that people wanting to vent anger at particular service providers are more likely to volunteer to take part. In any study of this kind, participation can only be invited and many factors may influence the decision to participate, such as whether or not clients are self-confident. In this context, having both a general mixed group and groups organised around a common language may encourage more clients to participate.

These approaches require more intensive research early on. It requires the cooperation of the AMEP coordinator/manager, and may need to involve more teachers. However because it involves taking a flexible approach and acknowledging the expertise of AMEP staff, they are likely to be responsive.

In this context, it is worth noting that during the pilot it became clear that an AMEP teacher in one location had played a 'gatekeeper role'. Although DIMIA had made it clear that interpreters could be made available, this teacher made a personal decision not to recruit participants who were less proficient in English. This teacher later said she felt it would be too stressful for her less proficient students to take part. This may have had the effect of *excluding* some participants who could have offered valuable insights for the research.

Finally, it is worth noting that the participation of recently arrived migrants who were *not* clients of the services did prove to be valuable to this study and provided insights which may otherwise not have occurred. Where there are difficulties in recruiting even one general client group, it is suggested that it would be important to consult with one group of students in that location as well as with AMEP staff 'on the ground'. This would be in an effort to find out if there are particular reasons why services in that area are not being used by potential clients.

#### **7.4 GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS**

In this pilot study, there was considerable variation in the type of data collected from service providers. This was primarily because the composition of the groups differed markedly. Two of the locations each had only one service provider, and this meant that a discussion group was set up which was attended by all staff, and some volunteers. However in one location, five service providers were included. This meant that the discussion groups had to be focused on general service issues, and not on initiatives specific to particular services.

For any future research in this area, it is recommended that where an area is serviced by a core provider (an MRC/MSA), one

discussion group be devoted to that provider. If this is not possible, a separate one-on-one interview with the manager of this core service should be conducted (as occurred in one location in this study).

When discussion groups are to be attended by a number of providers, one suggestion would be to match 'like services with like'. For instance, in Canberra, service delivery is managed along the lines of a north/south split. However, it may have been of value for the representatives of the local Community Service in the north and the local Community Service the south, both of which had CSSS funding, to attend the same discussion group because this could have served to highlight issues associated with a common service delivery model.

## **7.5 INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS**

These generally went very well, and proved particularly valuable for exploring issues raised by service providers or clients in more detail.

One suggestion for future studies is that additional research effort be conducted prior to the fieldwork being conducted, to ensure that the people to be interviewed are the most appropriate. The contact lists supplied by DIMIA and service providers sometimes included stakeholders who did not have much to offer. Generally the research assumed that the best contacts were those which had been recommended, however this was not necessarily the case.

Based on the experience from this study, it is worth ensuring that one face to face interview is conducted with the local AMEP provider. These interviews proved to be invaluable, often providing a historical context as well as an informed understanding of issues for migrants and refugees in their area.

## **7.6 PRELIMINARY RESEARCH**

The experience of conducting this initial study has been useful in identifying a number of areas where more extensive preliminary research could assist the research process, including:

- Detailed consultations with the AMEP coordinator/manager in each location to find out which students use migrant community services and whether there are any particular groups that it might be worth convening separate groups for; and
- A 'first pass' check of the value of people recommended for stakeholder interviews. If the recommended stakeholder does not have a regular contact with a service provider, this should be noted. At times this is an important piece of data. In some instances, fewer interviews may suffice although more may be required in bigger locations or where particular issues need to be explored.

## APPENDIX A: STUDY LOCATIONS

## APPENDIX A: STUDY LOCATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The four study locations represented very diverse environments for the delivery of settlement services. According to DIMIA statistics, in 2000/2001 the Dandenong MRC had almost 3,900 clients and Canberra/Queanbeyan had 1,436 clients. In the same year, Cairns and Townsville each had about 720 clients.

There were also differences in the types of services offered in each location. This is evidenced not just by the type of assistance sought by clients at individual MRCs or MSAs, but also in the number of service providers in an area and the different emphases in service delivery.

The fact that there was only one service provider in Cairns and in Townsville meant that more detailed information was obtained on these services than on the various service providers in Dandenong and the ACT. The Townsville MRC has a high public profile which emphasises cultural activities; the Cairns MSA is less prominent but is highly regarded by mainstream providers and has assumed a strong community development role; advocacy and facilitation are a large part of its activities.

### DANDENONG

#### Settlement Patterns

In the two years to the end of June, 2002, 2,610 migrants settled in the Dandenong region of south-eastern Victoria. Of these, 1,097 were humanitarian entrants, 906 were family migrants without functional English, 133 were family entrants with functional English, and 475 were skilled migrants.

The most common countries of birth for all migrants settling in Dandenong over this period were Former Yugoslavia (14.2%), Vietnam (9.1%), Bosnia-Herzegovina (7.5%), Cambodia (7.3%), Sri Lanka (6.6%), China (6.4%), India (6.2%), Croatia (5.9%), Sudan (5.7%) and Afghanistan (3.1%).

#### Settlement Services

Service delivery in the Dandenong/Springvale region is split between the two areas. One of the services studied was SCAAB, the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau. This is a long-standing mainstream service, dating back to the days when it provided support to migrants attending nearby the migrant hostel. The South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre is the other major settlement service in the region. According to DIMIA statistics, the Dandenong MRC assisted almost 8,900 clients in the three years between 1999 and 2002.

The South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre receives core MRC funding and CSSS funds for four separate initiatives. A senior social worker is employed to deliver complex case management services, both for refugee/humanitarian entrants and recent small and emerging communities. A second CSSS worker also has as a focus new and emerging communities in the south eastern region. The two other CSSS grants are for an ethno-specific project targeted at refugees from Afghanistan and for work with refugee youth.

The SCAAB is funded to provide information, advice, advocacy and casework services to new and emerging communities. It also has a specific brief to assist Vietnamese women.

The two other services included in this study were the Merhamet Muslim Welfare Association and the Serbian Welfare Association of Victoria.

## CANBERRA/QUEANBEYAN

### Settlement Patterns

In the two years to the end of June, 2002, a total of 1,984 migrants settled in Canberra and Queanbeyan. Of these, 184 were humanitarian entrants, 367 were family migrants without functional English, 249 were family entrants with functional English, and 1084 were skilled migrants.

The most common countries of birth for migrants settling in the Canberra/Queanbeyan region\* over this period were China (9.7%), India (9.2%), United Kingdom (7.6%), Philippines (7.6%), Sri Lanka (4.3%), Pakistan (3.1%), South Africa (3.0%), Vietnam (2.9%), former USSR (2.4%) and Fiji (2.4%).

\*Based on the MRC service region for Canberra and Queanbeyan.

### Settlement Services

Five service providers in the Canberra/Queanbeyan region were included in this research: the MRC of Canberra and Queanbeyan, which has core MRC and CSSS funding, and four other services, each with CSSS program funding.

Two of these CSSS services, the Belconnen Community Service and the Woden Community Service reflect a classic split in service provision in Canberra – between suburbs to the north, and to the south. The Belconnen Service is funded to provide a generalist casework service to humanitarian and migrant entrants with limited English proficiency. It also aims to provide for a smooth transition to mainstream services for humanitarian clients who are living in the vicinity of Belconnen and have exited the IHSS early intervention program. The Woden Service is funded to facilitate humanitarian entrant and migrant access to settlement services and key community services.

A third CSSS project sits with an ethno-specific organisation, the Croatian Community Welfare Centre, which has the brief of providing comprehensive settlement assistance to migrants from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The fourth CSSS organisation is the Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre, which is funded to provide a culturally sensitive information and referral service to recent arrivals in Queanbeyan and surrounding districts.

## CAIRNS

### Settlement Patterns

In the two years to the end of June, 2002, a total of 440 migrants settled in Cairns. Of these, 11 were humanitarian entrants, 161 were family migrants without functional English, 94 were family entrants with functional English, and 173 were skilled migrants.

The most common countries of birth for migrants settling within the Cairns region\* over this period were United Kingdom (16.1%), Philippines (15.6%), Japan (13.0%), Thailand (4.7%), Papua New Guinea (3.5%), USA (3.3%), South Africa (3.1%), Indonesia (2.8%), India (2.6%) and Germany (2.4%).

\*Based on the MSA service region for Cairns.

### Migrant Settlement Services

In Cairns, MSS is the sole provider of settlement services for migrants. MSS is operated as an MSA by the Diocese of Cairns, as Centacare Cairns. MSS is relatively new, having been established in the wake of the closure of the Cairns MRC three to four years ago. MSS receives core MSA funding and funding for IHSS and CSSS projects. The staff of seven comprises a manager, CSSS coordinator, two CSSS workers, a community development officer, IHSS worker and an

Employment Services officer whose position is funded by the Department of Employment.

## **TOWNSVILLE**

### **Settlement Patterns**

In the two years to the end of June, 2002, 260 migrants settled in Townsville. Of these, 32 were humanitarian entrants, 70 were family migrants without functional English, 51 were family entrants with functional English, and 107 were skilled migrants.

The most common countries of birth for Townsville\* migrants over this period were the Philippines (14.2%), United Kingdom (12.1%), South Africa (8.8%), Thailand (7.1%), Iraq (4.6%), Former USSR (3.8%), Canada (3.3%), China (2.9%), USA (2.9%) and Papua New Guinea (2.5%).

\*Based on the MRC service region for Townsville.

### **Settlement Services**

The Townsville Migrant Resource Centre has eight paid staff: five funded by DIMIA, one with responsibility for child care services, an employment and training officer and a staff member funded to provide support on mental health issues.

The MRC has core funding from DIMIA as well as CSSS funding, which is designed to deliver on specific settlement issues, relating to health, socialisation, general settlement, lobbying and advocacy. The CSSS funding is also aimed at ensuring that the MRC fosters interagency collaboration and cooperation among settlement service providers in the Townsville region.

## APPENDIX B: STUDY PARTICIPANTS

### OVERVIEW

The client and service provider groups included individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. Migrants from many different countries were represented, as were managers of settlement services, staff and volunteers. Workers employed on CSSS grants with all of the different settlement service providers were represented in the group discussions. However other settlement service staff were also present, including those responsible for services such as job placement, community development and women's issues.

### DANDENONG

#### Clients

Two discussion groups were held at the Dandenong AMES and a third took place at the Springvale AMES. The third group was organised to ensure that clients who had used services near Springvale were also included.

The first Dandenong group started off with nine participants and ended up with 15. The second Dandenong and the Springvale group each had nine participants. The countries they came from were as follows: Afghanistan (3), Bosnia (2), Cambodia (2), China (3), Ethiopia, former Yugoslavia (4), Vietnam (2), and Iraq, Russia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Sudan (6).

The majority of clients involved in the Dandenong groups were humanitarian entrants; clients involved in the Springvale group were mainly family migrants.

#### Service Providers

Consultations were provided with two groups of service providers. One comprised staff of the SCAAB and the second with staff from the

South East Region MRC and the Serbian Welfare Association.

In addition one-on-one interviews were conducted with representatives of Merhamet Muslim Welfare Association and the South Eastern Region MRC.

### Community Stakeholders

Interviews were conducted with representatives of Centrelink in Springvale, the City of Greater Dandenong, Dandenong Community Advisory Bureau and the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture.

## CANBERRA AND QUEANBEYAN

### Clients

A total of 15 migrants from Canberra and Queanbeyan took part in two group discussions held at the AMEP. They came from the following countries: Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Burma (3), former Yugoslavia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Italy, Philippines, Poland, Serbia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Around one-third of the clients involved were humanitarian entrants; two-thirds were family migrants.

### Service Providers

Two discussion groups were conducted with representatives of five different organisations. The first group was attended by staff from the Woden Community Service, the MRC of Canberra and Queanbeyan and the Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre. The second group was conducted with staff and volunteers from the Belconnen Community Service and Croatian Community Welfare Centre.

## Community Stakeholders

Representatives of the following organisations were interviewed: Centrelink, the ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs, ACT Health, Housing and Community Care, Companion House and the AMES.

## CAIRNS

### Clients

Three separate group discussions were conducted, two with AMEP clients comprising five and two students. The third group, of five migrants, was recruited from clients of the Cairns MSA. The low numbers recruited through AMEP meant that Cairns was the least successful in terms of client recruitment. Two AMEP teachers informed the study team that they had great difficulty finding students in the higher levels of English language proficiency who had used the MSA. Their explanation for this was that the majority of their students (four out of five) were women, most of whom had migrated as spouse migrants. As such, they were likely to rely on their spouses and not settlement services for help in having their initial settlement needs met.

Migrants recruited through AMEP came from the following countries: China, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines (3) and Sierra Leone.

To compensate for the shortfall in AMEP clients, the study team asked the Cairns MSA to set up a discussion group with some of its clients. This was convened at very short notice and the numbers attending were again small (5). Of these, only two people (a father and daughter from Samoa) were recent arrivals.

### Service Providers

In Cairns the MSA is the only provider of migrant settlement services in the region. For this reason, only one group discussion was conducted. However there were a number of

subsequent discussions with staff of Cairns MSA, partly because of the unique nature of some services as well as a need to follow through on issues raised by other study participants.

The experience of working with the Cairns, and later, Townsville service providers, show that the group discussions differed greatly depending on whether there was only one service provider, or more than one provider, involved. Discussions with representatives of just one provider helped illuminate key issues for this provider. Discussions with more than one provider focused more on general settlement service issues.

## Community Stakeholders

Interviews were conducted with two AMEP staff as well as representatives of Centrelink, the Queensland Department of Housing, Cairns Community Mental Health, Mareeba Information and Support Service and Ruth's Women's Refuge.

## TOWNSVILLE

### Clients

In Townsville, AMEP staff succeeded in recruiting sufficient students for only one discussion group, comprising seven students. All of these had used the Townsville MRC. These students came from Japan, the Philippines, Russia (2), Somalia, Switzerland and Tonga.

A second Townsville group was recruited from the ranks of MRC clients. Numbers at this group fluctuated but ranged from between four and ten.

Most clients were family migrants, with one humanitarian entrant.

### **Service Providers**

As in Cairns, there is just one provider of migrants settlement services in Townsville. A group discussion was conducted with a total of 12 staff and volunteers from the Townsville MRC.

### **Community Stakeholders**

The study team decided to meet with representatives of the Townsville Multicultural Support Group, an organisation which was previously funded to provide CSSS services and which now has the IHSS contract for Townsville. A researcher conducted discussions with a group of four staff and volunteers. In addition, interviews were conducted with staff from the Community Legal Service, Queensland Department of Housing, Centrelink, Townsville District Health Service and the AMEP.

**APPENDIX C: DISCUSSION  
GUIDE FOR MIGRANTS AND  
REFUGEES**

## FOCUS GROUP GUIDE – MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

### INTRODUCTION AND GUIDELINES

Thank you for agreeing to take part in today's focus group.

My name is Joanne Finlay, and I'm a researcher from *urbis keys young*, a company which has been contracted by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs to conduct a client survey of DIMIA - funded community services.

The survey will be exploring what people think about the effectiveness of settlement services provided by Migrant Resource Centres and community organisations funded under the Community Settlement Services Scheme. The relevant services in the vicinity of Canberra are the:

- Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan
- Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre
- Belconnen Community Service
- Woden Community Service
- Croatian Community Welfare Centre

This research will help the department gain a better understanding of how settlement services have helped migrants and refugees to settle in Australia. They are interested in finding out what is working well, and where improvements could

be made to improve outcomes for people like yourselves.

It's important to note up front that we will not be recording the names of any individuals in this room. The purpose of this inquiry is *not* to gather information specifically about any of you as individuals or about your family. Our aim in setting up this discussion group is to gather opinions and stories which will be reported anonymously and which can be pulled together with comments from other students and reported as a summary. Please be assured that no names will be used in our report.

We are also holding focus group discussions with the people who provide services at the organisations mentioned before. These organisations have agreed to be part of the survey and they know that getting feedback from clients is part of the survey process.

1. First, let's introduce each other. Please tell us which country you come from, the immigration category (refugee, family reunion, employer sponsored etc) you came here under, and how long you have been in Australia?

As background for you, the company I work for, *urbis keys young*, has been doing social research for more than 30 years, much of it with service providers and clients of government services. Recently, for instance, we conducted a review of the AMEP, the organisation which runs the English classes you attend.

2. Let's find out a little more.  
 What preparation did each of you have before immigrating? Was the decision rushed? Did you have much time to prepare?  
 Now, still thinking about the time *before* you arrived, how much initial information did you get and did this help in orienting you to life in Australia? Is there any other information you would have liked to have? What information?
3. When you arrived here, were you on your own? With family?
4. At that early stage, what was the hardest thing for you? Lack of money? Finding accommodation? Not speaking English? Finding a job? Getting health care? What other things were difficult?
5. Who gave you most assistance when you first arrived? Family? Friends? Other immigrants? Or did you find people from either the government or the local community of most help? Which department, or what part of the community? Were they from any specific organisation?
6. When and why did you decide to move here, into the Canberra/Queanbeyan area? Where did you first stay? Did you already have family living here? Close friends?
7. Apart from any immediate family, who has been of most help to you in the Canberra/Queanbeyan area? How did you meet this person or persons? In what ways have they been able to help you?
2. Each of you has had some contact with the settlement service providers we are looking at as part of the Department's review. (If you'd like me to run through the name of these organisations again, they are the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre, Belconnen Community Service, Woden Community Service and Croatian Community Welfare Centre.)  
 Tell me which of these organisations you have had contact with, and how you came to hear about them? Why did you choose to make contact with the organisation/s that you did?
9. What *type* of contact have you, or other people in your family, had with these organisations? Did you go to ask for help? What kind of help? What were the *good* things about dealing with those organisations - in what ways did they assist you or other people in your family?
10. Do you think the services that those settlement organisations offer could be

*improved* in some way? What would make their services better?

Thank you very much for your time. We greatly appreciate your willingness to talk to us and take part in our research.

11. What has been the most confusing things about trying to get your lives together here? Did you feel that you were left on your own to get it all together or did you feel you were supported by people who understood what you were going through and needed?

12. Are there any *other* organisations in the local community which have helped you settle in to Australia, for instance your local church or community group? What about non-government organisations, or government departments? Are there any of these which you have found particularly helpful?

13. How has the assistance you got from the specific settlement service providers we are reviewing compare with the assistance you got from other people?

Who would you say has been *most* helpful, and why?

14. Finally, keeping in mind that our task is aimed at improving settlement services for refugees and other migrants who have not yet arrived here, do you have any other suggestions on how we can make the settlement process easier for them? That is what would you have ideally wanted when you arrived?

**APPENDIX D: DISCUSSION GUIDE  
FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS**

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE – SERVICE PROVIDERS

### INTRODUCTION AND GUIDELINES

Thank you for agreeing to take part in today's discussion group.

My name is Joanne Finlay, and I'm a researcher from *urbis keys young*, a company which has been contracted by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs to conduct a client survey of DIMIA - funded community services.

I know you have been informed about the nature of this study but it might be useful if I just recap what it is about. The survey will be exploring perceptions about the effectiveness of settlement services provided by Migrant Resource Centres and community organisations funded under the Community Settlement Services Scheme. The organisations in the south eastern region of Melbourne (the Dandenong area) included in the survey are the:

- South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre in Dandenong
- Serbian Welfare Association of Victoria in Dandenong
- Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau in Springvale
- Merhamet Muslin Welfare Association in Noble Park

The Department is interested in finding out what is working well, and where value could perhaps be added to improve outcomes for clients. This

research aims to help the Department gain a better understanding of how settlement services have helped migrants and refugees. The results will be made available to you and will be used to help support and improve settlement services. An important part of this research is hearing your views on what improvements could be made to add value for clients.

As part of our research, we are also holding focus group discussions with people who arrived in Australia in the last 12 to 18 months, who are currently studying English and who have used a service or services provided by your organisations. These people have been informed that your organisations have agreed to be part of the survey, and that you know that getting feedback from clients is part of the survey process.

1. To start off, I'd appreciate if you could each tell me which organisation you come from and your role with it?
- 2a. What settlement services in general do each of your organisations provide? eg Information? Advice? Referral? How would you describe your organisation - an advice bureau, for instance, or something else? Are settlement services the only services your organisation offers? How do you define 'settlement services'?

What languages other than English are available amongst the staff of your organisation?

- 2b. Does your organisation also involve itself in what might be termed 'community development' activities in relation to migrants? This might be community education workshops, cultural awareness training etc?
3. Please tell me something about your clients. Who uses the settlement services you provide? Are they mostly, for instance, recent arrivals? What countries do they mainly come from? What about other characteristics - eg age, gender etc?
4. Do any of you know what sorts of services clients use most? Please provide some details.
5. What proportion of your organisation's clients are recent arrivals (in the last 18 months) from *non-English speaking* countries? Do you have any idea what services *they* use most? How do you know?
6. How, mostly, do clients hear about your organisation? What do you think are the most common points of referral?
7. What organisations or groups do you most commonly refer people to? What types of service do they provide?
8. Is your contact with clients on a one-off basis? Do you have any kind of follow up system? (eg do you find out whether they have taken up the referral?)
9. Have you any done any formal assessments of the effectiveness of referrals from your organisation? If so, tell us about what this research found?
10. What do you think are the main *strengths or benefits* of the settlement services you provide?  
  
Are there any aspects of these services that you feel can be improved? What are the constraints you face in enhancing services? (eg. facilities; current location of service; lack of qualified staff; other issues )  
  
Have you *been able* to make improvements in your services? In what ways?
11. Do you have any other information about the effectiveness of the services you offer to our target client group? What in your view is a good settlement outcome? Do you think your clients achieve this and how do you assess this?
12. What other organisations do you know of in the Dandenong area which are also used by migrants/refugees arriving, say in

the past two years? Are these *community-based* organisations? Which ones? What *government* agencies are most commonly used?

13. Are there any ways that you can think of which would enable your organisation to improve the settlement services you provide to new and recently arrived migrants?
  
14. Have you any other suggestions of how the settlement process can be improved for migrants who live in the Dandenong area?
  
15. Finally, as you are aware, we are conducting focus groups with migrants who are currently learning English. Are there any particular groups of people who use your services who might not be able to speak with us directly because they do not speak enough English? Which groups, and can you recommend any particular ways of us making contact and talking with them?

Thank you for your time and help.

**APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW  
GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY  
STAKEHOLDERS**

## INTERVIEW GUIDE – OTHER ORGANISATIONS

### INTRODUCTION AND GUIDELINES

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.

As you are aware the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs is conducting a client survey of DIMIA - funded community services. *Urbis keys young* is conducting this survey on behalf of the Department.

The survey will explore perceptions about the effectiveness of settlement services provided by Migrant Resource Centres and community organisations funded under the Community Settlement Services Scheme. The Department is interested in what is working well and where value could be added to improve outcomes for clients. This research will help the Department gain a better understanding of how settlement services have helped migrants and refugees to settle in Australia.

The survey will primarily focus on obtaining feedback from clients and service providers in four locations around Australia.

The organisations in the ACT and Queanbeyan included in the survey are the:

- Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan
- Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre
- Belconnen Community Service
- Woden Community Service

### ■ Croatian Community Welfare Centre Inc

We are also talking to people from organisations in the Canberra/Queanbeyan area that have contact with these service providers. We are interested in obtaining a local perspective, in particular on aspects of service provision such as the referral of clients to your organisation and any other general views which may inform the research.

1. In the first instance, could you tell me which of the services your organisation provides are the main services used by recent arrivals - people from non-English speaking countries who have been in Australia for between 12 and 18 months?

Are there any other services provided by your organisation that are specifically designed to meet the needs of recent arrivals?

Are there any services your organisation provides which might be useful to this target group but which are currently under utilised?

2. Please describe for us your understanding of the migrant population in your area? What proportion are recent arrivals? What proportion are of non-English speaking backgrounds? What countries do they come from?

3. What type of contact, if any, do you generally have with the MRC of Canberra and Queanbeyan? Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre? Belconnen Community Service? Woden Community Service? Croatian Community Welfare Centre?
4. Is your contact primarily through staff? If so, which staff do you generally deal with?  
  
How does this contact typically come about? (eg via phone or written referrals, at agency meetings)
5. Do you have a sense as to which countries the clients of these organisations come from? Are they mostly longer settled or recently arrived migrants? If recent, how recent?
6. How do clients of these organisations make contact with your organisation? By direct referral from staff? Do they phone you or provide written referrals? Or do these clients simply hear about the service you offer either from staff from these organisations or by browsing written material displayed there?
7. How frequent is your contact with clients of the the MRC of Canberra and Queanbeyan? Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre? Belconnen Community Service? Woden Community Service? Croatian Community Welfare Centre?
8. What type of services are the clients of these organisations most likely to be seeking from you? Does the type of service requested vary according to what organisation they use? How well do the clients understand what services to expect from you?
9. What proportion of the migrants you deal with would not have heard about your services from one of these organisations?
10. Do the services that clients of these organisations ask for differ from those requested by non-English speaking migrants who *do not* use the organisations we have mentioned?  
  
Are you able to tell us anything about this latter group of migrants ie what countries they might come from or how long they have lived in Australia, in general, and Dandenong in particular?
11. Has your organisation ever evaluated how effective it is in delivering services to people of non-English speaking backgrounds? If so, what were the key findings and do any of these relate to settlement services for recent arrivals, particularly those people who have been in Australia for between 12 and 18 months? In what ways?

12. What is your perception of the effectiveness of these organisations (ie. the MRC of Canberra and Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre, Belconnen Community Service, Woden Community Service and Croatian Community Welfare Centre) in referring people from our target client group - ie. non-English speaking people who have been here for 12 to 18 months - to your service?

13. In what way could referral processes be improved?

14. How satisfactory would you describe your relationship with each of these organisations as being?

15. In what ways could these relationships be improved?

16. Are there any other organisations in the Canberra/Queanbeyan area which regularly refer clients in our target group to your service? Which organisations are these and how effective are they in providing referrals?

Are there any lessons to be learnt from these organisations ie are there some things they do better?

17. Do you refer clients from your organisation to other organisations? If so, to whom, and how does that mechanism work?

18. Are there any suggestions you can make on ways to improve use of your service by recently arrived refugees and migrants? Are there any adverse factors you would like to see changed?

19. Finally, how do you feel the community as a whole views the settlement service providers involved in this survey? Can these perceptions be improved? In what ways?

That basically covers the issues I wanted to discuss but you might want to comment on any other matters that you think are important. We thank you and greatly appreciate your willingness to take part in this survey.