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# Introduction

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Successful settlement of migrants and humanitarian entrants is crucial to the success of Australia's Migration and Humanitarian Programs. Migrants and humanitarian entrants bring with them a diverse range of skills and experiences that help them to settle in Australia. Most need relatively little, if any, assistance from specialist settlement services. Some need varying degrees of assistance from the range of government and community services available to all Australians, and others need higher levels of support from specialist services in order to participate fully in Australia's economy and in wider Australian society.

This *Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants* focuses on the specialist settlement services provided by DIMIA that aim to help those most in need of settlement assistance. It also examines DIMIA's role in working with other service providers to encourage the development and delivery of mainstream services that respond appropriately to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian population.

This is the first time that Australia's settlement services have been reviewed together as a package since the introduction of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society (Charter)* in 1998 and since a series of reforms have tightened the Migration Program's focus on skilled stream migrants. The review provides an opportunity to examine how well Australia's settlement services have responded to these changes and to consider whether further adjustments might be required.

While the focus of the review is on DIMIA's specialist settlement services, it also considers the extent to which other government services have developed under the framework provided by the *Charter*.

## The review

The Hon. Gary Hardgrave MP, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, announced the review on 6 August 2002. The terms of reference, located in appendix I, envisaged consultation and analysis leading to recommendations for the improvement of settlement service delivery within existing government policy which:

- aims to enable migrants and humanitarian entrants to participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival;
- restricts eligibility for settlement services to permanent residents; and
- requires targeting of resources to those most in need of assistance.

DIMIA sought community input to the review via participation in public consultations and through written submissions. A discussion paper was released on 19 September 2002. The Minister wrote to more than 900 stakeholders inviting them to contribute to the review. Over 140 written submissions were received from contributors listed in appendix II.

The Minister conducted thirteen community consultations in all State/Territory capital cities. DIMIA conducted a further twenty-seven consultations with the community and with representatives from Commonwealth, State/Territory and local government agencies across Australia. A list of metropolitan and regional consultation venues is in appendix III. More than 1,000 people participated in the consultations. DIMIA also held bilateral discussions with major mainstream service providing agencies.

A departmental steering group of senior officials, including State Directors from New

South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, provided overall direction for the review.

The Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council acted as an external reference group for the review. Together with members of the Council for Multicultural Australia, its members attended the Minister's consultations and provided a further conduit for community comment.

Findings of the review also reflect community consultation on DIMIA's exposure paper, *Supporting Settlement in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia*, released in June 2002. A summary of feedback regarding the exposure paper is in appendix IV. Issues identified through this process are addressed in relevant chapters in this report.

## The review report

This report of the review findings and recommendations is divided into three main sections. The first section focuses on the policy and demographic contexts within which Australia's settlement services have evolved, and also provides some comparisons with settlement service provision in other countries. This section demonstrates that Australia's settlement services have developed in response to increasing diversity within the migrant intake and in response to developments in the broader social policy environment. Over time, settlement services have grown but they have also become more targeted, focusing on those most in need of assistance, principally new arrivals who are humanitarian entrants and family stream migrants with low levels of English proficiency.

The second section of the report examines the role of DIMIA-funded settlement services in the settlement of migrants and humanitarian entrants. It also considers some issues that exercise a significant impact on DIMIA's services. These issues include: the settlement experiences of the most recent arrivals to Australia; the effectiveness of

mainstream service provision in a culturally diverse society; and frameworks for the planning of both settlement and mainstream services to migrants and humanitarian entrants.

The third section comprises chapters on each of the major settlement services funded by DIMIA. The chapters for each of the services include an outline of their historical evolution, an assessment of their effectiveness today and recommendations for improving service delivery and outcomes. This section of the report covers:

- the provision of initial orientation, accommodation, household support, early health intervention and support for proposers and service providers under the IHSS;
- grants to community organisations to respond to locally identified settlement needs under the CSSS;
- funding to MRCs/MSAs to provide a range of settlement-related services in a specific locality;
- the provision of English language tuition through the AMEP;
- the facilitation of communication between non-English speakers and service providers, through TIS; and
- current performance and accountability mechanisms relating to each of these service types.

The final chapter of the report highlights the long-term benefits to be gained from a renewed emphasis on earlier, more focused interventions to improve settlement outcomes for the highest needs migrant groups.

The report makes sixty-one recommendations. Further consultation with stakeholders and the community on how these recommendations are to be addressed will precede the development of a detailed plan for implementation of the findings of the review.