

Part III: Community Studies

Project Method and Scope

Many of the social costs and benefits of migration to Australia are either unquantifiable, or not measured, as illustrated by the regional and national statistical analysis contained in Chapters 2 to 6. To fill the data gaps and explore the qualitative dimensions of the social costs and benefits of migration, the CARSS research team undertook a series of focus groups in four communities – two in regional Australia and two in East Coast capital cities of Australia.

Choice of Study Locations

Toowoomba and South Brisbane in Queensland and Shepparton and Darebin in Victoria were selected by the Research Advisory Committee. The selection of these locations reflects a variety of settlement histories and experiences, both positive and negative in both metropolitan and regional Australia. The selection was guided by the following considerations:

- settlement history of the area—new, established or undergoing transition
- source countries of migrants—changes over time
- settlement experiences of migrants—positive, negative, mixed
- impacts on existing population—positive, negative, mixed
- service responses to migrant influxes over time—from government departments and agencies, community groups, and
- policy imperatives and the role of government.

Methods of Recruitment

A mix of sampling methods were used to recruit respondents for focus group interviews: the use of public directories, local government community organisations and telephone books. After exhausting these directories to recruit respondents the team used targeted sampling and general advertising to fill gaps in our recruitment strategy. A stratified sample design was used to proactively target respondents to reflect a cross-section of the area's population. In each area civic leaders, representatives of the major employers, leaders of ethnic groups and charities, the local council, local professionals, local media, police and church, teachers, human services and community workers were sought for interview.

The Focus Group Instrument

Focus group interviews provide a rich source of data that compliments and adds richness, character and specificity to the broad quantitative picture. The focus group interviews aim to unearth a rich array of information about the positive and negative localised social impacts of migration to Australia. To maintain consistency across the conceptual, quantitative and qualitative components of the study, the focus group instrument was organised around the four main measures of social impact: human capital, social capital, natural capital and produced and financial capital. Questions were composed around several key themes: the impact of migration on local culture and diversity, formation of social networks and changes in neighbourhood, patterns of crime and justice, experiences at work, in education and employment, involvement in civil society, and broader impact on economy, business and productive diversity.

The size of the focus group varied from two to eight. The mean size was four. This variation was due largely to the availability of participants and unforeseen events (such as traffic jams) that led to some participants not being able to attend the focus group at the last minute. Each interview went for around 90 minutes. Most went over time as participants wanted to continue the conversation. Two researchers were present at each group – one to observe and take notes, the other to trigger responses using the instrument as a guide. All interviews were recorded for the purposes of transcription. Each participant signed a consent form and were given a guarantee that their identities or any individually identifying information would remain confidential. The study underwent ethical clearance before the collection of any data.

The basic methodology of focus group design was to use a number of trigger questions (with embedded follow up questions) to facilitate responses. A certain amount of spontaneity and uncertainty characterises this method. Hence not all questions were asked of all groups. However every participant was given the opportunity to sum their perceptions of the costs and benefits of migration to Australia.

Focus Group Composition

The qualitative methodology used a number of sampling strategies aimed to capture a wide variety of views from a cross section of community, volunteer welfare and government organisations. The sampling targeted respondents from a range of backgrounds, professions, community or interest groups who could also provide insider knowledge around two of the major themes of the report, namely the impact of migration on human and social capital. Potential respondents and organisations were grouped under the following Human or Social Capital clusters of potential informants:

Group 1: Human Capital

- 1.1 Health and Medical Professionals
- 1.2 Workplace Training, Educational Professionals and Childcare Workers
- 1.3 Leisure, Clubs and Sporting Associations

Group 2: Social Capital

- 2.1 Community Welfare, Social Work and Justice Sector Professionals
- 2.2 Local Council, Public Housing, Migrant and Civic Representatives
- 2.3 Cultural, Philanthropic and Religious Organisations

Limitations of the method

While focus group interviews can generate a rich array of qualitative data it cannot be generalised to broader population. Nevertheless surprisingly similar responses and common themes emerged across the four communities. There were also some costs and benefits specific to certain locations. It is common in social research to use multiple strategies to explore research questions as a way of triangulating findings (Punch, 1998; Liamputtong, Ezzy, 2004:40-41). The ensuing analysis of the community case studies has combined focus group data with local reports, publications and secondary material as a way of triangulating the findings. To make the data more robust, the analysis also refers in places to supporting quantitative data from previous chapters where available.

7: Shepparton

7.1 Background

Shepparton, a regional city of around 27 000 people, is located about 180 km inland from Melbourne. Around 12 per cent of the population as at the 2001 Census were born overseas (ABS Local Area Profile Data, 2001). This figure does not adequately convey the diverse multicultural composition of the community (Shepparton Council Plan, p. 7). Descendants of migrants from Italy represent one of the largest identifiable ethnic groupings in the district, estimated to comprise around 10 000 including second and third generation family members (Emilio Fiorenza, 2005). Shepparton is also home to many descendants from Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, and Albania whose parents and grand parents immigrated to the district in the early twentieth century (Fiorenza 2005). Since that time there have been successive waves of migrants from a variety of countries – including Middle Eastern Countries, the Philippines, India, Germany and New Zealand (Fiorenza 2005). Some of the descendants of these migrants participated in the focus groups. In 2005 and 2006 a number of African families settled into the area sponsored under the regional humanitarian refugee programme. Over the last six years a growing number of humanitarian migrants from Iraq who fled Saddam Hussein's regime have been drawn to Shepparton to live and work.

As a result of this population mix, and the district's relatively long history of migrant settlement (Fiorenza 2005), Shepparton has earned a reputation nationally for being a harmonious and successful multicultural centre. It is an attribute which many citizens are proud of. As one citizen noted:

I've lived and worked in the greater Shepparton area for 20 years, and I've seen a lot of different groups come in that time, and I think this is just a fine example of multiculturalism...it's really quite outstanding...like the mosque; no one could have even known there was a mosque until recent world events. They were quietly going about their business, and quietly exercise their religion...It's a fine example probably to the rest of Australia to take look and see how all the services have worked together and everybody's educated to the role of everybody else. (1/3)

7.2 Benefits specific to Shepparton

Resilient community brimming with social capital

The enormous contribution that successive waves of migrants have made to building Shepparton's robust levels of social capital and informal support for each other can hardly be over-estimated. Each wave of migrants have acted as bridges for the next – welcoming them into their community and assisting their cultural integration in a multitude of ways. The contribution of migrants to the local community covered just about all facets of activity.

You can live here, and never travel, and have the whole connection with the world, and learn about different cultures. So I think that this is great.

Social capital refers to the relations of trust, cooperation and mutual aid that are fostered by “norms and networks of civic engagement” (Putnam 2000). A distinctive feature of Shepparton is that it is one of the few regional areas in Australia where ethnic social capital has been able to accumulate over three generations or so. The first arrivals – Albanians, Italians, Macedonians, Greeks – established the rudiments of infrastructure facilities for those who came later. Over a period of time this network evolved into an impressive range of voluntary supports that include such things as accommodation, employment, child care, financial support, and general advice to members. The critical importance of such informal structures to members was underlined by one interviewee:

In our community, because we are here as a community, if they [Filipino migrants] have a problem, they always come to our community, and we give them support, and you know, give advice and everything. That’s what we are here for – we are community; we are all in one. (4/2)

During the post-war period the growth of group specific social capital gradually expanded to embrace much of the surrounding Australian born community. The need to pool resources played a significant role in this development. One recollection from a first generation migrant illustrates how this often occurred:

You know when you said it was the migrants – we built this place – it wasn’t just the migrants; it was the migrants plus the ones that was already here – of doing things together, and sharing the knowledge and skills of each other. I’m just thinking, like, of a very simple one. The Tatura man – one of the biggest tomato growers in Australia – how he worked together with a neighbour who was Anglo-Saxon. And sharing with each other, because he had wonderful skills in the tomato industry....But he didn’t know about the water tables – the salinity – where his neighbours did....the two of them doing it together made that industry grow. (6/2)

Linkages between specific ethnic groups and the Australian community gradually merged into a broader umbrella structure which embraced the Shepparton community as a whole. Local disasters certainly acted as a catalyst in promoting this outcome:

In my experience, when we have had a crisis in the Shepparton region – floods, fires – it doesn’t matter what we look like or what language we spoke. We were all there filling those bags of sand to build up the river. It was the flood in 1983 – it was all of us there helping each other. Out came the cup of tea, out came the pie, out came the Greek thing, you know....I have seen, in times of need, of stress, of fear, people have united and become very strong. (6/2)

An important element in building cohesion across disparate migrant groups has been the conscious effort given to cultivating reciprocity on the part of new arrivals by already settled residents. One well established overseas born woman provided an invaluable insight into how this process actually worked. She recounted the story of helping the wife of a possessive husband to become involved in a local women's group:

*[The wife said,] 'How can I ever repay you – anything [XX] – just name it!'
I said, 'I do have a condition, and I do want you to do something for me'.
'Ok, what is it? I hope I can do it'.
'Promise me that you will help another migrant in any way'.
And she says, 'But I'm not like you, what can I do?'
I said, 'What about a smile when you see a migrant person down the street, even someone you see in a shop'.*

Multiplied a score of times, it is not difficult to see how such a simple request paid substantial dividends over the longer-term. These forms of civic mindedness foster social attachment and inclusiveness and thus build valuable bridging social capital from one migrant group to the other and with the host community. Shepparton was brimming with it.

Certainly there is a strong sense of coherence and connection across ethnic communities at the grass roots level. The holding of the annual Mardi Gras where all groups enthusiastically participate is clear evidence of this. Involvement with the settlement of new migrants – particularly humanitarian cases – is high. One volunteer estimated that he put in 30 hours of unpaid work each week. There are around 120 volunteer home tutors in the district who work without pay. Moreover, there is an active effort by volunteers to keep the community informed and educated about the nature of new groups settling in the town. The local media helps considerably in this respect by providing comprehensive and supportive coverage of ethnic affairs. People give generously. One interview noted that in 2005 (after extensive publicity),

within hours of arrival of the first two African families we had four class room sized rooms full of donations.

Yet the evolution of ethnic social capital in Shepparton has had difficulty in creating more formal community-wide institutional structures:

The Ethnic Council was formed in 1977. At first the Council consisted of only a few groups but expanded over the following decade to become representative of all ethnic bodies in Shepparton. The role of the Council has been to negotiate on behalf of all groups with local, state and federal governments, and to attract and disseminate available funding. In 1990, however, a significant portion of the Italian community in Shepparton split from the Council and established the Italian Services Advisory Council to cater for their specific requirements (Fiorenza 2005: 9 – 12). The Ethnic Council continues to be the pre-eminent organization speaking for ethnic interests. It also receives distributes the bulk of government funding allotted to ethnic

residents. But the split between the two organizations has undoubtedly eroded the ability of the ethnic community to speak with a unified voice.

Though ethnic citizens are members of bodies such as the Shepparton Chamber of Commerce, there are no ethnic councillors. Only one ethnic candidate has stood in the course of the last three elections (2000; 2003; 2005). Moreover, despite acknowledging that Shepparton has a strong migrant presence, Council publications indicate that there are few services and activities which are specifically oriented to the needs of ethnic groups. Indeed, Council publications, whilst acknowledging the migrant presence, has very little to say about their role in, and contribution to, the community (Coomes 2005; GSCC 2005a; 2005b; 2005c; 2005d). The Goulburn Murray Regional Migration Programme is a notable exception. This programme was established as a joint initiative of the Greater Shepparton, Moira and Campaspe councils under the State Government Regional Migration Incentive Fund.

Overall, the strength of Shepparton's social capital rests on the depth and extent of its informal grass roots networks, which flourishes because of the strong multicultural presence in the community, rather than through more institutionalised forms of authority and influence.

Regional cultural diversity and creativity

I think it's a great benefit to Australia to have migrants come to the country – all of our lives because we've been given such an insight into the different religions, different foods, different culture –like lots and lots of different things. (2/2)

The general extent of the migrant contribution the cultural diversity and creativity of the district was quite well brought out by this observation:

As a musician I play at many, many functions. A couple of weeks ago I did a Filipino night. I do functions in all different places in Victoria, and I sit down sometimes and listen to the bands in these towns, and then councillors, and all that speak. They speak about culture of the Italians, or Spaniards, Filipinos, or Greeks or Macedonians. And I listen to these people talking. It's always a very, very positive thing – what these people contribute to their towns, their work, and the genuine aspect of these people is really apparent. You can see the mayors and the councillors voice it – positive. (5/3)

Productive diversity and economic prosperity for regional Victoria

It is widely acknowledged that the migrant population has contributed substantively to diversifying and expanding the retail and industry sectors of the town. One interviewee estimated that 20 percent of businesses in Shepparton were owned by migrants. This figure rose to 40 percent if

professional occupations were included. Additionally, the influx of migrants has attracted new services in health and education that benefits the community as a whole. As one woman noted:

Shep's well known for one of the region's increased baby booms, and we're getting new shops here because of it, like Cotton Kids and Pumpkin Patch. All these new shops are coming to our area, specifically because we've had growth in birth rate. And also, by having migrants come, it increases the number of services.

We now have more female doctors because we have people covered up in burkas. If we didn't have them, we wouldn't have as many female doctors. ... If I [can] take my young granddaughter, or my daughter, to a female doctor, I'd much prefer that... So to me that's a real big thing...I don't feel so vulnerable (5/5)

For many decades migrants were attracted by the opportunities available in the agricultural sector surrounding Shepparton which has traditionally grown fruits and vegetables, as well as supporting a strong dairy industry. The Goulburn Valley is widely known the 'food bowl of Australia'. Along with Campbell's Soups, the SPC and Admona Fruit processing plants, these industries provide seasonal work for migrant and resident workers in the region. During the post-war period migrant employees were critical in assisting the expansion of Shepparton's manufacturing and retail trades sectors. Most recently health, community services and education have emerged as major activities in the district. The critical contribution that migrants have made to the composition of this regional economy was succinctly summed up by one resident:

...migration is what makes Shep the vibrant place it is today. It is the abundance of work in agriculture that drew people to this place to begin with. But now we have moved on. We have an amazing commercial centre. Those migrants – probably one of the greatest things they have provided is employment. It is because of that influx that we now have a university (5/5)

Local Australian business people also understand the multiplier effect that ethnic activity can bring; 'By having such a multicultural community, and population that's increasing, our business links with the rest of the world is just going to improve. (5/4)

Tolerance for local expressions of ethnic and religious cultural diversity

There appears to be very little prejudice towards migrants in Shepparton, although some of new migrants to the community from middle eastern countries were adamant they were persistently discriminated against in the local labour market. Only one interviewee complained about racial prejudice.

The Shepparton branch of the Australia First Party mounted some unfavourable publicity about migrants in the wake of the September 11 attacks. However, residents seem to have paid them no heed. Through a fine example of bridging capital, the local multicultural centre introduced a number of middle eastern male migrants to members of the local RSL and Lions Clubs. 'See he's no terrorist'. The town and surrounding district, by all accounts, have been overwhelmingly tolerant and accepting of cultural differences and have shown very little if any of the predisposition to racism as seen in other parts of the country.

7.3 Costs and issues specific to Shepparton

All groups agreed that the social benefits far outweighed the costs of migration to Shepparton. Nevertheless, the focus groups identified two short-term social costs as having a particular impact on the Shepparton community.

Stretched regional infrastructure

Generally, new arrivals in Shepparton have been 'extremely lucky' in terms of the infrastructure support they receive in terms of accommodation, child care, family and resettlement services supplied by the Commonwealth but delivered through the local Migrant Adult Education Centre. This has been a critical factor in assisting families in their transition to an unfamiliar location. More recently, however, there are indications that available resources are not keeping up with demand. The most significant area in this respect is lack of childcare support. Without such support mothers are unable to look for work, to begin with, and to accept it if offered. It was also considered that availability of interpreter services could be greatly improved. Ultimately if this infrastructure is not sufficient to meet local demand its specialist provision imposes a substantial economic cost on the community as a whole. Such costs are immediately evident in the shortage of interpreters where qualified people must frequently be brought from Melbourne (at about \$600 per visit) to translate languages such as Swahili.

Understaffing in the Shepparton area, moreover, appears to be taking its toll on multicultural networks. One salaried officer went so far as to state that:

This community is very caring and very kind [but] it is exhausted in many areas. There is compassion fatigue going on here.

Inevitably, individuals have been affected at a personal level:

It's costing people out in those offices, it's costing them their well-being. Like, we've got a person off sick at the moment because of the stress she's been put under by the number of people who have arrived here that she's settling.

Absence of established local networks among newly emergent migrant groups

Attempting to settle new migrants without the back-up of an existing community that can provide essential support in the absence of an established ethnic community can result in substantial additional economic costs. This point was made in contrast to recently arrived skilled workers from Albania who have a strong local Albanian community network in Shepparton.

In bringing out those sort of people, we can accommodate them. There is no costs. We provide the accommodation; we provide the transport; we take care of them. But if you're going to bring people from everywhere else, you've got all the headaches – you're going to have to find accommodation, find someone to manage them, and someone to take them to and from to the job....you've got to look at the actual benefits as to why and how they will fit into a particular industry, which is very, very, important.

7.4 Overview

Participants in the Shepparton focus groups expressed very few concerns about the social costs associated with migration. The social costs were mostly regarded as short term integration issues that related mostly to the newest arrival of humanitarian migrants. There were two widely perceived social costs. There was a risk of racial tension forming between patriarchal cultures of some new migrants and local residents, particularly through the schooling of children and the clash of culture between middle-eastern Muslims and local residents over the role of women in society. There was also a perceived risk of long term welfare dependency occurring among newly arrived humanitarian migrants, should they fail to acquire jobs. The acquisition of English fluency among newly arrived migrants was regarded as critical to preventing this from happening. Skilled migrants brought into the region expressed disappointment at the lack of recognition of their overseas qualifications, and the long haul ahead of them to upgrade their skills and enhance their English fluency. The Shepparton community however is a testimony to the long term benefits of a society built on successive waves of migration. In terms of building a resilient community brimming with social capital and productive diversity, the social benefits of migration certainly far outweigh the social costs.

8: Toowoomba

I think that regional migration is great – but I have concerns over the secondary support. So the primary support – finding someone a house, you know the basic needs – but then the education, health, policing stuff.

8.1 Background

Over the last six years Toowoomba has become the host community for a growing number of migrants settled through the regional resettlement programme. In response to this the Toowoomba City Council commissioned a study into its Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) population (Upham and Martin 2005:1). The report, based on focus groups with key stakeholders, and a survey of 228 CALD residents, found that while there was a network of community service providers assisting the CALD community in the city, they were 'struggling to cope with the demands of newly arrived CALD people, particularly the Sudanese population' (Upham and Martin 2005:1). Employment, transport, infrastructure and housing were the major issues identified by the study as adversely impacting upon Toowoomba's CALD community. Lack of employment opportunities, inadequate public transport and racial discrimination scored highest among the three worst things about living in Toowoomba (Upham and Martin 2005:31). The highest ranking three best things about living in the city were educational opportunities, friendly people and family environment, and that the city was a quiet and safe place (Upham and Martin 2005:30). Given the level of support for refugee entrants from the Churches, surprisingly only 1% nominated the Churches among their three best things about the city (Upham and Martin 2005:30). Like the LSIA data, this data, while providing many valuable insights, tells the story about the positive and negative impact of migration mainly from the migrant's perspective.

Our study therefore sought to compliment the findings of this study commissioned by the Toowoomba City Council. It draws together secondary material with interviews held among five groups and two individuals to distil a general overview of the social costs and benefits of migration to the community. Two well known civic leaders from the city were interviewed separately to maintain privacy. There was a strong representation of community representatives, key stakeholders in the social and welfare sectors, religious leaders and parishioners in the groups – given their role in sponsoring and settling humanitarian migrants into the community.

8.2 Benefits specific to Toowoomba

Bringing much needed cultural diversity to a relatively mono-cultural community

Compared to the Australian population Toowoomba's residents are relatively culturally homogeneous with the exception of a small Indigenous population comprising around 3 per cent. As at the last census, the percentage of population born overseas residing in Toowoomba was around 14 per cent compared to an Australian average of 24 per cent (ABS Migration Australia 2004–05:4)⁹. Of those born overseas, the majority came from English speaking countries. In terms of ancestry, most residents from Toowoomba identify their ancestry with Europe and Oceania. Very few have ancestry traced to North African, Middle Eastern or Asian countries. A higher proportion of the Toowoomba population speaks English only (92.5%) compared to a Qld average of 86.8 (Toowoomba City Council n.d.: 41).

Toowoomba is gradually becoming more culturally diverse with the number of overseas born residents increasing by about 2 per cent each census period (Toowoomba City Council n.d.: 46). Toowoomba also has an aging population with a proportion of those aged 65 and over higher than the state, and a higher reliance on Centrelink payments than the state average (Toowoomba City Council n.d.:41).

Against this backdrop, from 2001 onwards there was a steep rise of migrants (mostly humanitarian entrants from Sudan) settling in Toowoomba. This population is estimated to be around 750 (Centacare, Lifeline and Social Justice Commission 2005: 1). The majority speak Dinka and almost half speak and read English (Centacare, Lifeline and Social Justice Commission 2005: 4). Sudanese migrants have been resettled in other regional areas such as Coffs Harbour, Armidale, Shepparton and Tamworth. They have met a mixed reception in Toowoomba which provides an ideal social laboratory for assessing the costs and benefits of humanitarian migration to Australia. On the whole the overwhelming majority of participants were positive about the impact of regional migration on the community.

It was unanimously agreed that migration was a valuable source of much needed cultural diversity and creativity for Toowoomba. Migration enriches the community in ways captured in the following remarks.

It's made the population of the city more diverse – that in itself I think has benefits.

From this city's point of view, I think it's (migration) a good thing all round.

the benefits I think are huge ...it enriches our community, in terms of food, culture, language, tourism – all sorts of possibilities there – they're all good.

⁹ In 2001, of Toowoomba's 105 302 residents, 91 223 were Australian born

Migration meets regional skilled labour shortages

Home to almost 90 000 residents Toowoomba is Queensland's largest regional inland centre. The city is a major retail and manufacturing centre that provides an array of educational, medical, trade and social services to its own residents and neighbouring communities. The city has a range of educational institutions servicing 20 000 school age children, around 5300 university students and 1740 TAFE students (Toowoomba City Council n.d.: 26). Most of its workers are employed in the retail, professional, trade, community services and educational sectors (Toowoomba City Council, n.d.:37). In the context of the resources boom and a growing economy, Toowoomba is also undergoing a regional growth in local industries, has strong employment growth and consequently a shortage of skilled labour.

Skilled migration was regarded by most participants as making a necessary and substantial contribution to meeting skilled labour shortages in rural and regional Australia.

Benefits: From a skills point of view..., a lot of businesses wouldn't be able to continue and remain competitive on the world market.

I obviously think in terms of some of the skill shortages it is a positive. I think that, especially on the business side of it has been a positive one.

Most participants felt that educating and skilling locals to meet demand for skilled labour was a preferable long term strategy for meeting regional skilled labour shortages, than using migrant labour.

Regional social and economic growth and prosperity

Migration has made a huge contribution to the social and economic prosperity of the region as described by this comment from one of Toowoomba's civic leaders.

There is no way on God's green earth, they (migrants) were the ones that drove this country, and turned it into the country that it is. I don't think we'd have ever survived; we'd have bred ourselves out of existence...I reckon its (migration) one of the greatest things that's happened to this continent, and I don't think that we have far enough immigration – that's my view – from any country. I don't have a problem with anyone from any where.

At a local level the positive impact of migration into the city was expressed in these terms.

The world view in Toowoomba 50 years ago, or even 25 years ago, was very insular... It's a very different society now to what it was even 20 years ago [because of migration].

The backbone of the city is built on migration, isn't it, really.

8.3 Costs and issues specific to Toowoomba

The focus groups identified several social costs or challenges as having a particular impact or burden on the wider host community.

Too few champions of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds

...it's a very conservative place this – they say we're rednecks – it's not really that bad'.

One of the key defining aspects of Toowoomba's cultural and social capital is that much of it is associated with religion. Around 80 per cent of the city's population define themselves as Christian (Toowoomba City Council n.d.: 50), which is about 10 per cent above the state average. In the absence of an established multicultural civic sector the local churches and religious schools appear to be the major social and civic institutions actively involved in the welfare and settlement of new migrants (especially humanitarian migrants). Lifeline (auspiced by the Anglican Church and funded by the Community Settlement Support Scheme), the Social Justice Unit of the Catholic Diocese, Centacare (also funded by the DIAC Community Settlement Support Scheme), the Toowoomba City Council multicultural officer, a CALD Consultative Committee, and the Sudanese Community Organisation are actively engaged in building bridging capital between the existing community and new emerging migrant communities – with it seems limited success given the relatively mono-cultural history of the city.

It seems to me that churches are quite active in this area, and schools are also... and universities....But in terms of a broader community, like say your council, or your Rotary; I think that will come – it's not here yet.

Given the limits of bridging capital and the absence of a wider established network of multicultural organizations it is not surprising that multiculturalism has not taken root in the civic institutions of the city. The Toowoomba City Council, with Commonwealth funding, has made demonstrable local efforts – it employs a multicultural officer, commissioned a report into its CALD residents and participates in a CALD consultative committee. But these are all relatively recent initiatives that can hardly be expected to change the social fabric of what was a relatively mono-cultural community overnight.

The concept of multiculturalism itself was queried by quite a number of participants in the Toowoomba focus groups who preferred the term 'multi-racial'.

... I do have a problem with the 'multicultural' word – I think maybe 'cosmopolitan' is a better word. Because where we came from, South Africa, was truly multicultural. There were plenty of mosques, synagogues, Hindi churches – you heard so many different languages being spoken.

Another representative from a Christian Church, deeply involved in supporting new and emerging migrants in the city, made the following observation about the difference between Toowoomba and Shepparton.

About three weeks ago I was in Shepparton, and we were just looking at regional refugee resettlement there – how that's gone over the years. But I think there's more champions ... in the Chamber of Commerce, in the Council. Whereas I think here it's still all older thinking.

We asked a representative of Toowoomba's Chamber of Commerce, present at the time, what he thought about the claim that there were fewer champions of multiculturalism in Toowoomba. He agreed pointing out there has been some movement away from the 'white Australia policy' among the community and business leaders of the regional city, but ... 'I still think there's a way to go.' He then pointed to the cyclical intergenerational nature of the costs and benefits of migration:

... if you look at Toowoomba in terms of second or third generation ... Lebanese business men seem quite successful here... And I think potentially we'll have African or Southern Sudanese business people or people on council or whatever. That's stuff is going to happen in two to three years.

His astute observation is one backed up by a body of research already reviewed, that most of the issues faced by migrants, and experienced by host communities, are short term and focus on the newest arrivals. The majority occur during the settlement/integration phase.

This was definitely the case in Toowoomba. There was an almost universal consensus across all focus groups and individual interviews that most the costs and anxieties about migration to Australia centred around the newly emerging Sudanese community. Much of the concern stemmed from their distinctive appearance. In a predominantly white community the tall striking dark skinned Sudanese stand out as a readily identifiable visual ethnic minority. As one participant noted, 'They [the Dinka people] were eight feet tall and extremely black; they stuck out like a sore thumb'.

Their visible presence on the streets – just walking – represents a challenge to the modes of social bonding historically formed up around a largely mono-cultural community heavily reliant on cars and private modes of transport. They walk partly because of their cultural background, partly out of necessity and partly because of the irregularity of public transport.

A parishioner involved in sponsoring humanitarian entrants into Toowoomba since 1990, commented that when the diocese first began sponsoring refugees 'they were not particularly welcomed' by the 'congregation'. However she noted that 16 years later many had been 'converted' and are now more welcoming of refugees from other cultures.

By contrast, business and skilled migrants are relatively invisible in the community. Toowoomba is home to a number of long term business and skilled migrants who apparently experience a relatively seamless integration into the regional city, as one business migrant from South Africa remarked.

... culture is very much the same – I feel very safe here... (have) friends, and opportunities – I'd much rather be here than back where I came from. ... I mean for South Africans, it was (like) crossing the road really.... and I'm sure British migrants ... as well wouldn't have any problems.

Limited support for newly emerging migrant communities

As the national overview pointed out, it might be expected that friends, relatives and ethnic organisations play an important role in helping individuals and families adjust to a new land. They provide crucial support for newly emerging migrant communities. These supports and networks are one aspect of social capital through which settlement needs can be met ((Kunz, 200?:54). The successful integration of migrants has benefits for both the host community and the migrant experience. They are also critical to smoothing the integration process and providing much needed informal as well as formal support to new and emerging immigrant communities. Toowoomba does have a relatively newly formed CALD consultative committee as a representative on that committee explained:

There is a cultural diversity network that has a lot of organisations coming together; and they sit and discuss issues relevant to the community, and the areas of refugees coming in and migrants and such, and what services are available and being provided for free, or at a little cost – improve skills for let's say, working in a shop or something like that. So the community does come together, and they talk about these things. As far as what comes out of it, I'm not exactly sure ...

The key problem in Toowoomba identified consistently by the service providers and community and religious representatives who participated in the focus groups, is that the new and emerging migrant communities from North Africa do not have access to a depth or breadth of ethnic organizations or

multicultural services. There is a loose knit Sudanese Community Organisation, but given the demands on new humanitarian migrants many are not in a position to provide voluntary support to each other, as this participant explained:

I think in the initial phase people are just working to survive. You know to get money to get the kids to school.

A Multicultural Staff Network at Southern Queensland University provides informal support to new migrants, although many of the people they support are obviously students or academics from overseas. While representatives of this organisation did offer support to the Sudanese community, particularly their youth through the provision of sporting events, such an organization could hardly be expected to provide critical support for newly emergent migrant communities. Unlike Shepparton, Toowoomba does not have the history of multiculturalism upon which new migrant communities can rely for support during the critical transition and integration phases of settlement. There are very few organic informal forms of voluntary support in the community outside the churches.

Residential dispersion of new migrants

Aware that residential clustering of new migrants can give rise to social divisions and 'ethnic enclaves', Toowoomba's local planners proactively dispersed the Sudanese humanitarian migrants it accepted across the regional city. A survey of 500 Sudanese residents confirms that they are indeed spread widely across the city (Finding a Home on the Range, 2006: 7). The dispersal of new migrants creates other problems, such as cultural isolation, and a reduction in the efficient delivery of public transport and social services upon which new migrants heavily rely.

Even though Toowoomba's planners had consciously avoided the residential clustering of humanitarian migrants, fear was still expressed by a minority of focus group participants that this could still happen, as it had in the capital cities. A sixth generation Australian born participant commented:

I think it's better integration if we can get them into mainstream society, rather than leave them in a cluster group...

I think the danger is that they become clustered, if there's such a thing, there's the danger of seeing the repetition of what happened in Sydney – where you see the gangs sort of develop. And in some respects it happens in Brisbane where you've got a very big Vietnamese community who live in one particular section of Brisbane, and it becomes very gang-orientated. That's a concern to me...Personally I can see a lot of danger.

In response a participant from a non-English speaking background, who had migrated to Australia about 25 years ago replied:

... in a sense to turn the cluster question on its head – the other onus is on say Anglo-Saxon Celtic people, 'How often do you not cluster?'... How often in your own family, social, church, Rotary, scouts, whatever setting – are you mixing with people who are not the same. There's clusters there but they're invisible because we're all the same – so we can only see if they're African, Chinese or whatever – we see they're clustering. If we don't want clusters, we have to be willing to change ourselves too.

At the core of this exchange between these two focus group participants (one Australian born, one overseas born) is the balance between bonding and bridging social capital. Any socially cohesive society needs enough social bonding capital and commitment to universal values of political freedom, democracy and equality, to make it cohesive, peaceful and prosperous. On the other hand, as many participants pointed out, there needs to a balance 'of mixing the old and the new', of bridging across cultural and ethnic differences, and that Australia had done this successfully for the last century or more. For without bridging social capital communities would become insular, inward and backward looking and at worst intolerant of newcomers and outsiders (Putnam, 2000). One of the major contrasts between Toowoomba, as a regional city, and capital cities where most migrants live, is that the social networks of the multi-cultural communities and organizations are understandably nowhere near as well developed. This could explain why some assisted migrants drift to cities after being initially placed in regional townships.

Stretched regional infrastructure and support services

... the infrastructure isn't here. They are not going to starve, but to integrate them. It's really very difficult with 500 people arriving in a year.

Inadequate infrastructure in transport, housing, language tuition, interpreter services and family support has a significant impact on the transition phase of new and emergent migrant communities in Toowoomba. Lack of infrastructure adversely affects both the migrant and the host community. While the Commonwealth provides the community with a range of Programmes and services in language tuition, interpreting services, accommodation and health checks (Millbank, Phillips, 2006: 1), the provision of such infrastructure imposes a substantial economic cost on the community as a whole. (For a list of settlement support services see endnote 1).

There was almost universal agreement among the focus participants, many of whom had worked in a volunteer or employed capacity with organizations and groups supporting migrants to Toowoomba, that the city lacked the infrastructure needed to support the number of North African migrants

entering the community. A selection of comments which reflect this concern appear below.

... we're busting at the seams...

For humanitarian migration there is always a stress on the community infrastructure, always...

At one stage we had two ESL teachers in the City, it was woeful...

I just think that there's an assumption – say in Melbourne or Sydney – there's an assumption there that there are services there that can meet those needs. Slowly Toowoomba is meeting those needs a little bit better, but there's still huge gaps, especially in education.

By contrast the same participants pointed out that business or skilled entrants were 'by their very nature' a far less burden on the community.

There is always room for business migration because business migrants, by their very nature, economically stand alone; so they can be integrated anywhere, and...skilled migration, yes we certainly need, or we could use in Toowoomba in the middle to high-skilled areas at the moment. There are certainly places for skilled migration.

Regional racism and discrimination

In a survey of CALD residents commissioned by the Toowoomba City Council, racial discrimination was identified as one of three worst things about living in the city (Upham and Martin 2005:31). Concrete examples of racism and discrimination arose spontaneously in the focus group discussions. Migrants of dark skin colour complained of being treated rudely on public transport, of being humiliated at Church gatherings, of being discriminated in the job market, and of their children being teased and bullied at school. When we asked a city council civic leader about instances of racism in the city, she was equally philosophical, commenting that racism affected those who arrived in the 1950s in the same way as it affects the newly arrived today.

It's always going to be the same challenges; and it's always about people with their own view based on whatever against someone else that doesn't look exactly the same as them – be they disabled; or be they from another country; or be they another colour. It's always going to be the same – it's inbred in people – an absolute dislike of anyone that's different to what you are.

Participants tended to blame a small but vocal minority of 'white supremacists' for most of the outward displays of racism in Toowoomba. A group calling itself Australians First distributed what most would regard as racist propaganda around the town and on the internet (ausfirst.alphalink.com.au/toowoomba.html). The document begins:

... Toowoomba is to be the subject of a colonization by African 'refugees' drawn chiefly from Sudan.... We urge the refugees to return to Africa now. (Pell, Saleam and Hale, ausfirst.alphalink.com.au/toowoomba.html accessed 12/4/2006)¹⁰

White supporters of migration are referred to in the document as 'the new arbiters of a colour-blind faith in racial diversity'. One participant in the focus groups was adamant that we lived in a multi racial and not a multicultural society and espoused some views consistent with the propaganda circulated by Australia First. Participants claimed that this extremist group had been issuing death threats and blowing up the letter boxes of Sudanese residents. One participant elaborated:

You hear lots of death threats; all sorts of threats – there's been targeting of streets where mainly Sudanese people live. I mean they're not sort of a great threat, but they'll put threats in their letter box – white supremacy sort of stuff...

At that precise moment a male focus group participant who had migrated to Toowoomba about five years ago announced:

I've been attacked a number of times here in Toowoomba....Down town.... I didn't know why I was standing there, and all of a sudden a guy tried to hit me. The second time, a fellow followed me around pointing at me, telling me that I was in his country, 'You're in my country, you're in my country, you're in my country,' So I just stood there, then when I looked over, he was throwing a punch at me, just like that. The next time was, it another fellow telling me to go back to my own country, 'Go back to your own country,'... I kind of consider that just about everybody here is from some place else.

A well known and highly regarded civic leader in the community who participated in this focus group, responded.

It's probably some of this white trash...

The view that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to be less favourably inclined towards immigrants is one that has been found by other researchers. An opinion poll carried out in 2006 by Associated Press of 1,009 people across Australia 'shows that a majority thinks immigrants are a good

¹⁰ We tried to locate these individuals for comment on the project but were unsuccessful and suspect these are not real names.

influence on our communities and our country and that recent immigrants have integrated well. However, minority groups in major cities and lower income Australians are less favourably disposed to immigration.

8.4 Overview

While participants in the Toowoomba focus groups expressed a range of concerns about the social costs associated with migration, and certainly more than those raised by Shepparton informants, the majority can still be regarded as short term integration issues that relate mostly to the newest arrival of humanitarian migrants. The only long term cost related to an anxiety that current high levels of welfare dependency among humanitarian arrivals would continue should their integration and settlement into the city go awry. Given the strong local government leadership on this issue, Commonwealth funding for regional settlement and support for the regional settlement programme by the Mayor and Churches in particular this scenario seems unlikely. In terms of Visa categories, clearly most of the costs relate to humanitarian entrants. Many of the social costs are born entirely by the first generation of migrants, while others are born by the wider host community. There were mixed feelings about using overseas skilled migration to meet regional skill shortages, but most participants would have preferred training local labour. Overall the long term social benefits were considered to far outweigh the short term social costs associated with migration.

Endnotes

Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship administers a range of Programmes and services to provide settlement support to new migrants and humanitarian entrants.

Settlement assistance begins with providing pre-embarkation information to new migrants through the departmental website and the Australian Cultural Orientation Programme (AUSCO). AUSCO aims to enhance humanitarian entrants' settlement prospects and create realistic expectations for their life in Australia.

The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) provides initial, intensive settlement assistance for humanitarian entrants for up to twelve months after arrival. Entrant's needs are assessed and addressed through an integrated case management approach that provides orientation, accommodation, and household assistance as well as short term torture and trauma counselling.

The Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) provides English language tuition to entrants who do not have functional English and the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) provides a national translating and interpreting service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Settlement Grants Programme (SGP) provides further settlement support to new humanitarian entrants for up to five years after arrival. The SGP funds projects that will deliver practical assistance to promote self reliance, inclusion and participation in Australian society. Many of the on-arrival and longer-term needs of migrants, such as employment, education and health care, are shared with the wider Australian community. Government requires that agencies responsible for providing these services to the Australian community generally, are also responsible for providing their services in a culturally appropriate way to their migrant and refugee clients.

Over the last year, 16 Australian Government Agencies have been working together to develop strategies to improve the settlement outcomes of humanitarian entrants through an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) on Humanitarian Settlement. Those agencies are now developing concrete proposals for consideration by government.

(Source: DIAC Background Document, April 2007)

9: South Brisbane

9.1 Background

The South Brisbane case study draws upon focus group discussions with seven groups and one individual to distil a general overview of the social costs and benefits of migration to the city. Brisbane City Council has jurisdiction over all the wards in the city, unlike our study in Darebin where the local council had jurisdiction over a distinct geographical area of Melbourne. Another distinguishing feature of Brisbane is that its culturally and linguistically diverse population is spread across the city (Brisbane City Council, 2005:4). As the greatest cultural diversity is concentrated in the inner South and the South West of the city the research team targeted its recruitment at civic leaders, volunteers, community representatives, residents and social welfare professionals from those areas.

While less culturally diverse than other Eastern States of Australia, Brisbane City has a growing culturally and linguistically diverse community. As at the last census 23 per cent of the population were born overseas, 13 per cent of people speak a language other than English at home; the main language groups being Chinese (23%), Vietnamese (10%), Italian (8.2%), Greek (6.3%) and Spanish (4%) (Brisbane City Council 2005: 4). As in other parts of the country in recent times, humanitarian entrants settling in Brisbane have come predominantly from the war torn areas of North Africa and the Middle East (Brisbane City Council 2005:4). The warmer climate is a draw card for some of these new and emerging migrant communities from the Pacific Islands and New Zealand.

The district surrounding Southern Brisbane includes the suburbs of South Brisbane, West End, Fortitude Valley, New Farm and Woolloongabba. Within the district, there is a mixture of established migrant communities (mostly Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese) and new and emerging migrant groups (mostly Tongan, Islander, African and Iraqi).

As at the 2001 census, 29 per cent of South Brisbane residents were born overseas, compared to a city average of around 23 per cent. South Brisbane is less of a reception point for new migrants into the Queensland capital than it once was because of the increasing gentrification of the area. Increasingly new migrant communities are settling in the south western suburbs like Marooka where rents are cheaper.

Brisbane is experiencing strong economic and population growth partly fuelled by the resources boom.). Between 2000 and 2003 the city's population grew by more than 6 per cent, unemployment declined and the value of new building increased substantially (by about \$1 billion) (ABS regional profile data). Strong economic growth is fuelling demand for labour unable to be met

by local supply in some sectors. In this context Brisbane may well overtake Sydney and Melbourne as the preferred destination for skilled migrants.

9.2 Benefits specific to Brisbane

Even though the participants in the Brisbane focus groups were more strident about the negative impact of new and emerging migrant communities, there was almost complete unanimity still that migration nevertheless accrued a multitude of social benefits to the city and to Australia as a whole which outweighed the costs – as this typical response to the question illustrate.

Costs, there are significant costs, but they are far outweighed by the benefits.

The majority of participants in this case study as in the others also identified most of those social costs as being short term and related mostly (not entirely) to migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, especially refugees, as captured in this quote:

Costs... It's the community development resources; it's the initial settlement resources that are provided to refugees – it's an initial cost; it's not long-term.

Creating cultural diversity and bridging social capital in a relatively culturally homogeneous city

Robert Putnam, in his book, he was talking about 'bridging capital', and 'bonding capital'. We do bonding capital pretty well; the challenge is bridging capital – because there's far more benefits in bridging capital than bonding capital. And we need to really think about how we're going to do that (Migrant Community Leader, Brisbane Focus Group).

As indicated by this perceptive Brisbane participant, this city has some way to go match the kind and extent of bridging social capital between migrant and Australian born communities as the research team saw in Darebin and Shepparton, Victoria. There are some important historical and geographical reasons for this.

The development of ethnic social capital in the city of Brisbane historically appears to have limited largely to a ring of inner-city ring of suburbs, and South Brisbane in particular. However with the growing gentrification of the suburb this area is less of a reception point for new migrants into the Queensland capital than it once was.

Brisbane is also quite different from other Eastern Seaboard capital cities in that its migrant born population is spread across the city (Brisbane City Council, 2005:4). The greatest cultural diversity is concentrated in the inner South (South Brisbane) and the South West (particularly around Stones

Corner and Marooka). This pattern of dispersion is true more broadly for Queensland as a whole, as Max Brandle explains:

The migrant communities of the post-war era are less numerous in Queensland, they are less geographically compact and vociferous so migrants are less visible than in other states (Brandle, 1991: 1).

Migrant settlement in Brisbane throughout the 20th century follows the pattern of other east coast Australian cities, with the first waves of mostly Southern and Eastern European migrants arriving in the post-war era – from 1947 through to the 1950s. Compared to other eastern states, however, Queensland took fewer of the post-war migrants arriving through the displaced persons programme (Brandle 1999: 4). The next wave of migrants in the 1970s and 1980s were mostly Chinese and Vietnamese refugees who formed tight knit communities in and around South Brisbane and Fortitude Valley.

Through chain migration and family reunion, post-war migrants gradually built up sizable communities. While these communities offered indispensable friendship and support to each other, that support did not necessarily translate, as it did so effectively in Shepparton, into bridging social capital to new and emerging migrant communities. An community leader from an established migrant community organisation articulated the problem this way:

I'm sure there is a lot tension between these old settled communities who are very well established, and those new ones.

Given the changes in the Migration Programme – in particular the shift away from family reunion and chain migration – toward skilled migration – new and emergent migrant communities have found it more difficult to build social capital in way early migrants from Europe, China and Vietnam were able to through family reunion and chain migration.

Taken together, the smaller numbers of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, their geographic dispersion across the expanse of the city, alongside the fact that Queensland was the last jurisdiction to establish a multicultural and ethnic affairs portfolio (in the 1990s), have reduced the city's capacity to build bridging social capital. It is not surprising therefore that some Brisbane city residents are still deeply wedded to policies of assimilation, as summed up by one of the participants this way:

If you want to assimilate, then come in; if you don't you can stay where you are.

Participants in the focus groups generally spoke highly of the City Council's efforts in recent years to turn the city around from being perceived as mono-cultural to multicultural. This is most evident in the City's Multicultural Communities Strategy, the purpose of which is to make Brisbane 'an even

more friendly, diverse and exciting place to live, work and do business.' (Campbell Newman, Lord Mayor, in Brisbane City Council, 2005). The strategy aims to build a more inclusive and harmonious city and to assist culturally and linguistically diverse residents to live 'without experiences of social exclusion, racism, discrimination and other forms of discrimination.' (Campbell Newman, Lord Mayor, in Brisbane City Council, 2005). Multiculturalism as a policy has only recently taken root in the City Council and policies governing its civil sphere (Brisbane City Council 2005), but according to many of the participants it has not yet taken a strong hold on everyday life, as this social worker from the multi-cultural sector put it:

I see a problem in that there is a policy, but it's not actually channelled down to the people; it's not conveyed in everyday people's lives. So it's something as if we are taught something – we are multicultural country – we respect other people, but we don't practice it on an everyday level.

Overall, the strength of Brisbane's social capital rests on the relatively recent development and implementation of multicultural strategies through institutionalized forms of authority and influence, such as the Brisbane City Council, and the range of groups that work through and with it to support new and established migrant communities. The shortcoming is felt at the grass roots level of everyday life – where multiculturalism in its organic form appears limited by comparison to Melbourne and Sydney. In a forward to a book about migrant's experiences of settling in Queensland, the former Premier Wayne Goss summed up the benefits this way:

The value of the contribution by our early migrants to the development of Queensland is inestimable. Their influence on our industries, culture and ultimately our entire lifestyles has continued down through the decades... (Wayne Goss in Brandle 1991:vii).

The general extent of the migrant contribution the cultural diversity and creativity was widely recognized among the participants as illustrated by the following observations:

Major benefits is multiculturalism, obviously, it's the spice of life, I suppose – difference, variety, better understanding of different cultures and whatever people.

I think the positives are – you've got to look at why these people are coming to this country. They have a lot to offer, whether they're fleeing dictatorship; whether they are coming from IR for a better life; whether they are coming on a whim; whatever it is – these people have something to offer. And I think that can only be positive, whatever it is – whether it's their knowledge; whether it's their ability to do a certain job; whether it's what they know about history – whatever it is, I think as a positive, if we're open-minded to what they have to offer, then we can only go forward

Meeting Queensland's need for skilled and unskilled labour

Participants were acutely aware of the contribution that migrants were making to filling shortages in skilled and unskilled labour, particularly in the current climate of prosperity being experienced by Queensland.

A positive I see, is that the employment gaps, probably factory workers, the areas where we probably need now,...that's helping our economy.

...with the aging population – it's a fact that we're not going to have enough workers in Australia. So obviously skilled labour plays a big part....

The major benefits are the skills, knowledge and wealth that these people are bringing with them. And as I said, it's like, you have educated doctors, engineers – we didn't pay a cent for their education, upbringing... I think this is great.

Australia's future capacity to attract skilled labour in an increasingly globalised world to the places where it's most needed was raised as an issue as captured in this remark.

How do we encourage skilled migrants into Australia – that's another topic altogether – we always seem to focus on the refugees more so in this conversation. Even the ones that aren't skilled – I don't know how you lure them into particular areas of employment.

We're losing a lot of our skilled people overseas because they pay (better) money overseas. So even getting skilled migrants in, I think is an issue, because I think they're choosing the US for example, over Australia, if they've got the pick.

9.3 Costs and issues specific to South Brisbane

Dispersion of Migrants – Stretching Infrastructure and Support Services

Lack of infrastructure adversely affects both the migrant and the host community. As already noted a range of settlement Programmes and services in language tuition, interpreting services, accommodation and health checks are provided by the Commonwealth, State and Local governments. Participants spoke highly of the range of Programmes and services available, particularly those delivered through the Brisbane City Council, under the Multicultural Communities Strategy. Under this strategy the Council coordinates ad Community Relations Group, a Cultural Diversity Group and an anti-racism project (Brisbane City Council, 2005:11). It provides a range of services including: the translation of local government documents into a range of new and emerging languages; the provision of neighbourhood guides and resources; tangible support for refugee settlement; an on-line welcome kit for refugees and migrants and a number of facts sheets. Brisbane City Council also funds a community development grants scheme that assists a range of

new and established migrant groups to build community capacity (social capital); and has funded 83 grants worth more than \$1 million over 4 years to celebrate cultural diversity (Brisbane City Council, 2005:11). The City Council employs bilingual consultants and facilitates a community jobs programme aimed at finding employment for refugees (Brisbane City Council, 2005:11).

However, the rapid growth in Brisbane's new and emerging migrant populations, couple with their dispersal across the city places an extra strain on the demand and provision of such services. In addition to this the gentrification of South Brisbane has significantly eroded the informal social supports offered to new migrants during their crucial integration phase into Australian life. Contracted services have largely taken over and filled the gap in informal supports. Some participants felt this promoted community division.

In terms of settlement support in the early years, it creates good citizens – like in the 50s with the Good Neighbourhood Policy. 'We're neighbours,' welcome families, have some training, but welcome families. Now it's been privatised, and that human element has been lost, so again, that kind of divides people.

Changes in local neighbourhood

Given the gentrification of South Brisbane new and emerging migrant communities are settling further out in the South Western suburbs of Marooka and Stones Corner. As noted in the literature review one aspect of migration that host communities sometimes have trouble coming to terms with is the changes to local neighbourhood. While many of these are superficial some residents find new smells and food outlets and the visual appearance of people from ethnic minorities unsettling. The reaction of several long-term residents to this sudden change was expressed in the following edited exchange:

But on the down side... I see it as a clumping effect too – they're being clumped particularly in Marooka. I'm just a bit concerned that it may become a bit of a ghetto...

But I agree with X, that I am concerned with the problem of ghetto-type thing, or keeping their own culture here and not coming and meeting or respecting our culture...

The 'clumping' of new migrants in suburbs with a long history of being mono-cultural raised a raft of concerns among long term residents. The risk of new social divisions and racial tensions opening up in response to these neighbourhood changes could present a challenge if forms of bridging capital fail to emerge between the new and established communities.

9.4 Overview

Like the participants in Toowoomba, Brisbane focus groups expressed a range of deeply felt concerns about the social costs associated with migration. Nevertheless the majority of these were short term integration issues that related mostly to the new and emergent migrant communities – from the Middle East, Africa, Tonga and the Pacific Islands. In terms of Visa categories, again most of the perceived costs related to migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, many of whom probably would have entered through the humanitarian intake. Some of costs are born entirely by the first generation of migrants, while others are shared with the wider host community. Overall however the social and economic benefits of migration to Australia were considered to outweigh the more short term social costs.

10: Darebin

10.1 Background

This case study is based on the outcomes of discussions with six focus groups and three individual interviews of civic leaders drawn from the Melbourne suburb of Darebin. The size of groups ranged from two to six individuals. Data from the focus groups has been combined with local publications to present a general picture of the social costs and benefits of migration to the community.

There are 128 000 residents in Darebin. This figure is expected to increase to 137 000 in 2021. Darebin City Council (DCC) notes proudly that, 'Darebin is among the largest, most diverse communities in the State' (DCC 2006b: 3) with 35 per cent of its residents born overseas. The major contributing countries are the United Kingdom, China and Vietnam. But there has been a significant influx recently from Sri Lanka, India, Egypt, the Philippines and Middle East countries.

More than 40 per cent of residents can speak a language other than other than English, with the proportion of residents speaking Italian, Greek, Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese being roughly three times the size of the respective rates across Melbourne. Emerging languages include Tamil, Sinhalese (Sri Lanka and Southern India) and Tagalog (Philippines) (DCC 2006b:2).

The region has a disproportionate number of people who live in poverty (DCC 2006b:3). Five times as many Darebin households than the Melbourne average earn less than \$15,000 per annum. Only about 6 per cent of residents earn more than \$100,000 each year (half of the Melbourne average). The unemployment rate in Darebin during 2006 has been 7.6 per cent; 50 per cent higher than Melbourne's average of 5 per cent. The residential concentration of migrants in the low socio-economic areas of cities is a long established pattern common to the socio-spatial organisation of many cities around the world.

10.2 Benefits specific to Darebin

The positive impact of migration on building Darebin's stock of social capital

The development of social capital in the Darebin municipality has been characterised by the emergence of ethno-specific services, groups, and institutionalised, faith-based networks that have, until quite recently, functioned as largely independent groupings within the broader communal landscape.

Migrant settlement in Darebin dates from the late 1940s and 1950s with the arrival of considerable numbers of Southern and Eastern Europeans. There was also a large influx of Vietnamese in the 1970s. These communities gradually built up critical mass with each succeeding wave of members. Each community offered indispensable friendship and support, as one interviewee recalled:

Where my parents worked – both of them – there were lots of Italians, so what they missed out on [in terms of] family connections ... [they had instead] ... all the people around them and they became their life long friends, and some of them have progressed into their old age with mum and dad. So the social support and the learnings didn't come then from the family, it actually came from the Italian community.

Religion appears to have been the critical adhesive in many of these groups with the church/mosque/temple forming the institutional core. The churches offered a regular calendar of festivals and events (balls, dances, dinners, picnics etc) which became significant occasions in the life of the community. The existence of a strong foundation in faith greatly accelerated the growth of social capital because it meant that many shared values were already in place. Communities could concentrate on developing identity and building cooperation through bridging capital.

The most salient of the faith-based communities were the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Orthodox, and Uniting Churches, the Salvation Army, the Church of Christ, the Islamic mosques and the Buddhist temples. By the end of the 20th century these organizations had all developed extensive networks which made available services to members in the Darebin area. They provide support with; youth groups, nursing homes, language classes, playgroups, social events, senior citizens' groups, aged care, computer skills, counselling, family support, women's support groups, translations services and resettlement assistance (DCC 2005c:12 -14)

However, while individual groups succeeded in building resilient community structures, they also appear to have often been quite self-contained with strong boundaries. Inter-ethnic communication developed only slowly and hesitantly according to some participants in the focus groups from these communities. For example, when asked about mixing with other denominations, the daughter of parents who migrated from Macedonia, recalled that:

... connection with other ethnic groups came in degrees. Outside your own ethnic groups it was first other Orthodox groups, then it expanded into other Christian groups, but very rarely did it cross the boarder into Islam. Most eastern groups have a very poor relationship with the Muslim population, even in their own country.

Some indication of the degree of separation between groups is provided in the Interfaith Survey undertaken in Darebin during 2004. The survey found that 21

per cent of citizens, and 24 per cent of religious leaders did not interact with persons of other faiths (DCC 2004: 8). Some 20 per cent of citizens and religious leaders did not know anyone from other faiths, and almost 60 per cent were not interested in meeting people from other religions (DCC 2004:9). Moreover, there was a perceived need from respondents to 'break down barriers' before different religious groups could develop a relationship (DCC 2004:25). Even Christian leaders met with each other only 'sporadically' and then for 'special occasions' (2004: 24).

During the 1990s the arrival of a number of new migrant groups dramatically changed the ethnic composition and dynamics of Darebin. For many of these migrants there were no established communities to which they could turn for assistance. Though agencies have been set up to provide support they are unable to offer the range of services that a large, established network could provide. As a consequence, a number of families from more recently arrived migrants claim they have found themselves managing in quite isolated circumstances. The extent to which some new migrants feel isolated is well illustrated by this poignant anecdote from one African interviewee:

We have made every effort to get to know the people in our street ... we had very limited success. Last Christmas we actually wrote letters inviting people [120 invitations in all] to come and enjoy African food and African music ... of course nobody came... We wanted to reach out to them ... but we got a cold shoulder.

Darebin City Council (and its predecessors before amalgamation in 1994) has had a long and successful experience in accommodating the needs of diverse ethnic groups. This is clearly reflected in the composition of the council – seven of Darebin's nine councillors are from ethnic backgrounds. The municipality also has an impressive history of consulting effectively with its residents – in 2006 the Council embraced 29 community advisory committees covering all areas of activity. In particular, Darebin City Council has developed an impressive range of services targeted specifically at its linguistically diverse array of residents. These include:

- The homepage of Darebin City Council's website is available in 12 different languages.
- The Council offers a multilingual communications service where residents may call a number, ask for a speaker in their chosen language, and be connected to a Council language Aide or an Interpreter.
- Multicultural Resource Directory published bi-annually containing over 600 ethnic listings of groups, associations and organizations. The website alone provides references in 29 languages.

- The UN Room – based in the Reservoir Civic Centre – is a shared facility that offers meeting and office space to all ethnic groups and agencies, and support for their Programmes and activities.
- Ethnic Communities Council – represents over 70 ethnic groups and associations and acts as a consultative body to the Council in terms of conveying programme and service requirements.
- Employment of a multicultural officer and co-ordinator of a local directory of ethno-specific groups and support agencies
- Interfaith Calendar – incorporates a list of dates through the year relating to important religious and cultural activities for different ethnic communities. (DCC 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d, 2006a, 2006b).

Migration has greatly assisted the development of social capital in Darebin and led to the emergence of institutionalised networks of activity that have acted as bridges across ethno-specific groups. In many cases these networks have centred around religious practices and ethno specific organisations. These organisations have, nevertheless, possessed the attributes and qualities to enable wider forms of civic engagement to evolve. The necessary catalyst here has been the Darebin City Council which has succeeded in providing a secular, independent core around which broader linkages can develop. The Council, in effect, is managing the transition from a community with a multiple of small, institutionalised networks to a much larger network that fosters interaction, co-operation and support among a spectrum of ethno-specific groups and agencies.

Benefits of Darebin's distinctive cultural diversity

There was wide agreement that Darebin had been built on waves of successful migration. The benefits of cultural diversity and multiculturalism appear to be esteemed by most community members, according to Council surveys, as this participant explains:

It's not just my opinion – people say (in the community survey) they value diversity in Darebin and they have a very good understanding of multiculturalism...

Another participant tried to explain the benefits of migration to the Darebin community by contemplating the losses or opportunity cost of not having such a culturally diverse community:

To me the benefits are immense... if you don't have diversity, you have to go and create it... not to have diverse communities, to me it's saying we'll avoid all these tensions, but they will be very limited people they will have

limited creativity, there would be so many losses that would come out of having a non-diverse community.

The way that migration multiplies productive diversity stood out as one of the key benefits to the host community, as illustrated by this example of a local catering firm established by a group of humanitarian female migrants:

X [catering company] have all these women from all these backgrounds ... so we have one caterer who is able to provide so many different types of authentic food and that's been really beneficial to us.

There was widespread agreement across all focus groups that Darebin had benefited enormously over the years from the migrant presence, both economically and socially, in ways expressed by participants in other community studies. One comment in particular – from a migrant – seemed to capture the general perspective;

We have potential to be unique in the world. What we do is fantastic; for the most part we can do even better. We have so many ways of thinking in this country and we can contribute and it is not just food and restaurants and fashion, it's actually about thinking about economic things, social structures, economic structures, different ways of doing business, innovation.

There was wide acknowledgement across the focus groups that migrants brought in skills and knowledge that Australia has not had to pay for; that the post war migrants had made very substantial contributions to the social and economic prosperity of Darebin; and that such diversity brought with it a great many long term benefits to the host community which far out weighed any costs.

10.3 Costs and issues specific to Darebin

Managing religious and cultural diversity in a post-9/11 climate

There was wide agreement across the Darebin focus groups that since the September 11 terrorist attacks there have been isolated incidents of hostility in the Darebin municipality and a growing number of complaints of discrimination by veiled Muslim women in particular. One interviewee reported that a Sudanese family living in the northern suburbs had their car fire-bombed four times and they were forced to move. Another stated that a local Imam refused to conduct religious services outside the CBD area for fear of violence. A third respondent, with a bureaucratic background, commented in relation to employees who worked in a large Darebin organization;

Now they are all professionals, or social workers of counsellors or job employment consultants or whatever. A lot of them who are of Muslim background, who are living in non-migrant areas, where they don't usually blend in, they have actually shifted home or have chosen to sell their

homes so they can go to areas where there are much higher concentrations of their people.

By and large, however, participants in the focus groups were very positive about the tolerance of diversity that exists in the Darebin municipality. Most of their remarks about racism related to the wider community, the media and certain politicians. For instance the Anti-Muslim sentiments talked about by participants were not so much felt at an every day level but more through social reaction to national and international events as portrayed by the media. By the same token, as has been indicated previously, there are clearly pockets of isolation within the region, and a feeling of indifference on the part of many.

By the early 2000s the lack of interaction between ethnic groups had become an issue of concern within the broader community. This became accentuated in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Darebin City Council responded to the situation in 2002 by applying for a Living in Harmony grant from the federal government. The grant was to set up the Cramer Street Project (Cramer St is where the local Mosque is located). A particular incident had prompted this initiative:

People were coming to the Mosque on Friday and just parking in front of people's houses on the front lawn ... and the hostility! Parking officers and Council [staff] would go down there giving out tickets to people who parked in the wrong spot ... rather than go down that track ... Council got a grant to put the[Cramer St] project together. (6/3).

The project involved mounting a number of events in the community which provided the opportunity for people from different ethnic groups and religions to interact. The initiative proved very successful. One Council employee observed that:

It was incredible how everybody got together and at the end, at the final festival, there were people of every religion. It was a major festival of about 3000 people. I'd say in the four to five years I've been working in the multicultural affairs unit of the Council, I've never, never, experienced any... conflict or major differences between communities. Actually, what some communities are doing now whenever they organize an activity, they are inviting the others to join them. This municipality does a lot in the way of festivals and events that are inclusive of people from different backgrounds.

A community leader also involved in the project had this to say about its positive effects:

In confronting the issue in Cramer St where we built the Mosque it has been a fantastic lesson – for people in that community have learnt a lot – how you deal with those issues in your neighbourhood – how do you tackle those nuisances ... and how relationships overcome any major

issue like that. So the lessons are tremendous and you don't get the opportunity to learn those if you are living in a comfort zone.

The obvious success of the Cramer Street project led to Darebin City Council commissioning the regional Interfaith Survey in 2004. The Council also undertook widespread consultation with the various religious groups in the region. This evaluation of resident perspectives not only confirmed suspicions that religious separation was a problem in the municipality, but also provided the Council with the starting points with which to work towards a long-term solution. The Council drew two important conclusions from the information provided by the consultation process:

1) That to foster improved communication across disparate community groups it made sense to utilise the social capital generated by existing religious organisations. Members of these networks already possessed the attributes necessary to build linkages with other networks. As the Council's Interfaith Consultation Report stated:

Faith communities provide networking opportunities for their members, which strengthens community cohesion within religious groups, but can also lead to wider social integration. Accordingly, identification with a faith community within a religiously plural society can be interpreted as a sign of involvement with rather than disengagement from Australian society.

2) That the Council itself would have to create the framework which would facilitate inter-ethnic dialogue. The report noted:

The overwhelming response of the religious leaders was that it was very important for Council to be a neutral party in interfaith activities. The Council must be an unbiased party, so that religious leaders can come together on neutral ground under the 'umbrella' of the City of Darebin.

By the mid 2000s, Darebin City Council had begun to emerge as the hub of a much larger network of inter-ethnic participation. Certainly, the perceived role of the Council as the leader in this arena arose frequently in the course of focus group discussions. While there are other multi-ethnic organizations working in the region, their impact appears to be much less significant at the grass roots level.

Unemployment and under-employment among newly arrived skilled migrants

A number of recently arrived skilled migrants expressed great disappointment at not being able to find suitable employment.. For these well-educated arrivals, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications is a major problem (the Russian doctors working as cleaners syndrome). Steps have been taken to provide avenues for such people to seek accreditation, retrain and upgrade

their skills. Yet according to those who participated in the focus groups, this did not meet their expectations. To successfully take on a professional role migrants need to be able to possess more than the necessary qualifications. They also need to understand and embrace the culture of a foreign workplace. As one employment agent explained:

This has been our experience dealing with employers and recruitment agents... that there is a certain kind of a cultural 'fit' that you have to have before you can be accepted into this sort of middle-class world of employment as a professional migrant. So you might have enough social English, but if you present yourself at an interview for instance, or the way your resume looks, you know, you're very quickly discarded because you don't fit what an HR person or... a recruitment agent is looking for. We get professional migrants who say, 'I've been sending resumes to recruitment agents – I don't even get a response'.

Such high level communicative skills can be very difficult to acquire. One interview commented that it was only after she took a degree in Australia that she could fully comprehend the nuances and subtleties of what was expected. The ability of skilled migrants to adapt more readily may simply reflect a less complex work environment. Skilled migrants however faces other major problems. The most salient of these is that many do not have their families with them. In the absence of such a vital support system they may not perform nearly as well as they could with family backup and support.

Lack of culturally appropriate aged- and child-care services

The lack of adequate culturally sensitive child care was frequently cited as a major obstacle for migrant women in the way of realizing life goals and participating in English literacy classes.

I think one of the big issues happening now with lots of the new arrivals is childcare. And learning English is very difficult if you've got a big family, or you've got children who are not at school yet – to find time to go to an English class when you've got your family. So one of the really big issues that has to be addressed in the English language facilities, is that you can provide a classroom with childcare that's nearby....many grandparents are now the babysitters so the grandparents are now missing out on learning English, they're staying home. I see childcare as one of the major barriers that's in the way of learning English at the moment.

Darebin has one of the largest populations of older persons in Victoria, a great of many of whom came to Australia as post war migrants. This demographic underscored concerns raised by a number of civic and community leaders about the lack of culturally appropriate aged care services in Darebin.

Duplication and lack of coordination in infrastructure provision

Unlike the other communities studied, Darebin was widely regarded as rich with infrastructure required to support the seamless integration of new migrants. Certainly no-one stated otherwise. However some key participants (members of organisations responsible for dealing with a variety of issues affecting new migrants) expressed concern that resources for migrant infrastructure were not being spent in the most effective manner. They argued that there were too many un-coordinated layers of assistance – federal, state, local and NGOs – and that roles and relationships were not clear. One well-positioned official (and himself a migrant to Australia a couple of decades earlier) argued that governments should deal directly with ethno-specific representative bodies rather than going through additional levels of bureaucracy.

We don't need the government interference; let [the representative bodies] sort it out themselves. But what we should do is go out to these organizations, talk to them to see what they need, rather than say I'm here, I'm just forming this body, and you just come to me and I'll give you the service. ...So I think we really need to engage and involve the ethno-specific groups themselves, rather than having these bodies who have been established in the so-called mainstream thinking... They don't know what the community want.

However other key institutional players interviewed felt that services would be more efficiently provided and co-ordinated through main-streaming. There were also concerns (and some cynicism) that financial assistance could be too easily acquired by including currently fashionable phrases in submissions. Such activity, it was felt, distorted the funding process and led to the duplication of infrastructure support for new migrants.

Certain areas can be quite attractive to funding agencies – you can mix in key words like 'humanitarian' and 'young women' and 'refugees' – you can get money for similar Programmes.

10.4 Overview

While the focus groups raised a number of costs associated with migration, in perspective there was wide agreement that cultural diversity brought with it a great many benefits to the host community which out-weighed the costs. Again the majority of the participants saw the social costs to the host community as being short-term as summed up in this quote:

Look with every wave of migration we have heaps of problems. We are having problems at the moment with people from West African communities and people from Sudan ... but it depends how we view them ... some will say 'oh no what have done bringing in these people with problems', but we are also bringing in a whole lot of benefits as well. We have become sophisticated and skilled in dealing with these issues which is why the whole world wants to learn from us Australia, how we are doing

multiculturalism – why are we so successful. So I don't view it as a negative at all because with every challenge that diversity causes there are heaps of lessons for us to learn from.

11: Common Benefits, Issues and Concerns

11.1 Benefits common to all communities

Substantial benefits to migrants and subsequent generations born in Australia

There was substantial agreement across all focus groups as to the benefits that migration brings to both the migrant and the host community and especially intergenerational benefits. Economic advancement and the opportunity to pursue material gain were invariably cited as critical factors. So too were the freedom, safety and expectations that went with being a citizen in an advanced democracy. The following comment is typical of the views of participants:

I think we're the most democratic country on the earth. We can be whatever we want to be... So I think that is why I like Australia – it's one place that it doesn't matter where you come from, it doesn't limit what you can do yourself, and what you can do for your country.

Some migrants share such sentiments but take a longer-term view of the benefits. In particular, they see their investment in intergenerational terms. For instance, after discussing her own difficulties in settling into Australia, of feeling isolated and lonely, an elderly woman who migrated from Denmark about 40 years ago said, 'But I am still very happy I got here because my children have had much better jobs... My eldest son is a mine's engineer and my daughter a lab assistant'. A similar sentiment was expressed by a more recent arrival to Australia experiencing cultural isolation:

My children.... I know they will grow up; they will go to university, and even myself, I am developing...I've got a job, I've got a qualification, I've got a house... a sense of security. Yes and even when we are in big trouble ... People will mostly help you.

Migrants who participated in the focus groups were keen to talk about the benefits that their migration to Australia had bought them in terms of enhancing their safety and security as well as their long-term educational and economic prospects – as one refugee from South America put it:

I'm so glad to have this passport and this nationality in the country that I call Australia – I get a bit emotional about it.

Other major benefits included: the relative lack of racism, a tolerant and supportive society, absence to terrorism ('I feel that Australia is so blessed not to be touched by terrorism'), the freedoms that Australian women take for granted, and the enjoyment of living in a multicultural society.

The national quantitative overview noted that the overwhelming majority of migrants were satisfied with their decision to migrate and few return. This was well supported by the focus group participants who had migrated to Australia. Many felt their migration had advanced their social, educational and economic prospects. Those fleeing war torn and less peaceful countries highly valued the peace, tranquillity and security that Australia provides.

I can always appreciate where I've come from, but I can also appreciate where I am right now. So I hold onto the past, but I accept where I am presently as being a beautiful place to be. My family miss out because as I tell them, 'Look I love my family very much, so you must know that Australia must be a beautiful place for me to stay that far away from my family'.

Enhancement of local knowledge and innovation

... new business skills; new ways of looking at things, new perspectives this is one of the wonderful benefits migrants and refugees bring.

A common view expressed across the focus groups was that migration had generated many new ideas for addressing problems, creating business, and cultural engagement.

Innovation is a big force for me. They bring ideas that worked for them in their own country – different ways of solving things. I've seen it time and time again, even on farms... this gentleman was trying to teach grafting and he [migrant] was watching... He said, 'do you want to try it my way?' This was the gentleman from overseas. Using one-fifth of the time it had taken the farmer to do it – every single graft took. So he said, 'could you just train everybody else?'

There was almost universal praise among the participants for the new knowledge that migrants bring to Australia and their host communities.

... academics who came from other countries... in science they came with significant scientific achievement; with international publications; knowledge of different educational system from different countries around the world. The knowledge of certain systems... significant knowledge of other educational systems or... government, and so on. This has been of major benefit to Australia.

Productive diversity and global business opportunities

Participants generally felt that migration also opened up valuable business opportunities for Australia with the rest of the world as captured in this quote.

The migrants of today are more sophisticated people – they create industries. The Chinese are the only nationals who ever came to this country, who within six months of arriving here developed a thriving export industry. In addition to that, we have also a lot of innovation – so multiculturalism (helps) Australia – with new ideas that link up with the world. We have new languages. In other words, we can export now in Arabic – we have good migrants who can sell meat in the Middle East; know how to kill the sheep accordingly; and they have got the right contacts. Australia needs multiculturalism to survive economically, in the short and the long-term... Australia could not have developed into a modern nation today, without migrants.

There was a wide appreciation of the valuable contribution that business migrants (including migrants who go into business regardless of their visa category on arrival), make to the local economy.

There's always room for business migration because business migrants, by their very nature, economically stand alone, so they can be integrated anywhere, and in the northern area, skilled migration, yes we certainly need, or we could use in Toowoomba in the middle to high skilled areas.

Bridge across the hemispheres

Given Australia is the only island continent in the world, without migration participants felt that as a society it would stagnate and remain isolated from global cultures and economies. This sentiment was aptly captured in the following observation:

One of the benefits of it [migration] is the fact that it has brought Australia into the world... it's created a bridge, they've [migrants] created a bridge across the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Australia's peculiar geographic characteristic as an island continent in the southern hemisphere is something that creates anxiety. Migration was widely believed among participants to reduce Australia's isolation from the rest the world, through the global transfer of people and with it knowledge, partnership and understanding. The following observations were typical across the focus groups:

I think another benefit is: a lot of Australians don't get to travel overseas because they can't afford to, and because we are quite isolated from the rest of the world. So it gives them the opportunity to learn about different cultures and countries that we didn't learn about at school.

Fifty years ago we were insular, small-minded. Now thanks to the migrants we're broad-minded and part of the world.

11.2 Common issues and concerns to migrants

Family separation and cultural isolation

The separation of many migrants (both humanitarian and skilled) from their extended families is a source of great distress. It is also perceived as a major cause of under-productivity on the part of individuals. As one many commented:

Those families are never able to settle properly because their mind is there [their country of origin]. They are not able to work because they are dealing with issues, very stress related issues. And at the end they are not able to contribute in this society. So what they do is sit back and received a pension form government. [But if parents could be joined by their children] those people [the children] can look after us, and the government won't have to pay us any pension or anything.

A humanitarian entrant from the refugee camps of North Africa spoke freely about her post-migration experiences. She expressed much appreciation to the parishioners for sponsoring her and her children and Australia for giving her a new life. When asked what was the cost of migration she replied 'mostly your with yourself you see, indoors with yourself and everything', when prompted 'So it's a sense of isolation?' she replied, 'yeah'. Living in a relatively culturally homogenous community was clearly impacting on her sense of cultural isolation. One of the Australian customs that shocked her most was that women formally arranged to by phone to 'have a cup of tea'. Where she came from they just met spontaneously. This woman clearly longed for a sense of cultural engagement – for the outdoor culture of Africa, where neighbours and friends did not arrange to meet, they just did.

What seemed to distinguish Brisbane and Toowoomba from the two Victorian communities studied, where multiculturalism has much longer history of acceptance at grass roots level of those communities, was a stronger sense of cultural exclusion and isolation. The feeling of being culturally excluded – of not being accepted as quite equal – was summed up by one participant from an established migrant community this way:

Yes, I can feel a tension – there is a bit of racism, you can feel it. Not at work well not with me, but deep inside you can feel there is a difference. They differentiate you, and you have to work 10 times better than them to be at least equal, regarded as equal. And I think it's unfair.

Overt racism was not identified as a widespread problem in any of the communities. It was more the feeling of not belonging or being excluded, and as a migrant who came from Italy to Australia 20 years ago explained, this is not a new phenomenon.

I don't think it's new – I coped a lot of that when I was growing up at school. I went to a Public School and there was probably 900 students.

We were termed... wogs, and we used to cop it every single day – ‘Go back to your own country. What are you doing here’.

Those individuals in the focus groups who expressed most dissatisfaction with their life in Australia were recently arrived Muslims from African and Middle Eastern countries. Veiled Muslim women claimed they had difficulty getting jobs and felt discriminated against. All but two of the Muslim women we interviewed had removed their veils to avoid evoking Anti-Muslim reactions. Most were philosophical about the issue seeing it as a short term over reaction to global events summed up by this Muslim woman from an Arabic background:

I think that people will get used to seeing veiled women – whether Muslim women continue to choose the veil in the future is a cyclical thing. There could be two scenarios. Muslim women in Australia may feel they don’t want to wear it. I think it also has been a reaction – an identity thing which is why they chose to take it on – but there will still be an element that will feel it is a religious expression and by then I think a lot of Australians will see it as a non-issue in the long term, because they will get to know people who wear the veil and become accustomed to it and non threatened by it and will talk to these women and find that they are not so strange after all and it will not be an issue. What is happening in Australia is no different to what is happening in other parts of the world, I think the reaction to it is over exaggerated – making a big deal out of the veil.

Setting in place a cohesive programme of family reunion, moreover, was perceived by many participants and service providers especially, as an integral component underpinning successful integration and future economic development:

If we want unskilled or semi-skilled labour that we want to train up in the future, you have to have it with a package of family support ... the family provides the collectivist unit.

Overseas qualifications not recognised

Educated humanitarian and skilled migrants across all focus groups in all communities expressed some dismay that their qualifications are not immediately acceptable in Australia. From a host country’s point of view it is an important quality control to ensure that overseas qualifications in trades and skilled professions such as medicine, engineering meet acceptable Australian standards. Some skilled migrants have difficulties coming to terms with this. During the process of upgrading overseas qualifications some skilled migrants become underemployed. For instance skilled migrants from India, Africa, Iraq who participated in the interviews complained they could only find manual work in orchards, abattoirs, farms and factories. For this cohort of highly qualified middle class migrant they found the experience personally demeaning, but something they were prepared to do for the sake of their children’s future. As one migrant from Iraq argued:

Many of those people are very highly qualified because the ...refugees from Iraq who were affected by oppression of the former regime were the highly qualified people. And neither Iraq benefited from those qualified people (leaving), nor the host countries are utilising the skills from those groups. So it is a waste of resources from the original countries, as well as the new countries.

While acknowledging this to be the case generally, established Australian residents took a more localised – and strongly felt – perspective. It was argued that the majority of the Goulburn Valley's estimated 2–3000 Iraqi migrants came from privileged backgrounds in their old country. This created very real problems for employment in the area:

Most of these people are very well qualified/educated in their own right. They will not relate to manual/physical work....these guys didn't want to get their hands dirty....or get out in the cold.

One interviewee gave an example of the attitudes that service providers were confronted with. She was allotted a client who had been in detention in Iraq for some time, then in a refugee camp for a couple of years before coming to Australia:

He said to me (through an interpreter), 'Right, I'm ready now, I just want to make a new life'. I said, 'What do you do?'. He said, 'I am a tax official'. Well mate, that's just not going to work. And that was his thing. He was a tax official in his own country. He'd lost five years of his life getting from there to here. But in that time an education thing hasn't happened that showed him, 'Mate, you're going in a different direction now. You can't do that anymore'.

That this migrant (and many others) had managed to get as far as Australia without apparently being provided with any information or training about his new environment was a matter of some concern to service providers and volunteers.

Unemployment, under-employment and welfare dependency

The analysis of human capital in Chapter 3 noted there is wide discrepancy between those migrants employed in managerial and high status jobs, and those employed in low status jobs, with migrants from USA, Canada, Japan and India particularly prominent among those with the highest representation of high status jobs (Table 3A.1.1). Conversely, in terms of low status jobs, migrants from the Balkans, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and some Pacific Islands tend to be prominent (Table 3A.1.2). Conversely, in terms of low status jobs, migrants from the Balkans, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and some Pacific Islands tend to be prominent. In general terms the newest arrivals with few job skills and English speaking ability or literacy (and who are by definition more likely to be humanitarian entrants) are those groups most at risk of being

confined to residential clustering and dead end low skill jobs, welfare-dependency or long-term unemployment. Despite the strong demand for labour (mostly skilled) new arrivals tend to experience very high levels of unemployment. The rate of unemployment among the Sudanese population in Toowoomba, for instance, is around 19 per cent (Upham and Martin 2005: 24).

It was widely acknowledged amongst the focus groups that lack of employment opportunities for migrants not only affected the individuals themselves, but also impacted adversely on the wider community. As one interviewee pointed out, employment was central to successful migrant integration and long-term social development:

If you are going to keep the fabric of settlement you've gotta look at the employment question head on. It's not about medicalising those people, or putting them in counselling Programmes, calling them tortured or traumatised or whatever. It's not about giving them little handouts, it's about really fulfilling some of their expectations through employment.

The experience of newly arrived humanitarian migrants contrasts with those relayed to us by migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s. Post war migrants living in Brisbane, Shepparton, Darebin and Toowoomba all claimed they had no trouble whatsoever finding jobs.

They brought the Labour Department on board the ship to interview quite a few people... and I was one of them, and I got two jobs... before I got off the ship.

Given the limited employment opportunities for new migrants largely in low skill agricultural work, and problems many had upon initial arrival in Australia, the skilled migrants arriving in Australia in the past few years complained they were or had been under employed. One skilled migrant summed up his situation thus:

A brain drain for the country I came from and a brain down the drain for Australia.

A number of migrants have difficulty finding employment. This is partly due to poor English skills, and partly due to difficulty with their overseas qualifications being recognised as already discussed. The loss of well-qualified people to the workforce, and the wasted capability this entailed, was felt keenly by a large number of participants:

We've got people who come here as accountants. But when we talk to employers they say, 'we don't want to have a bar of them'. They need to go and do a course in GST or Australian taxation law before we can actually employ them. So here they are coming under this scheme but having to work in call centres. So they are actually not being utilized for the skills that they have.

Given the high rate of unemployment among humanitarian entrants, in the absence of employment opportunities volunteer workers and service providers across the groups noted there was a risk of this cohort of migrants becoming welfare dependent because they had been accustomed to United Nations hand-outs. A parish volunteer who herself had sponsored a number of families from third world refugee camps to Australia over the last two decades relayed the problems she had encountered with humanitarian migrants becoming over dependent on Church support.

They come here you take them around the supermarket – they see all these wonderful things that they want to buy – the appliances you get at Kmart... most of the churches run what we call Parish Pantries – we have one. They very quickly learnt that they could get the food free if they went around from this place to that place – Salvation Army, CentreLink, Lifeline and our Parish and other Parishes. They could just feed the family without spending any money on food – therefore you could spend the money on all these other things.

11.3 Common issues and concerns to host communities

Integration issues, Australian values and cultural conflicts

The overwhelming majority of focus group participants across all communities responded positively to the question: ‘Do you think it is reasonable that both migrants to Australia and Australian born citizens share similar values, such as value for equality of opportunity, equality between the sexes, political freedom, justice, work and family life?’ Many participants felt strongly about this, responding with emphatic remarks like:

... they must abide by our law, otherwise I don't believe they should be here. Otherwise how can you run an equal system of freedom without abiding by our law?

An elderly woman who migrated to Australia from London in 1958 with her family to build a new life captured the general sentiment expressed across the groups.

You go to a different country – you accept that it's different, don't you. If you wanted to stay at home, you'd stay at home, don't you! ...Yeah, I think if they come here they should accept it regardless.

Significantly, a number of participants stressed the importance of sharing fundamental political values. For example, a long-settled professional migrant stated:

One thing I think we all agree on – anyone who identifies themselves as Australian would argue that – we all have a common belief in democracy. If you don't believe in democracy you shouldn't be here, really. Democratic values, freedom of speech, choice, a fair go, these are the

Australian values that we believe in. We pride ourselves in being the champion of humanitarian movements, and peace, and environmental protection. These are things that we as Australians are passionate about.

Yet most participants in the focus group interviews also felt that it was unreasonable to expect new migrants to Australia, especially those from non-English speaking countries or refugee camps, to be able to appreciate or even comprehend those quintessential Australian values immediately upon arrival. For instance:

... I'm worried about this, especially young teenage men – there needs to be a way which they can understand that these are core Australian values. ..and there ...(are) ways of treating each other... There needs to be a space where they can hear that very clearly, so that they do belong, rather than later on bringing up the stick and saying, 'You crossed the line.' It would be better at the beginning to ensure that there is a (shared understanding) from male to female relationships to driving on the road, to a whole range of issues...

It is understandable therefore that a number of social issues about the impact of migration on Australia consistently identified by the focus groups arose from the gap between the need for social unity and cohesion (tangibly expressed in a firm commitment to universal values such as equality of opportunity, equality between the sexes, political freedom, justice, work and family life), and a array of generally short term cultural integration issues (such as ignorance of road rules, domestic violence laws, child protection policies, equal opportunity legislation, compulsory schooling and voting and so on). Across all focus groups that gap was seen as greatest for humanitarian entrants coming from cultural backgrounds very different from Australia's, as the following quotes illustrate.

The driving is the fraught subject. They tend to drive without a licence – they rarely realize how dangerous it is to do that.

The costs are them assimilating with us, especially when they're from war-stricken, war-torn countries; and from countries with vastly different value systems to what we have here – that's the conflict.

Common integration issues or cultural conflicts identified by participants as adversely impacting on their host community included:

- ignorance of local laws and driving rules;
- higher rates of family violence;
- lack of understanding or appreciation of Australian values of equality;
- unequal treatment of women by migrant men from patriarchal cultural backgrounds;
- mistrust of government and authority;
- welfare dependency and over-reliance on volunteer support;

- drain on infrastructure support,
- misunderstandings arising from cultural differences and a lack of English literacy; and
- inadequate work and employment related skills necessary for successful cultural exchange and integration.

Gender conflicts were commonly raised by participants as one of the major issues associated with new and emergent migrant communities coming to settle in Australia from cultures where the female sex are not accorded equal respect or value, as one interviewee put it: 'Back home in Africa, the man is God. The men really do trample on the women if they get the chance.' While some participants identified migrants from a Muslim cultures as the major source of gender conflicts, others felt it was more the patriarchal attitudes of certain middle-eastern and African tribal cultures towards women that posed most of the challenges to their cultural acceptance among the wider community. Other participants pointed out that similar gender conflicts were experienced by women from Southern European cultural backgrounds during the post-war waves of migration.

There were also widespread concerns that religious fundamentalism has a negative impact on Australian culture and values. As one group put it:

I don't know if anyone else agrees, but it only seems to be Muslim people that are asking for these accommodations – I don't see Chinese people or Japanese people say, 'Close down the pool,' or bring in Buddhism into McDonalds.

[Others agree.] Yeah, Islam seems to have so many more strict rules around their religion.

It was widely felt among the participants that cultural diversity brought about by new and emerging migrant communities needed careful balancing with existing Australian cultures. A young educated woman from a professional background expressed the concern this way:

I would have thought it was just a threat to what Australians know and love – like the threat of that being taken away from us. In order to accommodate everybody else's culture, we might lose ours – and I just think maybe we should work a little bit more at having everything equally represented, and try to have migrants understand our values. It's not just about us learning theirs, which would be accepting, they've got to learn ours to be accepting.

Another participant in the same group similarly remarked that multiculturalism is two-way street:

It's okay, so long as it's not harming anyone, or competing on other people's freedoms – that's the beauty of Australia – we are free, and you

are free to wear a veil if you want – that's cool. But it's not cool when you start expecting exceptions, or wanting to wear a veil on your driver's licence – I don't know, that's taking it a bit far, I think.

The anxiety that multiculturalism may undermine Australian culture was however balanced with a faith that Australia could 'become a beacon of light for the world', as this young professional man put it:

On the big picture level... I've been in parts of the world in the last few years where I've seen what happens when you don't have diversity. I've seen with my own eyes incredibly awful things happen in a culture that does not manage diversity. I have a vision for Australia to become a beacon of light for the world, to show how you can actually manage cultural diversity because it does need managing. It's not just going to happen. Because this is a very small planet now. So let us be a beacon of light; let us show the way for people to live together.

English literacy, training and communication difficulties

There was clear unanimity across all focus groups that fluency in English was a skill that all migrants had to attain if they wanted the opportunity to pursue a successful career and life in Australia. Interviewees reflected on the experiences of their parents – many of whom had poor language skills – and felt that this had been a seriously limiting factor in their lives. One interviewee noted simply that, 'If you don't speak the language you are at a loss'. Moreover, the growing sophistication and complexity of Australian society in the twenty-first century left little option but acquire a good grasp of the language. When asked, 'How important it is for immigrants to speak English?' the majority of participants across all groups and communities answered one way or another in the affirmative. Here are two typical responses:

If you can learn the language, it gives access to so much more; but what it really gives you access to is the culture. By learning English and being converse well, as everybody in this room can, you can have deeper conversations with people about what it is to be Australia, and what it is to live in Melbourne...

It is difficult to see how people can participate in society unless there is some degree of common language. I feel that there is so much these people are going to miss out on if they are not able to share the language.

Lack of adequate English on the part of migrants obviously affects the host community as well as the migrant. The community loses, both in terms of providing the initial cost of language tuition, and the subsequent inability to obtain a job and thus contribute to the economy. From the host country point of view English literacy is also critical to effective cultural and communicative exchange as articulated by the following participant's story about trying to make friends with new refugees in her neighbourhood.

I'm liaising a lot with these families because most of my daughter's friends are little Sudanese girls. So I'm trying to...talk to them, but I can't because they can't speak English that well... they're all socialising amongst themselves, and they're not really branching out. Like I'd love to be able to say, 'Come round for a cup of coffee,' you know, and aid that integration thing which is what needs to happen. But because of the language barrier, I can't do it.

Occupational health and safety issues were raised by business people across the focus groups as some of the costs associated with employing migrant workers.

... from a business point of view, if people haven't got a good grasp of English, there's some health and safety issues, some very important issues. If people can't speak or can't read the English language, it's probably impossible for a workplace where they might have multicultural employees, to have that signage in a number of languages.

Participants tended to regard English as a global language, not just an Australian official language, as captured in this comment.

English is a world language now... as a business medium it is extremely important that you learn English...if you want real aspirations for people... in terms of mobility... then you must learn English. Otherwise you are limiting people.

English literacy and proficiency was widely regarded as 'absolutely critical' for largely practical reasons of acquiring an education, getting a job, communicating, running a business, integrating into the community and being valued by residents from the host society.

So it's not essential for a sense of identity, but in terms of value, I think it's recognized as absolutely critical by migrants.

A minority of focus group participants thought that it was possible for a migrant to manage quite well without English as long as s/he was a member of a large, well-organised ethnic group that offered access to all the necessary resources. In such contexts, speaking English was not necessarily considered an absolute prerequisite to being and feeling Australian as this participant, a second generation migrant, tried to explain to the group:

Fundamentally, what is it to be Australian? As we were saying, my grandmother has been here for 50 years, and can barely string a sentence together – she has raised 6 children who have raised their children, and she has had successful businesses. And she has served the country; she has paid her taxes; she has done what she had to do. She lives in a great house; has enjoyed her life; and has loved being an Australian... And she can speak English very, very brokenly. Does that make her less of an Australian than anybody else?

The issue of English proficiency arose repeatedly in discussions about aged-care services. The aging of post-war migrants who, like this participant's

grandmother, did not manage to acquire English language skills and the apparent tendency for residents of aged care services to revert to their native language, makes their care all the more challenging for mainstream aged care services.

The issue of English literacy and its impact on schools, teachers and the education system in areas where new and emergent migrant communities were settling was also raised as a common concern across the four communities. Another major challenge identified by participants was teaching English language skills to people who were illiterate in their own language, as were about half of those coming from refugee camps. Participants with experience in adult migrant education and language tuition commonly questioned whether the allocated hours of Commonwealth supported funding for adult language classes was sufficient. After completing their allotted hours, these informants claimed that many still lacked the necessary language skills to find a job.

11.4 Overview

There was universal agreement across all focus groups that migration brings substantial benefits to both the migrant and the host community that far outweigh the costs. From a migrant perspective many of these benefits are intergenerational and accrue mainly to their descendants. From the perspective of the host country, migration contributes substantially to Australia's capacity for innovation, productive diversity and economic prosperity opening up valuable cultural and business opportunities with the rest of the world. As an island continent in the southern hemisphere the benefits to Australia, while incalculable, clearly have been enormous. The focus groups identified several substantive social costs or issues affecting migrants settling in Australia. For migrants the issues commonly raised included cultural isolation, separation from family and friends, problems with English literacy, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, under-employment, unemployment and welfare dependency. The impact is felt by both the host community and the migrant. A number of other issues were consistently identified as matters of concern, although it is difficult on the basis of the interview data to gauge the social costs to the host community involved. In any case they are mostly short term integration issues or cultural conflicts that understandably arise from the gap between migrating from a refugee camp or war-torn part of world, and the time it takes to learn a new ways of living, speaking, and relating with members of the host culture.

