
Chapter Six: Mainstream Services

Mainstream organisations, whether they are acting as direct service providers or as funders of services, have a responsibility to provide appropriate services for migrants and humanitarian entrants as part of their services to all Australians. Their responsiveness to a culturally and linguistically diverse clientele is a key service issue for both new arrivals and longer-resident migrants, and has a major impact on their capacity to fully participate in the economy and within the Australian community. This is particularly the case in the key service provision areas of employment, skills recognition, housing, health, education and youth services, family support and aged care.

The community has expressed considerable cynicism about the Commonwealth Government's commitment to the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* (the Charter) and about agencies' achievements in relation to people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The threshold issues of concern in relation to performance against Charter principles appear to be that:

- agency data collections are often inappropriately focused and insufficiently disaggregated to facilitate an accurate understanding of client needs and to account for the performance of services (for example, non-English speaking background or country of origin data does not provide an accurate reflection of the extent of disadvantage of a client);
- some programs are not always sufficiently responsive because of this imperfect understanding of client needs, and program design may not be optimally effective (for example, humanitarian entrants with little or no formal education have indicated they would find more value in practical work experience rather than resumé and interview preparation); and
- the full reality of providing social services in a culturally and linguistically diverse society is not accurately reflected in agency budget allocations (for example, the limited availability of material in community languages and limited budgets for translating and interpreting services impede effective consultation and communication and preclude effective use of complaints mechanisms).

There would, therefore, be benefit in a stocktake of the performance of service delivery agencies to more accurately assess the current state of play in relation to the implementation of access and equity principles; the extent to which the costs of meeting the needs of a diverse client base are factored into agency budgets; the adequacy of data collections; and the scope to develop a more effective reporting framework. Such a stocktake would help to clarify whether perceived deficiencies represent a preference for ethno-specific service delivery, an inadequate provision of access and equity, or simply a high demand for rationed services across the broad Australian community. Where needs are or could be met within mainstream programs, it would also position agencies to communicate this convincingly to the community.

Priority should be given at a whole-of-government level to early intervention strategies for school children, young people in transition to employment, and families, who face particular difficulties due to their pre-migration experiences, the further disruption that is inherent in a move to another country, low English proficiency and recency of arrival in Australia.

Introduction

The terms of reference for the review include identifying strategies for enhancing the responsiveness of mainstream service providers to migrant clients and for enabling improved whole-of-government responses to migrant service delivery needs in accordance with access and equity principles. Many of the service needs of new arrivals to Australia are not unique to the migration experience but are in fact shared with the wider Australian community. Some of these needs, such as employment, housing, health and education needs, are immediate at the time of arrival and may also recur over time. Other needs may not arise until many years after arrival.

In a culturally and linguistically diverse society such as Australia, the responsiveness of mainstream services to the diversity of their clients is a key service issue. The accessibility of mainstream services is one of the most significant sources of concern and frustration to new arrivals, and has a major bearing on their capacity to participate fully in the Australian community as soon as possible after arrival.

This chapter examines commentary from public consultations and submissions to the review in relation to the performance of key social services. Where these comments have referred to programs that are the responsibility of mainstream Commonwealth Government agencies, this chapter uses these to illustrate generic issues requiring consideration, rather than attempting a comprehensive analysis of individual programs.

The history of access and equity policy

As outlined in chapter one - The Policy Context, the 1978 Galbally report, while affirming the need for specialist settlement services, envisaged that all mainstream

programs and services would eventually become fully accessible to migrants and humanitarian entrants. This would ultimately obviate the need for special services and programs. Settlement services were necessary 'at present' to ensure equality of access and provision.¹

Chapter one of this report also traces the historical development of the division of responsibility between DIMIA-funded and mainstream services for meeting migrant needs. As outlined in that chapter and chapters two to five of this report, DIMIA-funded settlement services address specific, mostly on-arrival needs of new migrants, while the general needs of migrants should be met by mainstream services.

In 1978, the Commonwealth introduced the Ethnic Liaison Officer Scheme, under which, generally speaking, mainstream agencies appointed a senior officer to take on the role of disseminating information about migrant needs in relation to their own programs. In 1981, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs conducted an evaluation of the programs and services resulting from the acceptance of the Galbally report. This evaluation placed further emphasis on the importance of ensuring that mainstream services were accessible to people of all cultural backgrounds.²

In 1985, the Commonwealth Government inaugurated its Access and Equity Strategy. The strategy required Commonwealth agencies to meet client needs through general

¹ Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants (Chairman F Galbally), *Migrant Services and Programs*, AGPS, Canberra, 1978, p. 4.

² Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), *Responding to Diversity: Progress in Implementing the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society: Access and Equity Annual Report 1998*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1998, p. 55.

programs and services, modified if necessary to remove barriers that would otherwise prevent access to services or result in inequitable treatment of various client groups. All portfolios were required to produce three-year access and equity plans outlining the action they intended to take to improve their services. In 1987, the Commonwealth Government established the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet with responsibility for coordinating the Access and Equity Strategy. In 1989, the adoption of the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* extended access and equity to include all groups that might face barriers of race, religion, language or culture, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 1992, OMA conducted an evaluation of the strategy. This evaluation found that, while access and equity principles were increasingly visible in performance reporting and literature, they were not yet permeating the core cultures and practices of government departments. Further progress would require greater commitment from departments and also more cooperation and coordination between agencies at all levels of government.³ From 1993, all Commonwealth agencies began reporting annually on their access and equity performance.

The 1996 *A Fair Go for All* report marked the first time that a Federal Parliamentary inquiry was conducted into the extent to which access and equity principles were being applied in the delivery of services to migrants. The report made a series of recommendations to improve migrant access to services, including recommendations that definitions of access and equity be standardised and that access and equity requirements constitute part of the obligations for all service providers.⁴

In 1996, responsibility for coordinating the Access and Equity Strategy passed to DIMIA.

At that time, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries were increasingly turning to customer service charters to strengthen the customer-service orientation of public institutions. From 1996, the Access and Equity Strategy was re-focused in the form of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. The *Charter* represented a concerted attempt to move away from access and equity as an 'add on' to government services and towards building cultural diversity considerations into the core processes of government service delivery. In 1998, the *Charter* was formally launched Australia-wide as a framework for best practice in culturally-responsive service delivery.

The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society

The *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* is a key tool for assisting government programs to meet the needs of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse society. The *Charter* integrates a set of service delivery principles concerning cultural diversity into the strategic planning, policy development, budget and reporting processes of government service delivery. The *Charter* applies to all government-funded services, irrespective of whether these services are actually provided by government agencies, community organisations or commercial enterprises.

The service principles of the *Charter* are:

- Access - Government services should be available to everyone who is entitled to

³ Office of Multicultural Affairs, *Access and Equity Evaluation Report*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, pp. 5-6.

⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *A Fair Go for All: Report on Migrant Access and Equity*, AGPS, Canberra, 1996, pp. xii, xviii.

them and should be free of any form of discrimination irrespective of a person's country of birth, language, culture, race or religion;

- *Equity* - Government services should be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them;
- *Communication* - Government service providers should use strategies to inform eligible clients of services and their entitlements and how they can obtain them. Providers should also consult with their clients regularly about the adequacy, design and standard of government services;
- *Responsiveness* - Government services should be sensitive to the needs and requirements of clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals;
- *Effectiveness* - Government service providers should be 'results oriented,' focussed on meeting the needs of clients from all backgrounds;
- *Efficiency* - Government service providers should optimise the use of available public resources through a user-responsive approach to service delivery which meets the needs of clients; and
- *Accountability* - Government service providers should have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures they are accountable for implementing *Charter* objectives for clients.

Feedback from public consultations and submissions to the review indicates that stakeholders understand and support the principles of access and equity, and in particular the principles of the *Charter*. Specifically, they share its focus on supporting effective access by migrants and humanitarian

entrants to all of the services for which they are eligible.

In very basic terms, migrant and humanitarian settlers, in order to gain access to mainstream services, need to: know that a service exists; understand what it is, what it can do to help them, and trust it to assist them; be able to find it; and be able to communicate with the service. In order to continue using an organisation's services, if they consider it necessary, migrant and humanitarian settlers need to find the organisation approachable and trustworthy, and the service effective.

Submission from the Migrant Network Services (Northern Sydney) Ltd, NSW

The performance of Commonwealth agencies

The Commonwealth annual Access and Equity reports assess the performance of fifty Commonwealth departments and agencies in meeting *Charter*-related responsibilities. Performance indicators seek to measure the appropriateness of consultation, communication and complaints mechanisms and whether data collections meet statistical standards on diversity. They also measure whether service standards address any differential impacts on clients, and whether staff learning programs cover the benefits of cultural diversity.

The 2001 report assessed agencies against a new performance management framework that required agencies to report against sixteen performance indicators in their roles as policy advisers, providers, purchasers, regulators and employers. This was the first year that all Commonwealth agencies had been asked to report against the new framework. It concluded that, while some individual agencies have made significant

progress in implementing the *Charter*, the performance of Commonwealth agencies as providers was mixed.

Those agencies whose provider role involves a strong incentive to factor diversity management strategies into their core business do so very effectively. Other providers tend to have general strategies in place, but do not specifically target their clients. Some providers know the characteristics of their clients and have feedback mechanisms in place to ensure they meet client needs. Others have not researched the client base and therefore rely on broad-based feedback strategies to monitor performance.⁵

The 2002 report noted that in general, the quality of agencies' responses has improved since 2001 and agencies are reporting on a greater variety of roles.⁶ There were particular improvements in agencies reporting on their policy adviser role. The report also noted that although there has been an overall improvement in performance, the extent to which agencies have targeted strategies in place for a culturally and linguistically diverse client population is still somewhat variable.

These reports, however, are based on self-assessment. The depth and adequacy of the reporting framework is, therefore, influenced by the extent to which agencies see themselves in particular roles and the business incentive they have to address issues of culture and language.

Public consultations and submissions to the review have reflected a somewhat more negative perception among stakeholders regarding the performance of mainstream agencies. There was considerable cynicism about both the Commonwealth Government's commitment to the *Charter* and the achievement of access and equity in relation to people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

It is our view that part of the problem lies in the fact that monitoring of government policy of access and equity, by government itself, if it exists at all, is virtually non effectual. It is just not a priority... The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society undeniably exists, but it too seems unmonitored as a whole, and therefore unaccountable at the appropriate levels.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region Inc, NSW

The concept of access and equity has been around for some years now, and sometimes there seems to be an attitude by government that it has been largely achieved. However, this is unfortunately not the case and there needs to be constant commitment and continuing work towards achieving greater access to services and equity in service provision for Australians of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Submission from the Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the Northern Territory

⁵ DIMIA, *Access and Equity Annual Report 2001: Progress in Implementing the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002, p.iv.

⁶ DIMIA, *Access and Equity Annual Report 2002: Progress in Implementing the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2003, p.5.

While recognition of [access and equity] principles is creeping into some sectors, there is still widespread adherence to: the perception that the responsibility for all people born outside Australia, especially for those whose first language is not English, rests with the Department of Immigration ad infinitum; the view amongst workers in mainstream agencies that if a person from a non-English speaking background presents with a problem, all they have to do is refer that person to the relevant ethno-specific organisation (usually to a CSSS worker) who will then take full responsibility for resolving the problem; the belief that the Department of Immigration is responsible for bearing the costs of all services to people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

For this reason, some DIMIA-funded settlement service providers have stated that they have reservations about referring their clients to mainstream agencies.

It is counter-productive for DIMIA-funded services to help migrants access mainstream services which do not consider it their responsibility to support these clients, and/or do not have the required skills and knowledge to provide responsive and effective services to migrants and humanitarian entrants... These issues cannot be overcome through staff attendance at one-off trainings on cultural diversity or using interpreters effectively, through the commitment and good will of isolated workers and agencies, or through agencies espousing that they are responsive when they do not have the structures in place to be so.

Submission from the Ecumenical Migration Centre, VIC

Due to high or over demand, it is easy for providers to overlook certain sections of the community. Additionally, service providers may not be fully aware of the changing demographics of their region and the changing profile of the new arrival communities. The provision of information and education on local settlement issues to mainstream providers must form an important element of any strategies designed to improve service access by new arrival communities.

Submission from Community Information Whittlesea, VIC

Generalist and ethno-specific services

Debate about mainstream delivery often raises questions regarding delivery through generalist or specialist services (ethno-specific or multi-ethnic services). Stakeholders often express a preference for ethno-specific services for understandable reasons including issues of language, culture and trust. In particular, people who have experienced repressive government regimes learn to distrust government organisations and to find support through personal networks and relationships that involve mutual obligations. Relationships with an ethno-specific service provider can more closely resemble such personal relationships.

Family support, in particular, is an area in which people may seek support from service providers who speak the same language, and whose values are most similar to their own. In other circumstances, such as when an agency is unable to provide a service such as public housing due to resource limitations, it is not surprising that an applicant might also look for an advocate from their own background, whom they can trust to understand their particular situation. Where the resources are available, but services are

not culturally appropriate, a migrant or humanitarian entrant may again favour an ethno-specific service option.

It is also not surprising that some mainstream service providers also see use of DIMIA-funded or other ethno-specific services outside their own programs as an alternative to developing cross-cultural expertise within their own services as ethno-specific services can provide access to language skills and an understanding of client need that are otherwise resource intensive for the mainstream agency to provide. However, this failure to develop their own expertise operates to the disadvantage of clients in the longer-term. Settlement and ethno-specific services can also shield clients from mainstream services, which further limits the skills of mainstream providers.

Some client groups also have a low take-up rate of both settlement services and mainstream services, as is the case with young people from migrant and humanitarian entrant backgrounds. While settlement services have the cross-cultural expertise to assist young people, youth advocates have argued that they generally lack the youth work training and expertise to help this group. They argue, however, that mainstream services may be equally lacking in either cross-cultural expertise or the ability or willingness to target and support newly-arrived young people. There will, therefore, be a role in some cases for specialist providers with a combined expertise in cross-cultural work and in work with particular sub-groups of clients.

While many government services are now outsourced through contractual arrangements, government agencies as the purchasers of services still need to understand their client groups and make informed decisions about service delivery strategies and the services that they purchase.

A variety of service delivery strategies is likely to be necessary to address the needs of

clients. It is preferable that services develop cross-cultural expertise within their program delivery framework. The use of specialist providers should be seen as one of a number of available service delivery strategies within any given program, not an alternative outside it. Mainstream services need to make judgements on whether and in what circumstances it is appropriate to use specialist providers within their programs. These decisions will be influenced by the increasing diversity of the Australian population, as identified in chapter three of this report - The Demographic Context, which means that the provision of ethno-specific services will not be possible for every group. These decisions should also be informed by the performance outcomes resulting from different service delivery strategies.

Effective multicultural servicing

It is important to acknowledge that there are significant examples of effective multicultural servicing by mainstream agencies. For instance, Centrelink's multicultural service strategy has made a substantial investment in service delivery, planning and consulting with its diverse customer base. This includes translating and interpreting services for customers, a multilingual call centre and a communications strategy using print, radio and outreach services in community languages.

While DIMIA and Centrelink use different processes to maintain a pool of language professionals, they share the same challenges of keeping pace with new languages and emerging dialects, providing language services in regional areas and managing customers' preference for on-site interpreters.⁷

Centrelink provides guidance, information and support to its interpreters to work

⁷ A more detailed discussion about these issues is provided in chapter twelve of this report - The Translating and Interpreting Service.

specifically with its customers, reflecting the common experiences and issues that migrant customers are likely to encounter everyday. For languages that do not have NAATI accreditation, (see chapter twelve - The Translating and Interpreting Service), usually small and emerging communities, Centrelink considers a person's tertiary or other qualifications.

Centrelink's network of multicultural service officers consults with migrant and humanitarian entrant communities, provides customer feedback on the impact of government initiatives and participates in local and State/Territory Settlement Planning Committees. Centrelink consults with peak multicultural community organisations at the national level through its National Multicultural Reference Group. Centrelink also consults at the regional, State/Territory levels through its Multicultural Advisory Committees and the Multicultural Service Officer network.

The need for consistent investment

While there are notable examples of the investment by some agencies in culturally and linguistically responsive service delivery across the Commonwealth, this investment is not consistent across agencies. Meeting the Commonwealth Government's objective of enabling migrants to participate equitably in Australian society requires consistent effort on the part of mainstream agencies to ensure that access and equity principles are fully implemented. Service gaps will continue to exist until culturally-responsive service delivery becomes a fundamental aspect of Commonwealth Government policy and program planning.

Comments to the review have indicated that there are a number of areas in which performance in implementing *Charter*

principles could be improved. The threshold issues appear to be that:

- agency data collections are often inappropriately focused and insufficiently disaggregated to facilitate an accurate understanding of client needs and to account for the performance of services (for example, non-English speaking background or country of origin data does not provide an accurate reflection of the extent of disadvantage of the client);
- arising from this imperfect understanding of client needs, some programs are not always sufficiently responsive and program design may not be optimally effective (for example, humanitarian entrants with little or no formal education indicated they would find more value in practical work experience rather than resumé and interview preparation); and
- the full reality of providing social services in a culturally and linguistically diverse society is not adequately reflected in agency budget allocations (for example, the limited availability of material in community languages and limited budgets for translating and interpreting services impede effective consultation and communication and preclude effective use of complaints mechanisms).

There would be benefit in a stocktake of the current state of play in implementing access and equity principles to provide a basis for strengthened reporting arrangements. Such a stocktake would help clarify whether perceived deficiencies represents a preference for ethno-specific service delivery, a failing of access and equity, or simply a high demand for rationed services. Where needs are, or could be, met within mainstream programs, it would also position agencies to communicate this convincingly to the community.

Recommendation 6

That the Commonwealth Government request the Auditor-General to consider undertaking an audit of:

- the current state of play in relation to implementation of access and equity principles under the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*;
- the extent to which costs of meeting the needs of a diverse client base are factored into the budgets of service provision agencies;
- the adequacy of data collections; and
- the scope to develop a more effective reporting framework, which would identify best practice in service provision.

Data Collections

Some problems are obscured by inadequate data collection that does not fully identify who is using government services and what benefits they are deriving from them.

Data collections are often limited to recording non-English speaking background (NESB) or country of origin. This data does not provide an adequate indication of the extent of disadvantage which may be faced by new arrivals as a result of their pre-migration experiences, lack of English language proficiency, formal education and relevant work experience.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has confirmed that 'NESB' is an inappropriate indicator of disadvantage as the term has a number of conflicting definitions, and it groups people who are relatively disadvantaged with those who are not disadvantaged. It also does not separately identify cultural and linguistic groups.⁸

The ABS has developed a minimum core set of indicators that it considers necessary to replace the NESB category:

- country of birth;
- main language other than English spoken at home;
- proficiency in spoken English; and
- Indigenous status, for collections not specifically focused on migrants to Australia.

The full set of indicators includes ancestry, country of birth of father, country of birth of mother, first language spoken, languages spoken at home, religious affiliation, and year of arrival in Australia.⁹

It is possible that these measures may not be adequate to assess the existence or the extent of disadvantage that some migrants and humanitarian entrants face or that they may not be the most appropriate indicators in particular contexts. Some agencies are reluctant to adopt these indicators because they consider them to be of limited predictive value for their service delivery objectives, or because their business systems are geared towards different data collections.

Some agencies have suggested additional indicators, for example, literacy in a first language. This would be particularly useful in assessing the appropriateness of language tuition and other vocational training programs. It has also been suggested that linking the ABS core indicators to a regional location indicator would highlight relative disadvantage resulting from reduced access to services in rural and regional areas.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*, catalogue no. 1289.0, ABS, Canberra, 1999, p.3.

⁹ ABS, *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*, p. 5.

Given that some measures may not be relevant for all agencies, collaborative work on the development and use of indicators of disadvantage, together with potential for linking existing data collections would be useful. For example, correlations between visa category, year of arrival in Australia, English language and literacy levels, welfare dependency, and participation in employment and social support services would provide a basis for further analysis on the diversity of clients and the extent of relative disadvantage using existing data collections.

Recommendation 7

That DIMIA, other Commonwealth Government service delivery agencies and the Australian Bureau of Statistics work together to improve the adequacy of existing indicators of disadvantage for potential use in mainstream data collections.

Key areas of mainstream service provision

Feedback to DIMIA from settlement service providers over many years and the commentary provided in the course of the review has confirmed that the key areas of mainstream service provision of concern to migrants and humanitarian entrants are:

- employment;
- skills recognition;
- housing;
- health;
- education
- youth services;
- vocational training;
- aged care; and
- family support.

This chapter will now turn to examining mainstream service provision in each of these critical areas. In accordance with this report's focus on the early settlement period for migrants, the discussion focuses mainly on new arrivals. However, it is also worth noting that many of the issues affecting new arrivals also reflect broader difficulties for longer-resident migrants.

Unemployment has emerged as one of the key issues underpinning the shortfall in service provision to new migrants. Unemployment is consistently raised as a major impediment to settlement and the transitional experience, in many cases undermining the success of other aspects of the experience. It is therefore crucial that employment be addressed in a concerted pro-active manner:

Creation of public campaign highlighting the examples, positive contributions and benefits of a diverse work force to the economy and specific businesses, including breaking down the assumptions and stereotypes employers may have of migrant workers, qualified or not.

Provision of direct funding to specialist ethnic/multi-ethnic community based service providers, with a strong element of integration/coordination with settlement services.

Increasing the number of specialist occupational skills programs to provide work experience and training including skills upgrading programs and workplace language programs.

Submission from the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria

The MRC views this as one of the most problematic areas in the settlement of new arrivals as the referrals that it is

The MRC views this as one of the most problematic areas in the settlement of new arrivals as the referrals that it is has made to Job Network agencies has not yielded employment gains for refugees. The findings of the MRC 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 longitudinal studies revealed that in both the first and second follow up survey with respondent families (38 and 81 families respectively), of those adults registered with a Job Network provider (55% in the first follow up and 65% in the second) only two had found employment through this channel.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia

At this juncture we offer half a service: we see numbers of Job network clients of NESB who are being 'parked' by mainstream case managers, on the basis of being too hard to help.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region, Inc, NSW

A particular area of concern for humanitarian entrants in Darwin is access to employment, and assistance with finding employment. Because of the way the Job Network is funded the emphasis for Job Network providers is on gaining outcomes, so they are not interested in assisting people such as humanitarian entrants who may require more time to be spent with them, may require the use of interpreters, etc.

Submission from the Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the Northern Territory

Despite having their previous skills, people have been forced to take up jobs by the job network members, which are not related to their skills/training. There have been poor outcomes from clients that have registered with the Job Network. The job network members compete with each other and there is little communication and coordination between them. This in itself can be a barrier as information is not provided equitably.

Submission from the Cambodian-Australian Welfare Council of NSW Inc

Employment

The strongest messages from public consultations and submissions have been that new arrivals face considerable difficulty in obtaining employment, are dissatisfied with the assistance provided by current employment services, and see a need for more specialist employment services and more opportunities to gain work experience in the Australian labour market.

It is suggested that there is a valuable role that DIMIA can play if it sees its role as facilitator. The first step in doing this is to acknowledge the barriers faced by humanitarian entrants in getting employment. These include; language proficiency...lack of recognition of qualifications, lack of local work experience, lack of understanding about the Australian workplace environment, the absence of a network or contacts... difficulties gaining access to affordable child care, discrimination from employers, often because the employers do not

understand who the refugees are and why they have come to this country.

Having done this, the next step is to engage the various agencies and groups that have the capacity to play a constructive role in breaking down these barriers, including but not limited to; the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations; Centrelink; professional associations; large public sector employers; unions; training institutions; AMEP providers (peak) child care agencies; service clubs; chambers of commerce; targeted media (for running 'success stories').

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

The key barriers identified by commentators to finding employment can be divided into client and systemic issues. Client issues included: limited English language proficiency; lack of local work experience; lack of employment-related networks or contacts; and lack of familiarity with the Australian workplace. Systemic issues cited were: difficulties related to skills recognition; inadequate assistance from employment services; and discrimination from prospective employers.

As reported in chapter four - The Settlement Experiences of New Arrivals, while their employment prospects improve over time, some migrants continue to experience significantly higher levels of unemployment. For instance, humanitarian entrants are generally unemployed for a longer period of time and they can be heavily dependent on welfare and support services. Their unemployment rate after three years in Australia is still estimated to be around 18% compared to the current national unemployment rate of 6.2%.

The risks involved in not responding to the particular needs of arrivals at high risk of long-term unemployment can be felt for some years. Labour Force Australia data from February 2003 showed the high unemployment rates for job seekers born in Viet Nam (10.4%), Lebanon (11.0%), the Middle East and North Africa (13.6%) and the republics that made up the former Yugoslavia (10.0%). The average unemployment rate at that time for persons born in Australia was 6.6%. Most of these regions or countries have been a major source of humanitarian entrants to Australia.¹⁰

Job Network

The Job Network is a national network of around 200 private, community and government organisations contracted by the Commonwealth Government to deliver employment services. NESB Job Network specialists operate in locations where more than 10% of the population is from non-English speaking backgrounds.¹¹ There are currently twenty-seven of these providers delivering Intensive Assistance services at 112 sites. They operate in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Most NESB specialists rate favourably in their performance assessments, with most scoring between 3.5 and five stars in the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) 'star ratings method' out of a possible five stars.¹²

People from DEWR's NESB category make

¹⁰ ABS, *Labour Force, Australia - February 2003*, catalogue no. 6203.0, ABS, Canberra, 2003, p.30.

¹¹ Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), *Job Network Evaluation Stage 3; Effectiveness Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002.

¹² DEWR, *Job Network Member Performance Ratings as at February 2002*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002.

¹³ DEWR, *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes Year ending March 2002*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002, pp. 11-13.

up a significant proportion of Job Network clients. They constitute around 10% of all Job Matching and Job Search Training clients and approximately 20% of all Intensive Assistance Clients.¹³

Commentary to the review has expressed three key concerns in relation to the performance of the Job Network. The first of these was the extent to which providers assist clients who may require more time and greater investment to secure employment outcomes. Community representatives argued that many migrants and humanitarian entrants are ultimately 'parked' in the system. The term 'parking' refers to providers actually supplying little or no assistance to disadvantaged job seekers and concentrating their efforts on clients easier to place in employment.

The second key area of concern was that the Job Network focus on assistance with resumé writing and interview preparation was redundant when clients had no or limited education and no Australian work experience to record in resumé.

Many new arrivals find real discrimination in the employment market and receive consistent poor service from many employment agencies who find new migrants from non-English speaking countries too hard to place.

Submission from Community Information Whittlesea, VIC

Job Network providers have also been criticised for not using interpreter services frequently enough. Job Network members are funded to provide interpreting services for clients where necessary, from initial up-front payments when a job seeker is referred to them. They are encouraged to use interpreting services in their tender information but as

need for the service depends on an individual's circumstances, bearing the cost of interpreting services is left to the discretion of providers.

From the service provider's perspective, one community agency delivering employment and community services in Tasmania stated in its submission to the review that it faced

Basic needs providers in the mainstream need to know who is fee-free and for how long. Employment services noted that in most cases by the time they see clients the fee-free time is over and clients face substantial language barriers to accessing adequate support. A common theme was the need for interpreting services well after basic functionality in English has been achieved for complex issues e.g. Tenancy issues or job seeking skills development.

Submission from Colony Assistance Service for Housing, TAS

considerable budgetary constraints in using interpreting services for outreach activities and regular contacts with clients. It considered its budget allocation was insufficient to bear the user-pays cost of TIS charges.

The employment segment of this agency noted that clients require access to interpreting services even when they have achieved functional English. In its view, funding to services offering basic needs support was inadequate for meeting the real needs of humanitarian entrants.

From 1 July 2003, under new employment services contracts (see section below) DEWR will make funding available for Job Network providers to purchase interpreting services available through a Job Seeker Account. This account can be used to purchase a range of services and products for job seekers to assist them to overcome barriers to employment

and obtain work. DEWR will monitor the services purchased through the Job Seeker Account as part of normal contract management activities. The use of interpreter services during diary interviews with job seekers will also be recorded.

Other commentary from public consultations and submissions to the review argued strongly for funding of cross-cultural expertise across Job Network and State/Territory labour market programs as a positive and necessary element of service delivery. There were also calls for:

- more targeted data collection on migrant employment experiences; and
- greater coordination of State/Territory and Commonwealth employment services.

New Employment Services Contracts

Current Job Network contracts are due to expire in June 2003 and additional enhancements will operate from that time.¹⁴ These refinements will improve financial incentives for providers to purchase services to assist migrant and humanitarian entrant job seekers. Complementary program arrangements will allow all Job Network providers to refer job seekers to other employment and training programs if this is considered to be the best option for a person.

These arrangements allow Job Network providers to refer clients without exiting them from their caseload, thus retaining the chance to earn an outcome fee for eventually placing a job seeker in work. This will include arrangements to refer eligible job seekers with low levels of English proficiency to DIMIA's AMEP. The 2003 enhancements are based on an 'active participation model' and in summary they include:

- Centrelink as the 'gateway' to employment services;
- referral to a single Job Network provider, for the duration of a person's unemployment;
- a Service Guarantee, outlining the type

and frequency of services job seekers can expect, also acknowledging providers' obligations to take account of cultural and linguistic diversity and a Code of Conduct;

- a Job Seeker Account for Job Network providers to purchase fares, petrol assistance, interpreter services, workforce clothing, training, work experience and a range of other services;
- immediate entry to customised assistance under new Intensive Support (currently Intensive Assistance) for those with severe barriers to employment; and
- more flexible linkages to complementary employment and training programs funded by Commonwealth, State/Territory governments.

Australians Working Together

The Commonwealth Government introduced *Australians Working Together* (AWT) in the 2001-02 Federal Budget as a major reform to Australia's social support system. A number of Commonwealth departments are jointly responsible for the AWT package. These include the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and DEWR.

AWT aims to reduce welfare dependence, build self-reliance and encourage clients to participate in activities that give something back to the community while they are on income support. It includes reforms to income support arrangements administered by FaCS and is designed to build on existing employment assistance and mutual obligation policies.¹⁵

¹⁴ DEWR, *Employment Services: An Active Participation Model*, discussion paper, DEWR, Canberra, 2002.

¹⁵ Department of Family and Community Services & DEWR, *Australians Working Together: Helping People Move Forward*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002.

The full range of AWT measures will be phased in over several years. The first phase of measures were introduced in 2002, including: the Personal Support Program (PSP); a network of Personal Advisers based in Centrelink offices; enhanced Job Network arrangements; Training Credits for Work for the Dole and Community Work participants; a Transition to Work Program for people re-entering the work force after a long absence; and Training Accounts for mature-aged and Indigenous job seekers.

FaCS has announced that the second phase of AWT measures will be introduced from 20 September 2003. They include:

- Working Credits to allow people to keep more of their income support payments when they start working;
- a Language, Literacy and Numeracy Supplement of \$20.80 a fortnight for people undertaking approved language, literacy and numeracy training; and
- increased participation requirements for some income support recipients.

Centrelink, as the Commonwealth's service delivery agency, is the 'gateway' for delivering many of these initiatives. Centrelink will continue to work with Job Network and other service providers to support people of work force age who are receiving income support under these arrangements.

The AWT enhancements should increase the level of support available for eligible new arrivals. It should be noted that the two-year waiting period for income support and access to some employment services applies to newly-arrived residents other than humanitarian entrants.

It will be important to monitor the outcomes for migrants and humanitarian entrants under AWT and against the Job Network's new employment services contracts. As noted earlier in this chapter, current data collections

to support this may be inadequate, as they generally provide aggregated data for clients from NESB. However, these job seekers are a mix of new arrivals and long-term residents from a wide variety of language backgrounds, visa categories and with a range of professional skills. Their English language skills vary from proficient to limited, and they have similarly varied work skills and pre-migration experiences that may either impede or assist their job prospects. Such aggregation may, therefore, mask the performance of the Job Network in relation to humanitarian entrants who may face multiple barriers to gaining employment. Consequently, future data collections should allow greater disaggregation of information for sub-groups of clients.

There are presently no data collections that show the employment rate of migrants and refugees in Tasmania. There are no collections on which policy can be based or from which barriers to employment can begin to be identified.

Department of Immigration Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) collects data on arrivals, but not on employment. Combinations of information are available through Australian Bureau of Statistics and Centrelink based on labour force and countries of birth. Primarily, however, these are national figures from which it is difficult to extract the Tasmanian experience.

Submission from the Multicultural Council of Tasmania

Conversion of data categories takes considerable time and resources. However, more robust reporting measures could be achieved by monitoring the performance of Job Network providers and the outcomes for job seekers at least by visa category and

country of birth from the outset. As noted earlier in this chapter, further research on year of arrival correlated with these variables

Recommendation 8

That Job Network management and performance reporting have the capacity, from the commencement of the Third Employment Services Contract, to count and report on:

- the services purchased through the Job Seeker Account, including the extent of use of interpreter services;
- employment outcomes by visa category and country of birth;
- referrals to complementary programs including the AMEP, the Personal Support Program and use of Personal Advisers; and
- participation in Intensive Support arrangements.

would provide more detailed analysis on the extent to which a job seeker's recency of arrival is linked to their relative advantage or disadvantage in the labour market.

Under AWT, FaCS funds and administers the PSP, which targets support to people who are vulnerable to social isolation and find it difficult to be involved in the workforce and/or the community. Participants may be facing homelessness, drug and alcohol problems, psychological disorders, domestic violence, financial management problems and/or long-term unemployment.

There are several service options for migrant clients in this program. They include an interpreter allowance for participants that Centrelink has identified as needing an interpreter. Service provider organisations delivering the PSP include specialists dealing with survivors of torture and trauma and FaCS advises that some of these providers are already

working with clients from refugee communities. Further service options will be considered as part of a program review, to be completed by 2005.

The PSP can assist humanitarian entrants who are not ready for job search activities and who require intensive support. Further examination of the program and its relationship with on-arrival services for humanitarian entrants provided under DIMIA's IHSS would be useful.

Recommendation 9

That the Department of Family and Community Services continue to monitor the reach of the Personal Support Program to humanitarian entrants and consider with DIMIA how to coordinate it with IHSS services in order to avoid overlaps in service provision.

Work experience

Organisations working with new arrivals from all visa categories have requested early access to work experience for their clients, irrespective of their qualifications or skills levels. While many arrivals have skills, trades or professions, finding work can be extremely difficult without on-the-job training, local networks or contacts.

[W]ork experience training should be provided for newly-arrived skilled migrants as they always find difficulties in entering into the Australian job market without the benefit of local experience. It would be possible for example to introduce tax or other incentives for employers who offer work experience training and work experiences for newly-arrived migrants,

encouraging the better integration of skilled migrants into the Australian employment market.

Submission from the South West Sydney Community Legal Centre, NSW

For some eligible new arrivals such as humanitarian entrants, the Job Network provides work experience through Work for the Dole or other programs when mutual obligation requirements take effect after six months of unemployment. Intensive Assistance providers may also purchase work experience as one of a range of other supports. However, the representatives of humanitarian entrant communities stated at public consultations that current programs do not cater well for these job seekers and that work experience tends to be offered too late. This is particularly the case for entrants who are pre-vocational job seekers, with interrupted schooling and literacy or language gaps. They see early assistance with resumé writing and job applications as of little benefit to them. Some migrant job seekers, however, will also only be eligible for access to Intensive Assistance when they have met the two-year waiting period requirements.

Commentary to the review has noted several examples of culturally-responsive employment programs which specifically targeted a 'niche' market, used strong migrant community networks and tailored their services to respond to their clients' particular job search and training needs. These included:

- the Specialist Migrant Placement Program (targeting skilled stream migrants) in New South Wales;
- the Adult Migrant Education Service (targeting older humanitarian entrants

with work experience and employment in cooperative business ventures) in Victoria; and

- the Multicultural Community Centre (targeting vocational training for migrants to place them in high demand industries such as aged-care services and hospitality) in Queensland.

One response to these issues might be to combine work experience flexibly with other language tuition and training options. Combining work or vocational training with targeted English language support or parallel training is also an effective way to enhance motivation to improve English skills. DIMIA already caters for part-time English tuition in the AMEP, recognising that not all participants can attend classes on a full-time basis.

Mature-aged job seekers

Mature-aged job seekers who have been retrenched from low or unskilled jobs or who lack vocational English are known to have difficulties with long-term unemployment and retraining. Older and unskilled migrants with lower English language proficiency experience high rates of welfare dependence. Much of this group's previous work has been automated and the products of the industries that employed them are now imported. They are at a high risk of permanent welfare dependence.¹⁶

This also has implications for planning for retirement and social and economic participation of those people under the Age Pension age who have been retrenched. Research commissioned by DIMIA on older migrants has found that migrants who are not from the main English-speaking countries

¹⁶ B Birrell & J Jupp, *Welfare Recipient Patterns Among Migrants*, DIMA, Canberra, 2000, pp. 26-27.

are less likely to have superannuation coverage than workers from the main English-speaking countries or Australian-born workers.¹⁷

Submissions to the review have confirmed that these groups remain at risk of long-term unemployment, and can be perceived as being difficult to place in new jobs by employment service providers.

The shift from the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) to the Jobs Network has not met the intensive needs of unemployed migrants particularly long-term and mature age workers. The nature of contracted services under the Jobs Network has produced poor outcomes new arrivals and long term unemployed migrants representing those who are more difficult to place.

Submission from the Migrant Resource Centres Forum of New South Wales

These developments have caused the disappearance of unskilled and semi skilled jobs that have traditionally been a source of employment for new and recently arrived refugees and migrants, and that had previously absorbed large numbers of Vietnamese people^a...

Current statistics, July 2002, put the unemployment rate of Vietnamese at 9.9%, compared with 5.6% for the total Australian population. The Vietnamese unemployment rate is second highest, with Lebanese being the highest at 16.7%.^b

Submission from the Vietnamese Community in Australia, VIC

^a N Viviani, *The Indochinese in Australia 1975 - 1995: From Burnt boats to Barbecue*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996.

^b DIMIA, *Immigration Update 2001 - 2002*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002.

The Commonwealth has identified mature-aged workers as a target group for assistance under AWT. There are specific measures to assist mature-aged workers to gain work related training through Training Account funds and early access to job search training. DEWR has also advised that mature-aged migrants considered to be at risk of long-term unemployment are very likely to be eligible for the Job Network's Intensive Assistance through initial job seeker assessments conducted by Centrelink.

Recommendation 10

That agencies funded under the Commonwealth's *Australians Working Together* initiative develop new service options for migrants and humanitarian entrants, including mature-aged workers, which allow them to gain work experience early on in their job search, with scope to combine work experience with English language and other training elements.

Regional employment

The characteristics of the local labour market and its relative strengths and weaknesses have a significant impact on the short-term employment prospects of new arrivals and on their long-term settlement in the area. For instance, commentary at public consultations in Tasmania noted that the state of the local labour market is exercising a negative impact on the settlement prospects of humanitarian entrant families, despite strong community support for families settling in the State. High local unemployment rates and a lack of unskilled positions for new arrivals with limited English and vocational skills are of particular concern in some locations.

¹⁷ C Benham & D Gibson, *Independence in Ageing: The Social And Financial Circumstances Of Older Overseas-Born Australians*, a report prepared for DIMA by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, DIMA, Canberra, 2000, pp. 57 - 61.

Gaining employment is a key factor for successful settlement of migrants and refugees. Multicultural specific employment assistance program should be developed by the Commonwealth alongside with the Job Network Program and the State Breaking Unemployment Cycle Program in Queensland. More coordination should be established with the Department of State Development in Queensland to identify measures for developing infrastructure and creating jobs in regional areas to cater for the employment needs of new arrivals in the region.

Submission from the Multicultural Development Association Inc, QLD

Nevertheless, in other areas, regional consultations have affirmed a strong demand for skilled labour and lesser skilled labour and strong community support for humanitarian settlement. Consultations also indicated that, while new arrivals can be willing to move to regional areas for employment, settlement services in regional areas are limited.

Suggestions for improving employment prospects in regional areas have generally included:

- early consultation with local government and regional development authorities to coordinate service provision and employment opportunities;
- flexible funding arrangements and local collaborative solutions to support migrants and humanitarian entrants who need to learn English as well as find work;
- drawing on 'best practice' examples where employment and other settlement support needs have been addressed in a collaborative effort by regions, for example in Queensland and in the Shepparton area of Victoria;

- providing assistance with job placement as well as initial advice, information and orientation to support migrants and their families;
- targeted and timely advice, especially to skilled stream migrants, about where employment opportunities exist in regional areas; and
- involving MRCs/MSAs, and other regionally-based multicultural workers in liaising between employers and job seekers, particularly if regional communities have little experience in accommodating immigration intakes.

This commentary suggests that there would be benefit in piloting arrangements under which unlinked refugees are actively linked to regional employment opportunities, and appropriate settlement service provision. The existing network of Area Consultative Committees and local governments are well placed to understand the characteristics of local labour markets and provide advice on regional employment opportunities. Further discussion of the dispersal of unlinked refugees to regional areas can be found in chapters seven and eight of this report.

Overseas skills recognition

Public consultations and submissions to the review have indicated that skills recognition remains a major issue for new arrivals. Skills and qualifications recognition has different meanings to the holders of overseas qualifications. Skills recognition can mean eligibility for registration or licensing, formal qualifications recognition, having qualifications accepted by Australian employers, or ultimately finding employment in a chosen field of work.

Among the difficulties reported by commentators to the review, the major issues included:

- lack of understanding or information

about skills recognition processes at the point of visa application;

- skills recognition processes taking up to three months and the perceived high cost of fees, bridging courses and retraining;
- perceptions of a 'gap' between DIMIA's skills assessment at visa application and later skills or trade recognition practices undergone in Australia; and
- the failure of employers to recognise or value overseas qualifications and employment experience.

The skilled migration process involves an extensive assessment of skills, qualifications, work experience and references. Because of this, and despite any notes of caution regarding employment prospects from the Department of Immigration, people are led to believe that Australia has places and jobs for those who have the right skills and experience. When people arrive, the reality is often very different. Our experience shows that many new arrivals face disillusionment and disappointment as they attempt to establish themselves in the employment market. They find that the very qualifications, experience and skills, which contributed to the success of their application to migrate to Australia, are, in fact, not fully recognized, trusted or valued in the Australian employment market. After making hundreds of applications for work and registering with employment agencies many skilled migrants are faced with the hard fact that employment in their skill or professional area will not happen.

Submission from Community Information Whittlesea, VIC

The process of gaining recognition for overseas qualifications is lengthy and can disqualify people from obtaining work in the field for which they are skilled, particularly in the first few months of arrival and before the process of recognition has been completed. The recognition process for overseas qualifications can take 6-12 weeks. Because the turn around time for job applications is only two weeks, people who are applying for jobs without approved qualifications may miss out on securing appropriate employment.

Submission from the Settlement Services Coalition, NSW

Recognition of overseas qualifications

In Australia, powers to make recognition decisions about overseas qualifications lie with the following bodies:

- in relation to decisions for employment purposes - the professional bodies or employers;
- in the case of regulated occupations - the State/Territory regulatory authorities;
- for academic purposes - the educational institutions; and
- for skilled stream migration - the relevant peak professional bodies assess professional and managerial occupations, Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) in DEWR assesses trade occupations and VETASSESS assesses the general educational level of qualifications for unregulated occupations, under contract to DIMIA.

Key legislation facilitating recognition for all migrants whose qualifications have been recognised for licensing or registration in any one State/Territory is the *Mutual Recognition Act 1992*.

The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, now known as AEI-NOOSR, has authority under the *Migration Act 1958* to approve assessing bodies, for subsequent gazettal by the Minister for Immigration, to undertake skills assessments for the General Skilled Migration Program. This is confined to professional occupations that require registration or are self-regulating.

TRA, which administers the *Tradesmen's Rights Recognition Act 1946*, provides national recognition in most electrical and metals trades for permanent residents of Australia who developed their skills through means other than Australian apprenticeships. TRA is the assessing authority gazetted by the Minister for Immigration for a range of trade level occupations for the purposes of skilled stream migration to Australia.

As discussed in chapter four of this report - The Settlement Experiences of New Arrivals, the overall proportion of migrants using their highest qualifications does improve over time with variations across visa categories. Skilled stream and business migrants have the most success in using their highest qualifications, with just over 70% of them using their highest qualifications eighteen months after arrival in Australia. At the same period, about half of family stream migrants and 19% of humanitarian entrants are using their highest qualifications.

Skilled and family stream migrants and humanitarian entrants each face slightly different issues. All skilled stream migrants who are granted permanent residency have their qualifications assessed for their nominated occupation by the relevant assessing authority. Once resident in Australia, migrants with 'suitable for migration purposes' assessments from relevant assessing authorities who wish to practice regulated occupations (for example, dentistry, architecture, licensed trades), must register or obtain licensing with an Australian State

authority before they can legally practise. Employment in some self-regulating occupations (for example, engineering, social work), may require eligibility for membership of a professional or industry association.

The overseas-trained professionals who enter Australia as skilled stream migrants generally have good English language skills. They are advised of any additional requirements for registration or licensing before they come to Australia. Assessment letters from all AEI-NOOSR-approved assessing authorities provide them with clear information regarding further requirements for legal practice of regulated professions. This advice also states explicitly that the assessment is not an offer of work and that securing employment will depend on a range of factors.

Despite these caveats, many skilled stream migrants report frustration at having to undergo procedures in Australia with professional or trades recognition bodies. They also report lack of acceptance of qualifications by employers and in some cases active discrimination in the labour market.

Community commentary also suggests that finding work commensurate with qualifications is a key issue for skilled stream migrants and that it influences their perceptions about skills recognition issues.

People arriving under the Skilled Migration category believe they will obtain appropriate employment due to the nature of the programme under which they have migrated. They find it difficult to understand why they are permitted to migrate under this Programme if their qualifications are not recognised.

Submission from the Ethnic Minorities Action Group

Migrants are not being provided with adequate employment information and advice that would facilitate their settlement and integration into Australia. Continuing failure on part of the government to assist these skilled migrants to align themselves with the expectations will eventually lead to other serious problems. The department must liaise closely with other departments to urgently address the issue of employment, which forms the basis for a smooth settlement. Over the last ten years Parramatta and Holroyd have seen a huge influx of migrants. Many of the economic problems that we are faced with today are due to two reasons; [t]he expectations of skilled migrants before arrival [and] [t]he actual demand for their skills and qualifications after arrival.

**Submission from Baulkham Hills
Holroyd Parramatta Migrant
Resource Centre**

Family stream migrants and humanitarian entrants can face a number of additional issues to those of discrimination and lack of acceptance. While the prime reason for their migration selection is not employment related, many of these entrants have post-secondary qualifications and they have a strong desire and expectations of working in their field of expertise and of enjoying the status or income they expect their qualifications to bring.

DIMIA currently provides information about skills recognition at overseas posts through settlement information kits and the Partner Migration Booklet, which is distributed from regional offices and overseas posts and available on the DIMIA web site. Some humanitarian entrants receive basic information about skills recognition processes as part of their orientation and information assistance. Many new arrivals still report

significant difficulty in obtaining detailed information about the skills recognition process. Translated material is limited in this area. The AEI-NOOSR web site, designed to provide information relating to the recognition of tertiary qualifications and professional recognition pathways, is produced in English.

For humanitarian entrants and some family stream migrants, lower levels of English proficiency, the cost of skills recognition, and the cost and time to undertake bridging courses, whilst managing other aspects of their early settlement, are additional significant barriers to the use of qualifications in Australian employment.

Commentary to the review has called for a range of measures to improve skills recognition processes, including:

- more information at the point of visa application and more information about Australia's labour market;
- enhanced cooperation between management bodies and government agencies;
- creating a one-stop shop to handle skills recognition procedures;
- providing documentation from the government to support job search;
- employment assistance programs for skilled migrants;
- creating fast-track or simplified procedures to assist skilled humanitarian entrants; and
- competency-based testing to help skilled humanitarian entrants who arrive without documentary evidence of their qualifications.

As previously identified, responsibility for making decisions about overseas qualifications in Australia is currently shared

between State/Territory regulatory bodies, Registered Training Organisations, TAFEs, professional bodies, and the approved migration assessing bodies that cover a range of trades and professions.

Each State/Territory has its own registration laws and registration organisations, and professional bodies set their own requirements for entry to professional practice. Many professional occupations in Australia are in fact self-regulating and their requirements for recognition of qualifications vary. Streamlining these procedures into a one-stop-shop as suggested by some commentators would therefore be impractical.

It is clear, however, that there is scope for streamlining information provision and skills recognition processes, through, for example, use of appropriate web-based technology. A constructive step forward to address these issues would be to engage key stakeholders such as Commonwealth, State/Territory and professional bodies to explore how the expectations of Australian employers and of overseas-trained professionals can be more closely aligned.

DIMIA, together with Centrelink and Job Network providers who play a role in referring job seekers to appropriate bodies for advice on skills recognition and employment entry options should be involved in such discussions.

There are several enabling professional recognition schemes in place. AEI-NOOSR administers the Assessment Fee Subsidy for Overseas-Trained Australian Residents (ASDOT). The scheme pays the fees for some assessments of overseas qualifications that lead to full and unconditional registration where occupations are regulated or, in other professions, the fees for an examination. Eligibility is based on Australian citizenship or permanent residence, as well as holding a

Centrelink Concession Card. Assistance is available for one attempt only at each examination stage or assessment.

Preliminary data from AEI-NOOSR indicates that around 408 applicants who were trained in major humanitarian source countries in the 2000-01 year received assistance under the ASDOT scheme, at a total cost of \$404,800. In the same year, a total of 512 migrants applied for assistance for qualifications assessments and examination attempts at a cost of \$543,359.¹⁸

Some overseas-trained professionals with Australian citizenship or permanent residence may be eligible for the Bridging for Overseas-Trained Professionals Loan Scheme. These loans, which are similar to the deferred payment arrangements for university students, pay fees for bridging courses that enable overseas-trained professionals to meet entry requirements to practice. The amount of the loan varies, depending on the amount of study required, the occupation and the course provider.

Feedback from the community has indicated that there are particular groups of overseas-trained professionals who would benefit from more targeted assistance, including humanitarian entrants and family stream migrants.

There is also room for improvement in changing negative attitudes to overseas qualifications. DIMIA's Productive Diversity Partnerships Program has been developed to provide resources for Australian business and Australian business educators to help them to understand the benefits of productive diversity and give them tools for implementing productive diversity strategies. DIMIA is currently piloting projects in regional centres

¹⁸ Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, *Annual Report 2000-01*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p. 76.

bringing together businesses and migrant job seekers to examine how Australian business can make the best use of the diverse skills and experience of this workforce.

For example, DIMIA is currently planning a key project for 2003 in the Rockhampton/Gladstone region. This project will look at developing practical tools and other planning resources to make it easier for business to meet skill gaps in their local labour markets through the Migration Program. The project will be undertaken in close partnership with key government and local business stakeholders. Through this project it is hoped that better use can be made of the Migration Program, to attract and retain skilled people to the region.

Recommendation 11

That DIMIA, AEI-NOOSR and Trades Recognition Australia seek to engage key stakeholders in the development of streamlined arrangements for obtaining information about skills assessment in all States/Territories.

Recommendation 12

That AEI-NOOSR and Trades Recognition Australia consider the scope to provide more targeted assistance to groups of permanent Australian resident overseas-trained professionals and tradespeople, including humanitarian entrants.

Recommendation 13

That DIMIA, in collaboration with AEI-NOOSR Trades Recognition Australia, the Department of Family and Community Services and Centrelink review information provision, including pre-embarkation information, about skills recognition processes to prospective and newly-arrived migrants, particularly family stream and humanitarian entrants.

Housing

The key barriers for new arrivals in finding housing are discussed in chapter four of this report and are covered again in relation to humanitarian entrants in chapter eight - The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. Public consultations and submissions to the review have confirmed that finding suitable accommodation is an issue for all new arrivals in both the public and private rental markets.

Difficulty in accessing the private rental market is an ongoing issue particularly for large families. This is due to the high cost of rent from Sydney, gender and racial discrimination, lack of previous rental records and lack of information about rental procedures, contracts and the clients' rights. A further issue is clients not understanding what they are being requested to sign eg a rental tenancy contract, either because they cannot understand the English version of this document, or because they are unfamiliar with the working of, and the conditions attached to, such a contract.

Submission from the Settlement Services Coalition, NSW

In some states, in particular those with larger intakes, getting refugees into suitable housing remains a major challenge [because]: state agencies responsible for public housing do not see humanitarian entrants as a priority group and thus entrants have to go to the end of (often very long) waiting lists, the available housing stock in the private rental market is often not suitable for entrants... real estate agents and landlords are often reluctant to rent to people from unfamiliar cultural backgrounds, especially where they do not have a 'rental history'.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

Humanitarian entrants generally require affordable and appropriate housing, which may be provided through either public housing or some other type of housing assistance due to their low income status. Rent assistance and access to public rental housing were the two most significant types of government-provided housing assistance evident within the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA). Humanitarian entrants make up 36% of the users of public housing services and rent assistance, despite being just 14% of the total pool of migrants. They also comprise 95% of the high users - services used on four or more different occasions - of housing services.¹⁹

Public housing

The Commonwealth, State/Territory governments provide housing assistance through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and the Commonwealth Rent Assistance Program. Grants to State/Territory governments are used primarily for public housing, with grants also being provided for Indigenous housing, community housing and crisis accommodation programs. Funding is also directed towards home purchase assistance and private rental assistance. Local government commonly sponsors community housing projects, and in rural and regional Australia, local government also has a role in housing provision.

The CSHA is in the process of being renewed for a further five years. A series of negotiations with State/Territory housing authorities will take place in 2003 to finalise details. These negotiations provide an opportunity to highlight accommodation issues for eligible migrant families and to reflect these in specific strategies and deliverables under bilateral agreements.

Commentary from public consultations and submissions to the review has pointed out that, while humanitarian entrants generally rank high on measures of disadvantage and

have characteristics that typically give them some priority, they are not formally recognised as a priority group under the Agreement.

In making their own eligibility decisions, States/Territories generally focus on addressing disadvantage in all of its forms. This is an appropriate approach and will, in identifying a range of characteristics and experiences resulting in disadvantage, generally also capture the characteristics of migrant and refugee experiences that trigger a need for housing assistance.

Public housing stock was largely acquired in the growth periods for public housing of the 1950s to the 1980s to meet the needs of 'average' families. State/Territory housing authorities are undertaking programs of stock renewal to address changing demographic trends, however, this is a slow process and humanitarian entrants with large families find housing in both the public and private rental sectors difficult to obtain.

Recommendation 14

That the Department of Family and Community Services and State/Territory housing authorities canvass the implications of the changing demographics of public housing applicants, including humanitarian entrants, for the type and amount of public housing stock in each State/Territory, in their negotiations for the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement in 2003.

Rent Assistance

The Commonwealth Government provides assistance to people on a low income who are renting in the private rental market through

¹⁹ A Beer & S Morphet, *The Role Of Housing And Other Services In Successful Settlement Of New Arrivals To Australia*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, 2002.

Rent Assistance. Rent Assistance may be paid to migrants or humanitarian entrants who receive basic income support such as Special Benefit, or to those receiving more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A. Migrants subject to the newly-arrived residents waiting period for social security benefits have to wait for the duration of that period to receive Rent Assistance.

Many new arrivals find accommodation in the private rental market. Rent Assistance complements broader income support by providing supplementary income, recognising the additional cost of private rental housing. It may be paid to new arrivals receiving a payment if they are renting in the private rental market and are paying rent over a certain level. Some new arrivals and especially humanitarian entrants can pay a high proportion of their income on housing and experience significant housing stress.

Some new arrivals have other difficulties in finding housing beyond financial costs. Real estate agents and landlords can be reluctant to rent to people without a rental history. Some may have had negative experiences with humanitarian entrants who had little or no rental experience, particularly in a Western context, and needed additional support in order to manage their rental property appropriately.

The Victorian Settlement Planning Committee (VSPC) has pursued a number of approaches to provide support to migrants seeking stable and appropriate accommodation. The VSPC Accommodation and Housing working group has addressed issues of discrimination in the private rental market by conducting a State-wide campaign targeting real estate agents and landlords, promoting positive stories about migrant tenants and explaining their circumstances.

The VSPC Refugee Young People and Housing Issues working group identified the need for

more appropriate housing for humanitarian entrant young people, developed a report on Culturally Appropriate Housing Options, and engaged a range of housing services and research bodies on this set of issues. These approaches resulted in an increased awareness of migrant needs in the real estate industry and collaboration between a range of agencies.

Commentary in public consultations and submissions to the review has suggested that housing issues should be tackled with:

- information and cross-cultural training for the private housing sector;
- an introductory letter for newly-arrived humanitarian entrants to explain to landlords their lack of a rental history;
- strategies to inform newly-arrived humanitarian entrants of their rights and obligations as tenants; and
- greater orientation and life skills training for some new arrivals about urban and suburban living to improve their access to the private market.

The last of these strategies is addressed later in this report in chapter eight. In addition, the strategy adopted in Victoria in relation to real estate agents may serve as a model of joint action by settlement planning stakeholders, housing agencies and the real estate industry.

Health

Public consultations and submissions to the review have pointed to a number of issues regarding health care, particularly for new arrivals.

Access to health care by new arrivals can be improved by; readily available information on local bilingual health professionals; use of onsite interpreters by health professionals both in private practice and in the public system;

reduced waiting times for critical services including psychological, medical and dental treatments; development and implementation of innovative programs that support people from refugee backgrounds to deal with their pre arrival experiences and plan for their new life in Australia.

Submission from Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on behalf of a number of settlement service providers, VIC

Early access to health services is particularly important for humanitarian entrants. Many new arrivals have been in war-torn environments or refugee camps where they were unable to receive treatment for health problems; dental care has been non-existent; and they have had no support in coping with the psychological impact of torture and trauma experiences. This issue is discussed in further detail in chapter eight of this report.

Health providers and other general commentators to the review have identified the critical need for sensitive and appropriate mental health support for migrant and humanitarian entrant clients. Health providers have suggested that mental health referrals between agencies could be improved for humanitarian entrants. Other commentators have suggested that mental health service providers should be given cross-cultural training, with an emphasis on refugee mental health issues. Commentary in public consultations has pointed to tensions between settlement service providers who are not equipped to deal with mental health issues and who make referrals to specialist services, while such services' lack of familiarity with clients from diverse backgrounds leads them to refer clients back to settlement service providers.

The Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) funded by the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) supports the physical wellbeing and psychosocial recovery of people who have

experienced torture and trauma in their countries of origin or while fleeing those countries. PASTT works to improve access to health, mental health and related mainstream services after clients have received the specialist assistance they need. The Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma delivers the program using a network of organisations to offer specialist support for people who come to Australia from countries where they have experienced torture and other forms of trauma. There are service providers in each State/Territory.

Commonwealth-funded services for survivors of torture and trauma are currently being evaluated in combination with the evaluation of the IHSS.

Most refugee new arrivals entering Australia experience a variety of health needs, due to their often protracted refugee experience. The needs of physical, mental and dental health must be met by a country accepting new arrivals, and provided in a linguistically and culturally accessible manner. ... [M]any general practitioners do not provide a bulk billing service, or make it a practice to use interpreters, and do not use relevant cross-cultural training when it is offered. For these reasons, many new arrivals find it very difficult to access appropriate health services.

Submission from the Greater Dandenong Migrant Settlement Committee, VIC

The cost of basic health care

Submissions to the review have reported widespread concerns about the rising costs of medical appointments.

Organisations in several States/Territories noted the financial impact of full charges for medical appointments on the more disadvantaged migrant groups as the number

of bulk-billing general practitioners continues to decrease across Australia.

Some saw this as discouraging humanitarian entrants in particular from attending medical appointments.

DoHA reports that almost seven out of ten visits by Australians to General Practitioner involve no out-of-pocket expenses.²⁰ The department has indicated its understanding of these concerns and a willingness to consider ways to assist access to information about doctors who bulk bill. There is difficulty, however, for all Australians in identifying which doctors bulk bill without calling each one as the decisions of doctors to bulk bill may change frequently. Collecting such lists would be an appropriate role for IHSS providers and MRCs/MSAs.

Private health insurance

DoHA reports that some new arrivals, particularly those who have held private health insurance in their country of origin, are keen to join a private health insurance fund as soon as possible after arrival. Until recently, new migrants who did this after the age of 30 years were liable to pay extra for their insurance under the provisions of Lifetime Health Cover. The Commonwealth Government recently removed this potential disincentive. Some new migrants will now find it easier to exercise their choice to take out private health insurance.

Translating and interpreting services

Commentary to the review has reflected general concern that medical practitioners and other health services are not making sufficient use of interpreter services. There were calls for more health specialist interpreters to address current shortages in metropolitan and regional areas, and increased information provision to medical practitioners, including those in rural and

regional areas, to raise their awareness about the Doctors Priority Line. These issues are discussed in more detail later in chapter twelve of this report in relation to DIMIA's fee-free translating and interpreting services.

Education

Commonwealth and State/Territory education funding arrangements cover the language and learning needs of newly-arrived students. State/Territory governments are responsible for providing schooling to all school age children. The Commonwealth provides education funding through the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000*. The Commonwealth also provides funding to States/Territories to develop the foundation literacy and numeracy skills of children as early as possible in their school years.

Newly-arrived students in schools

The Commonwealth Government's national report on schooling in Australia broadly describes the progress of students in Australian schools, in grades three to five, against nationally agreed literacy and numeracy benchmarks.²¹ It reports the proportion of students who have achieved minimum acceptable standards of literacy and numeracy, without which they would be expected to have difficulty making sufficient progress at school. The report indicates that most students from language backgrounds

²⁰ Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon. Kay Patterson, *Seven out of 10 GP visits have no out-of-pocket expenses*, media release, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, February 14, 2003.

²¹ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2000*, MCEETYA, Melbourne, 2003.

other than English are generally faring well in Australian schools, with only slight differences between them and the Australian national averages.²²

This finding does not include students who are still learning English, those who have been in Australian schools or resident in Australia for less than two years, or those who are recently arrived and who are a particular focus for this review. For this reason, the discussion below focuses largely on newly-arrived students.

The Commonwealth funds a number of programs to support children and young people with low levels of English proficiency as part of its national focus on assisting Australian school students to develop their core learning skills. It should be noted that State/Territory governments fund education authorities within their jurisdictions to provide many other programs for students in their schools, which have not been examined in this review.

Two Commonwealth programs relevant to newly-arrived students are examined below.

The English as a Second Language-New Arrivals (ESL-NA) Program

Students who are not considered to have functional English when they start school, and who are eligible permanent residents or who hold other eligible visas, receive English as a Second Language (ESL) tuition on arrival. ESL tuition usually takes place in Introductory English Centres in both primary and high schools. The Commonwealth provides a per capita grant for ESL instruction for newly-arrived students requiring intensive assistance. Students must be Australian citizens or have permanent residency status or be a minor granted a visa under the Humanitarian Program to be eligible for ESL-NA funding. In 2001, grants of \$3,810 per student were made

to education authorities for each eligible ESL student. In the 2000-01 financial year, ESL-NA assisted 9,154 students.

The Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes Program

The Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes Program combines funding from several specialist programs targeting literacy, numeracy and special education needs. Education authorities are responsible for its administration and they may direct funds to students with the greatest need for support. The program targets students with a language background other than English along with students with disabilities, Indigenous students, students in geographically isolated areas and students from low socio-economic status backgrounds.

Humanitarian entrant children in schools

Public consultations and submissions to the review have acknowledged there are many valuable initiatives operating in schools and community centres across Australia. However, they have also argued that the support and tuition needs of newly-arrived students are not always matched by available resources or funding. Commentators have stressed the need to involve newly-arrived students and their families in school life, combined with adequate support, English tuition, counselling and responsiveness to student learning needs at school.

²² For year three students, 90.8% of students from language backgrounds other than English achieved the reading benchmark, compared to the national average of 92.5%. For year five students, 84.9% of students from language backgrounds other than English achieved the reading benchmark, compared to the national average of 87.4%. Similar patterns were reported for numeracy benchmarks.

The difference between Australian and overseas school systems can be a substantial challenge for some students, who need time and support to adjust. Some commentators have pointed out that the difficulties that some children experience in coping with a new school environment, adjusting to studying in English, creating friendships and feeling included can translate into behaviours that cause conflict in the family. Understanding by schools of the degree of adjustment required and of the cultural context from which students have arrived can be critical.

Many people fall into the trap of thinking that just because young refugees learn the language quickly and readily adopt local customs, they are settling in well. Outward appearances can often disguise considerable confusion and grief.

Submission from the Refugee Council of Australia

A review [should be] undertaken of the level of services available for particularly vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds with little or no schooling, or with significant interruptions to their schools and suffering the effects of war. These entrants have particular settlement needs and will require support over a longer period of time if they are to settle successfully in Australia.

Submission from the Victorian Government

Children who have not had schooling for an extended time, or who have had particularly traumatic pre-migration experiences such as some humanitarian entrant children, have

been universally seen as particularly vulnerable and in need of additional support or counselling. The degree of support that students receive can vary according to the capacity of individual schools. Developmentally, the system of age-graded classes can be a hurdle for students grappling with language, literacy or numeracy gaps alongside peers who have benefited from continuous education.

Public consultations to the review have reported that, for instance, humanitarian entrant children who are 9 years old can be placed in grade four despite the fact that they are unable to read or write even in their own first language. Other children become classified as ‘low achievers’ because they lack English language skills and their initial disadvantages become entrenched throughout their high school years.

Young people and the links between education and employment

There is a general consensus that young people are now more likely than in the past to experience variable pathways to finding work than previous generations. The contemporary youth labour market is characterised by a rise in part-time work and a fall in full-time employment, which for some young people, can be an attractive option to complement study choices. In their early years after leaving school, young people make multiple transitions to full or part-time employment, training or study and some experience spells of unemployment. While the majority of young people are doing well in their transitions, a significant minority experiences difficult transitions.

There are critical links between the education levels of young people and their employment prospects. The greater the years of schooling or equivalent education, the greater the prospects of employment or further education or training. Students with strong literacy and

numeracy skills are more likely to make successful transitions in their first few years after leaving school.²³ In the initial years beyond school, early positive or negative experiences have a significant impact on job prospects in subsequent years. This is of particular concern for newly-arrived students with language or educational difficulties that must be overcome in a short period of time.

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) indicate that, compared to Australian-born school leavers, fewer NESB-category school-leavers move directly into full-time work (13% compared to 21% for the Australian-born).²⁴ Nearly a third of these school leavers experience a brief period of unemployment or part-time work before moving onto full-time work (29% compared to 23% of Australian-born), in the first years of their working life.

However, more of these school leavers enter further study leading to full-time work (16% compared to 11% for the Australian-born). The LSAY indicates that young people from its NESB category have strong levels of participation in year twelve and in higher education. They compare favourably to their Australian-born peers and in some cases they exceed the Australian-born participation rate for higher education. In 1999 for example, 41% of these students participated in higher education, compared to 28% for Australian-born students.²⁵

However, in the course of the review, commentators have expressed particular concerns about young people entering the high school system as teenagers, who have had less time to acquire English and other vocational skills. For instance, they considered that the ESL tuition hours available to students were not always adequate to equip them for managing general curriculum requirements and vocational training.

Feedback to the review has also focused on a number of issues confronting young people that did not relate specifically to education services, but for which schools can be a focal point for action. A pilot program in Queensland provides an orientation program for migrant parents to introduce them to the Queensland school system. There is also a system of 'community advocates' to mediate between children and relevant others when issues of truancy, homelessness, child abuse allegations or school conflicts arise. Schools can also play an important role in civics education.

Youth Services

While many migrant and humanitarian entrant young people are faring well in their transitions, commentary to the review has highlighted the difficulties that some of them face. Youth advocates have stated that the needs of newly-arrived migrant and humanitarian entrant youth are not being met adequately either by DIMIA-funded or other agency programs, due to the particular barriers they face to participation and significant gaps in current service provision.

Some of the barriers to participation they have highlighted are:

- gaps between settlement service provision and youth specific programs and youth workers;

²³ S Lamb & P McKenzie, *Patterns of Success and Failure in the Transition from School to Work in Australia*, research report number 18, June 2001, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 2001, p. viii.

²⁴ Lamb & McKenzie, *Patterns of Success and Failure*, p. 34.

²⁵ G Marks, N Fleming, M Long & J McMillan, *Patterns of Participation in Year 12 and Higher Education in Australia: Trends and Issues*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, research report no. 17, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 2001, p. 17.

- lack of service information to young people, including information in relevant languages;
- lack of data collection on the part of agencies to assess migrant and humanitarian entrant youth take-up rates of services;
- lack of cultural knowledge on the part of youth worker and other mainstream services about newly-arrived young people and how to address their needs; and
- lack of transitional programs in education and employment.

The Commonwealth Government funds a range of initiatives that aim to provide 'youth friendly' information about programs and services, including *thesource*, the Commonwealth Government's youth web site managed by FaCS. In 2002, DIMIA also introduced new youth web pages on its web site which specifically target newly-arrived youth and complement the range of web-based information pages now available to young people.

Commonwealth and State/Territory governments fund a wide range of youth programs which are beyond the scope of this review to examine in detail. However, two significant Commonwealth funded programs are the Jobs Placement Employment Training program, (which identifies refugee young people as a target group and is funded by FaCS) and the Jobs Pathway Program, (which identifies NESB young people as a target group and is funded by DEST).

While acknowledging the value of these and other youth programs, youth advocacy organisations and representatives from humanitarian entrant communities have stated that some newly-arrived youth, particularly humanitarian entrant youth, are still at risk of not making successful transitions.

They have argued this is often due to the circumstances of arrival in Australia, with or without family and community support, and a complex set of needs. Commentators have argued that a more coordinated mix of settlement-related, youth-specific and general services would be a step forward in supporting these young people.

This commentary confirms the findings of a growing body of research on young humanitarian entrants highlighting a range of factors that can put these young people at risk of not making successful transitions to independence. This has been highlighted in the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council's *Strategy for Refugee Young People* and in the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme's *Wealth of All Nations* report on young refugees:

The challenges and stresses of the transition to adulthood are compounded when a young person is making the transition to a new culture, dealing with the practical adjustments of settling in a new country, and trying to come to terms with the upheaval and trauma of their past. This may interfere with their identity formation as they struggle to reconcile the competing values of their country of origin and those of their peers in a new country.²⁶

The needs of young refugees are diverse, complex and significant and they tend to compound each other. Young refugees are likely to suffer considerable socioeconomic disadvantage in the short term, and there is a particularly high risk of homelessness among refugee young people, this being some six to 10 times greater than for school students generally. At the same time,

²⁶ Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council, *Strategy for Refugee Young People*, RRAC, 2002, web site address: <http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/publications/rys01.htm>.

the resilience of young refugees and their commitment to Australia and making the best of their lives must be emphasised.²⁷

In 2002, newly-arrived migrant and humanitarian entrant youth were the focus of the national settlement project for Settlement Planning Committees throughout Australia. Settlement Planning Committees have confirmed that the key areas of need continue to be service integration, lack of awareness amongst young people about available services, and difficulties with education, training and employment pathways. Settlement Planning Committees have developed approaches within their individual States/Territories to raise awareness about young people's needs, including establishing youth specific working groups to focus on newly-arrived youth needs, mapping local services for newly-arrived youth, identifying linkages between programs and holding information sessions with mainstream youth services.

There are further strategic opportunities to raise these issues through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and its Transitions from School Taskforce. The Transition from School Taskforce advises MCEETYA on approaches to enhancing student transitions from school to work and further learning. MCEETYA has recently issued a Ministerial Declaration *Stepping Forward - Improving Pathways For All Young People*.²⁸ The declaration cements a commitment to developing practical ways to increase the social, educational and employment outcomes of Australia's young people, including those who are at risk, disconnected or in vulnerable circumstances.

Priority should be given at a whole-of-government level to investment in early intervention strategies that recognise and support school children and young people facing particular difficulties due to their

migration circumstances, lack of English language proficiency and recency of arrival in Australia.

Recommendation 15

That early intervention strategies at a whole-of-government level recognise and support school children and young people at risk of not making successful transitions due to their pre-migration experiences, low English language proficiency, and recency of arrival in Australia.

Recommendation 16

That the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs consider the transition needs of newly-arrived migrant and humanitarian entrant youth and develop approaches to support them in the work of its Transition from School Taskforce.

Recommendation 17

That DIMIA work with local educational authorities, bilaterally or through Settlement Planning Committees, to plan for timely responses to the needs of newly-arrived humanitarian entrants of school age.

²⁷ L Coventry, C Guerra, D McKenzie & S Pinkney, *Wealth of All Nations: Identification of Strategies to Assist Refugee Young People In Transition To Independence*, a report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Hobart, 2002.

²⁸ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *Stepping Forward - Improving Pathways for all Young People, A Joint Declaration by Commonwealth, State/Territory Ministers for Education, Training, Employment, Youth and Community Services*, MCEETYA, Melbourne, July 2002.

Vocational training

New Apprenticeships

New Apprenticeships are a key element of the Commonwealth Government's approach to maintaining a skilled and flexible workforce. New Apprenticeships build on the success of traineeships and apprenticeships. They combine practical work with structured training and lead to nationally recognised qualifications. These qualifications can be delivered on-the-job, off the job, or a combination of both. New Apprenticeships are now available in over 500 occupations. As at December 2002, 375,000 people were undertaking New Apprenticeships.

The Commonwealth promotes New Apprenticeships by providing employer incentives and through marketing campaigns. Since 1998, the Commonwealth has funded New Apprenticeships Centres to undertake local level promotion in their regions, assist employers and prospective New Apprentices to enter into New Apprenticeships, and administer the employer incentive scheme. New Apprenticeships Centres operate from over 300 sites in Australia.

To be eligible for Commonwealth employer incentives the New Apprentice must be one of the following:

- an Australian citizen;
- a foreign national with permanent residence status; or
- a New Zealand passport-holder who has been resident in Australia for at least six months.

Participants from the NESB category in New Apprenticeships have increased from 4.1% in 1995 to 9% in September 2002. There are several DEST funded programs that assist people to prepare for a New Apprenticeship, such as the New Apprenticeships Access Programme (NAAP) and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

The New Apprenticeships Access Programme

The NAAP works with job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment, with pre-vocational training, support and assistance. Its primary focus is to assist disadvantaged job seekers obtain a New Apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment or further education and training. Under current contract arrangements, some 8,500 eligible job seekers in over 140 locations around Australia will participate in NAAP in 2002-2004.

There is no age limit to the program, although over 70% of participants are aged 14 to 24 years. To be eligible, an applicant must meet certain residency, Centrelink registration, and personal circumstances criteria.

The vocational training and support that NAAP offers has the potential to provide newly-arrived job seekers with the assistance needed to obtain long-term sustainable employment via a New Apprenticeship. NAAP also offers opportunities to mature-aged migrants to establish themselves in a new career by undertaking pre-vocational training and getting the necessary support to access a New Apprenticeship.

This chapter now turns to issues relating primarily to mainstream services for longer-resident migrants, as distinct from new arrivals.

Recommendation 18

That the Department of Education, Science and Training review New Apprenticeships Access Program eligibility criteria to ensure that the program considers the needs of newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants to improve their access to pre-vocational training and support.

Aged care

In public consultations and submissions to the review, aged care issues have been a key concern for many longer-resident communities. Perceptions about the responsiveness of agencies to their needs ranged from an appreciation of cross-cultural service strategies through to more general criticism that aged-care agencies are not responsive enough to the large scale needs of post-World War II migrant communities. A common theme across communities was the increasing reliance of older migrants, if they are not proficient in English and are frail, on bilingual staff and ethno-specific agencies.

Communities have strongly supported the work of cross-cultural aged-care services, but they have also stated that mainstream agencies still fail to address their aged-care needs.

DIMIA has imposed strict guidelines that agencies like AGWS are to do the absolute minimum of casework and more recently to 'wind down casework as a result of working with the mainstream services so that these agencies will look after the need of Greek speaking people as well as other settled migrants'. While this is an admirable and desirable outcome the reality is that on the whole 'mainstream' welfare and human service structures have failed to develop an integrated and total commitment to servicing a culturally diverse population. What has in fact occurred is that despite years of multiculturalism the majority of mainstream organizations have failed to develop the awareness and responsiveness to the needs of non-English speaking background (NESB) people and any regard to access and equity has only been superficial.

Submission from the Australian Greek Welfare Society, VIC

The strengths that people saw in existing programs such as the Home and Community Care and Community Aged Care models were in funding of ethno-specific agencies, recruitment of bilingual staff, and links with MRCs/MSAs in planning service delivery.

Commentary to the review has suggested:

- a clearer definition of where DIMIA's settlement responsibilities end and where the responsibilities of other agencies begin for aged-care services;
- increased use and recruitment of bilingual workers and health care interpreters in mainstream agencies;
- links with settlement services and other community organisations to disseminate information and reach out to smaller communities;
- greater use of language services to communicate with clients; and
- flexible funding models and partnerships between government funding bodies to improve access to health and aged-care services.

As noted in chapter three of this report - The Demographic Context, the immigration intakes of the 1950s and 1960s have resulted in a large number of migrants in Australia now being in the older age brackets. Many of these longer-resident migrants have relatively limited English language skills. The ageing of these communities has significant policy implications for the provision of health and aged-care services. Commentators to the review have noted that there are also implications for aged-care services in terms of understanding the interaction of ageing and traumatic pre-migration experiences for aged humanitarian entrants, both now and in the future, as small and emerging communities age.

Aged-care planning

There is already an extensive mechanism in place for the planning and delivery of aged-care services to older people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This planning is managed under the Ethnic Aged Care Framework. Under this framework, DoHA provides grants to a range of different communities and organisations to help to build links between migrant communities and aged-care providers, such as the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care Projects and the Ethnic Aged Services Grants.

Aged Care Planning Advisory Committees

Aged Care Planning Advisory Committees in each State/Territory play a role in influencing DoHA's allocation of new aged-care places for this group. They inform the department on the need for culturally and linguistically diverse aged-care services.

In the 2001-02 Budget, the Commonwealth Government allocated \$6.1 million over four years to address general access and quality issues around the provision of culturally and linguistically diverse aged-care services. In the 2002 Aged Care Approvals Round, 752 new aged-care places were targeted nationally for the Arabic speaking, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, Estonian, Filipino, Greek, Italian, Jewish, Latvian, Maltese, Polish, Serbian, Spanish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese communities, as well as some smaller, newly-emerging communities. Currently, there are 160 ethno-specific aged-care homes in Australia, covering some thirty-four communities, as well as 118 clusters of clients from twenty-nine longer-resident communities within aged-care homes.

Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care

Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) provides funding by competitive tender to State-wide organisations in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. Two additional PICACs are currently being

established in the ACT and in the Northern Territory. The objective of this program is to improve choice and participation for older people in aged-care services, identify their special needs, disseminate information amongst the aged-care industry about high quality care practices and provide training about culturally appropriate care within the aged-care industry.

Ethnic Aged Service Grants

The Ethnic Aged Service Grants (EASG) program provides funding for eight community-based organisations in New South Wales and Victoria to focus on the needs of their frail aged. A review of this program is being undertaken in 2003.

Other key services include:

- *Aged Care Assessment Teams*, which assess people to determine eligibility for a range of care options, including home and community care, community aged-care packages, residential aged care, or respite care;
- *Home and Community Care (HACC)*, a joint Commonwealth, State/Territory initiative, providing community care services to frail aged people and young people with disabilities, and their carers. HACC aims to enhance the independence of people and avoid their premature admission to long-term residential care. Around 24% of HACC clients were born in a country other than Australia, with 9% speaking a language other than English at home;
- *Community Aged Care Packages*, which support older Australians who choose to stay at home rather than enter residential care, targets frail older people living in the community who would otherwise be eligible for some type of residential care. In 2002, some 440 places were specifically allocated to people from the program's NESB category; and

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- *CommunityVisitors Scheme*, which supports lonely and isolated residents of aged-care homes who can benefit from contact with a volunteer. The scheme can provide visitors from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds for residents who may benefit from community contact.

Overall, this framework would seem to embody most of the elements characteristic of a mainstream service making appropriate efforts to provide a service responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity, including mechanisms to consult, identify needs and allocate services equitably. However, feedback to the review has indicated that communities are still not satisfied.

Although these people have now been residing in Australia for say 30 years, it is questionable to say that they are 'settled' with the ability to fully comprehend and grasp social, economical and political environment of Australia and to have equal accesses to all that they are entitled to as Australia citizens. These people who are aging at a faster rate than the host community, have difficulties accessing the Senior Citizen Centres which are geared for the Australian Seniors. These people feel like 2nd class citizens because they are treated like 2nd class citizens.

Submission from the Macedonian Welfare Association Inc, NSW

From the evidence available to the review, it is unclear what these perceived deficiencies are. For instance, an element of concern within aged care appears to be a preference for bilingual workers, but the need they are meeting is not entirely clear. It is difficult to assess whether they are performing an advocacy or a linking role in relation to initial

access, or an ongoing support role, and in relation to the older person or the family unit as a whole.

However, dissatisfaction appears to arise primarily, not from the absence of programs, but from the difficulties of meeting the very high demand for culturally-responsive aged care. A number of concerns appear to relate to the supply of residential aged-care services rather than to services being seen as unresponsive to cultural and linguistic diversity. While the efforts of DOHA to respond to cultural diversity have been substantial, high demand for aged-care services remains.

The issue of culturally and linguistically responsive aged care, in relation to DIMIA-funded settlement services, is discussed in chapter nine of this report - The Community Settlement Services Scheme. However, it is important to note that the provision of DIMIA funding through the CSSS risks enabling migrant community organisations and aged-care providers to avoid engaging with each other. Direct engagement between ethno-specific and mainstream organisations is crucial to developing a mutual understanding of needs and possible modifications to the existing care service arrangements that would allow these needs to be met. Overlaps in funding also work against mainstream organisations making structural changes that have the potential to benefit a wide range of communities.

Recommendation 19

That the Department of Health and Ageing review its existing arrangements for consultation with migrant communities with ageing populations and its arrangements for facilitating access to services for all ageing communities from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Family support

As noted in chapter five of this report - The Role of DIMIA-Funded Settlement Services, commentary to the review has reflected a general consensus that the act of migration itself, and the consequent need to adjust to life in a new country and society, can influence the ways in which migrants and humanitarian entrants experience family support needs that they share in common with the Australian-born community.

Commentators have noted that the stress of migration impacts on families both positively and negatively. Some of the adverse and unintended results of migration can be conflict and confusion over traditional cultural and gender roles in a new country, reversal or significantly changed family roles, or inter-generational conflict between parents and children as children grow up in a new country. Some new arrivals may also have experienced grief, separation from or even the loss of family members overseas. Families experiencing these kinds of stresses can require support from their family, community or family support services.

Various levels of government offer family support services and there is a variety of initiatives to improve family life in Australia. The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy is funded by FaCS and it supports families through a combination of services with an emphasis on government, community and family partnerships. While the strategy does not specifically address the needs of migrants and humanitarian entrants, its emphasis on responding to the specific needs of each community results in programs that are sometimes either ethno-specific or specific to migrants and humanitarian entrants, but which aim to be inclusive.

Public consultations and submissions to the review have reflected the strengths of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy funding model. Perceived strengths included the absence of a funding cycle (enabling flexibility of response), a strong element of capacity building, and the close working relationship established by the funding body with agencies to help them with their funding applications.

FaCS has programs to support family relationships, enhance the quality of parenting, and prevent child abuse and neglect. The agency funds community-based organisations to run parenting education programs, early intervention services to young people and families experiencing conflict, support for young adolescents and their families where the young people are at risk of destructive or self-destructive behaviours, and financial assistance for families with children.

FaCS' Men and Family Relationships Program and its Grandparenting project are two examples of family support programs that have provided support to parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Many of the Men and Family Relationships Program services are generalist counselling, relationship education and parenting skills programs designed to take men's particular help-seeking and problem-solving strategies into account. The program has been delivered to Arabic and Chinese communities in Victoria. Within this program, the *Hey, Dad!* Program has targeted fathers from migrant and humanitarian entrant backgrounds, featuring parenting issues that confront men in Australian society. The Melbourne-based project, *Grandparenting Across Cultures*, began as a support program for grandparents as carers in the Arabic community. The program has broadened over time to include people

from other overseas-born backgrounds, and has now become a general grandparents' program.

Early intervention strategies for family support should continue to provide support for families experiencing stress arising from the migration process.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored a number of service issues in relation to the responsiveness of mainstream services to both new arrivals and longer-resident migrants. It has also identified some mechanisms for enabling whole-of-government responses to migrant service delivery needs in accordance with access and equity principles. The next chapter highlights the importance of planning and integration between mainstream services and DIMIA-funded settlement services, if the benefits of service delivery are to be maximised.

