



## Issues Paper – Excerpt

### **Companion to the WACOSS Pre-Budget Submission**

Investing in Outcomes  
Making it Count for the People of WA

**Part One – Issues and Funding Pressures in the Community Services Sector  
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities**



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Companion to the WACOSS Pre-Budget Submission  
*Investing in Outcomes: Making it Count for the People of WA*

*Part One – Issues and Funding Pressures in the Community Services Sector  
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities*

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October 2010

# CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

## Background

Western Australian society is rich in cultural and linguistic diversity. At the time of the 2006 Census WA had the largest proportion of overseas born residents compared to the other Australian states. 531,747 people or 27.1 per cent of WA's population were born overseas. People from over 200 countries live, work and study in WA. 26,629 people living in Perth and Mandurah spoke a language other than English at home and did not have good English language skills.<sup>1</sup>

Being able to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the community helps people overcome feelings of isolation that many recently arrived immigrants and refugees experience. Familiarity with the English language is critical to supporting participation. Translation and interpreter services are also important, particularly when engaging with government agencies. We have an obligation provide adequate services to facilitate the successful transition of overseas born people into WA society.

The West Australian government has given its commitment to the principle of substantive equality and endorsed *The Policy Framework for Substantive Equality*. In order to make progress on substantive equality the government needs to commit to the further development of culturally appropriate services. Substantive equality underpins a fair society built on mutual respect, social inclusion and an environment free of prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of race, language, religion, ethnicity or culture.

## Issues

### *Importance of Multicultural Support Services*

New migrants require a range of support services to facilitate their inclusion and participation in West Australian society. New migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds require better support services so they can better understand and navigate the service system that exists to help them. Support services also need to foster trust in government. Many new West Australians come from countries where they have experienced trauma and torture and as a result have a deep suspicion and distrust of government.

Newly arrived refugee communities need to be supported to acquire language skills and everyday skills such as budgeting. They need support entering employment and the education system. These services must be delivered in a way this is culturally appropriate for a group with limited English literacy and no formal numeracy skills.

Migrants need services to support access to employment. Migrant specific job training could be linked to local employment opportunities. The creation of on the job supervised apprenticeships could be implemented so migrants can learn job specific English. Some migrants find the loss of status that comes with classroom learning traumatic. On the job English training will assist to reduce trauma experienced through loss of status.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian bureau of Statistics. *Perth: A Social Atlas. 2006 Census of Population and Housing*. March 2008, p.23

The community would benefit from a training framework for on the job skills recognition. Many migrants who arrive in WA have qualifications from their home countries which are not recognised here. A training framework for on the job skills recognition would fast track pathways from arrival and enable translation of existing skills and knowledge to the Australian context and then to meaningful employment.

Unskilled migrants need greater protections from exploitation in the workplace. Migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation because they may lack understanding of their workplace rights or they may be misinformed about their rights. Initiatives such as the multilingual educational documentary *Law of the Land*<sup>2</sup>, which deals with law and the justice system, could be extended to employment education. The distribution of this material through CaLD communities would help educate new migrants and protect them from exploitation.

The Settlements Grants Programs require secure ongoing funding. Settlement Grants Programs have been funded by a succession of single year grants, making the continuity of staffing and planning very difficult. Non-ongoing funding reduces the effectiveness of the service delivered. As has been detailed elsewhere in this consultation report innovation in service delivery is very limited when funding cannot be relied on. CaLD services have in effect become a succession of short term uncoordinated projects funded and administered by a variety of agencies with differing objectives.<sup>3</sup>

Settlement services need to prioritise family reunion in refugee re-settlement programs. Refugees are concerned about family members who remain overseas. The stress and concern refugees feel for their loved ones who remain overseas is a great impediment to the successful settlement of refugees in Australia.<sup>4</sup> It means they cannot function adequately without certainty for their loved ones. The isolation of women with small children is a big issue. The lack of transport and childcare services mean women and children are unable to fully participate and integrate into West Australian society.<sup>5</sup>

Continued access to mental Health support services is an important issue for refugees. Many refugees who have lived in Australia for some years continue to feel marginalised and disempowered. It is important to promote mental health support to these marginalised West Australians. More about this issue can be found in the section on mental health.<sup>6</sup>

### *Humanitarian Entrants*

Consultation with community service providers, particularly those involved with refugees, identified increasing Australia's humanitarian program and removing children from Immigration detention, as priority issues for government attention.

Australia has room in its migration program to take in more humanitarian entrants. Table 1 below compares the number of humanitarian entrants with the migration program intake between 2005-06 and 2009-10. It shows the rate of Australia's humanitarian intake fell as a proportion of total

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<sup>2</sup> See Ethnic Communities Council of WA. *Law of the Land* DVD <http://eccwa.multiculturalwa.org.au/law>

<sup>3</sup> Fremantle Multicultural Centre Inc. *Submission to WACOSS Consultation for State Pre-Budget Submission*. 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

intake between 2005-06 and 2008-09. In May 2008 the Federal Government announced an increase in the Humanitarian Program to 13 750 places for 2009–10. The Refugee category will be frozen at 6000 places with the remaining 7750 places being made up from the Special Humanitarian Protection and Onshore Protection categories.<sup>7</sup> This slight increase is still significantly lower than the humanitarian entry level in the peak year of 2005-06. Australia has the capacity to adjust its migration program levels and open its doors to more humanitarian entrants.

**Table 1: Humanitarian and Migration Program Entrants 2005-06 to 2009-10<sup>8</sup>**

Category	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10*
Humanitarian Intake	14,144	13,017	13,014	13,507	13,750
Migration Program Intake**	142,930	148,200	158,630	171,320	168,700
Total Intake	157,074	161,217	171,644	184,827	182,450
Humanitarian Program as % of Total intake	9.0%	8.0%	7.6%	7.3%	7.5%

\*Refers to initial levels not the outcome.

\*\*Migration Program incorporates family sponsored migration, skilled migration and special eligibility migrants.

The ongoing presence of children in immigration detention remains a serious concern for many people in the Australian community. As of August 2010 it was reported that 628 children continue to be held in Immigration detention centres around Australia.<sup>9</sup> This is despite clear evidence that detention has serious negative psychological and physiological impacts on children.

#### *Peak Organisation for CaLD Communities*

There is a need for an adequately funded peak organisation to represent non-government community service organisations. It should work with and on behalf of CaLD communities. Such a peak body should have the capacity to effectively engage in government decision making, represent the needs and interests of CaLD communities in WA and communicate outcomes back to communities.

#### *Language and Translation Services*

Language and translation services are fundamental to new migrants being able to understand Australian culture and society, access support services and participate in the wider community. Figure 11 below indicates the national figures for the top ten countries for humanitarian arrivals in 2007-2008. It provides a snapshot of the kinds of languages new arrivals are speaking and the language services they require. The dominant languages spoken by humanitarian entrants in the previous few years include Arabic, Dhari, Bosnian, Chinese (both, Mandarin and Cantonese), Somali,

<sup>7</sup> Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Fact Sheet 60 – Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program. See <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm> and Migration Program Statistics, See <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/statistical-info/visa-grants/migrant.htm> Accessed 18 October 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.chilout.org/>

Karen, Anharic, French, Swahili, Dinka and Kirundi. While some entrants from counties on the African continent speak well established languages like English and French others do not have ready access to interpreter services. Kirundi is an example of this. It is especially difficult for people from newly arrived minority cultures to find suitable interpreters.

**Figure 11: 2007–08 Top Ten Offshore Visa Grants by Countries of Birth<sup>10</sup>**

Burma/ Myanmar	Iraq	Afghanistan	Sudan	Liberia	Congo (DRC)	Burundi	Iran	Sierra Leone	Sri Lanka
2 961	2 215	1 185	1 158	410	348	303	302	267	243

While the State government appears to have responded to the recommendations in WACOSS' 2010-2011 Pre-budget Submission, *Putting People First*, there is a continued need for investment in language and translation services. WACOSS welcomes the addition of extra Intensive English Centres (IECs) for young people who have recently arrived in Australia. The additional IECs bring the number of primary centres to eight and the number of secondary centres to six.<sup>11</sup> However, it is crucial that migrants are aware and gain access to the English language services they require. There is confusion in some CaLD communities about the extra English services that new migrants may be entitled to. For many new migrants without basic literacy and numeracy skills the 510 hours of English language tuition is inadequate. There needs to be greater awareness of the additional tuition that is available.<sup>12</sup>

The *Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008*<sup>13</sup> outlines the standard the State government expects of Government agencies in meeting the needs culturally and linguistically diverse people, to support their participation in civic affairs. The policy is a valuable tool to prevent language acting as a barrier to the participation of new migrants in West Australian society. The State government, however, needs to ensure that all government departments in human service areas such as education, health, emergency services, police, communities and child protection are committed to the policy and adequately trained and resourced to implement the policy.

Following from the requirements outlined in the WA Language Services Policy, all government agencies should be able to:

- Provide cost free interpreting and translation services to all clients seeking to access State services and State funded services operated by community agencies.
- Undertake Translating and Interpreting in migrant languages as well as Indigenous community languages.
- Gather data on what training is needed by practitioners and users of practitioners, and liaise with trainers to deliver the same.

<sup>10</sup> Data supplied by the Ethnic Communities Council of WA.

<sup>11</sup> See OMI [http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/msd\\_2010/MSD\\_Output.cfm?servicetype=14](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/msd_2010/MSD_Output.cfm?servicetype=14)

<sup>12</sup> Office of Multicultural Interests. See [http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/msd\\_2010/MSD\\_Output.cfm?servicetype=14](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/msd_2010/MSD_Output.cfm?servicetype=14)

<sup>13</sup> 2008. The Government of Western Australia, *The Western Australian Languages Services Policy 2008*. Accessed: [http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/publications/languages/language\\_services\\_2008.pdf](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/publications/languages/language_services_2008.pdf)

- Develop a bank of translated material, in particular of standard government and agency forms, but of information relating to health, legal, welfare and industrial matters also.

### *Community Development*

The State government needs to work with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to breakdown negative stereotypes. Despite WA's cultural diversity, multicultural young West Australians continue to experience racism. A national study conducted by the Foundation for Young Australians found that 80% of respondents from non-Anglo Australian backgrounds had experienced some form of racism.<sup>14</sup> Racism can be explicit or implicit. Explicit racism is often experienced by young people at school while implicit racism is felt through community attitudes and negative media depictions of people from different cultures. Experience of racism and discrimination can have a serious negative affect on individuals' mental health. It can lead to social exclusion and reduce participation in employment, education and engagement with the broader community.<sup>15</sup>

There is a need for cross-cultural training within mainstream agencies and better coordination between existing services. Government departments and agencies as well as volunteers need greater training to understand cultural sensitivities. With the increasing number of overseas born population should lead to deeper engagement with CaLD communities to facilitate greater social inclusion. At the same time there is a need for appropriate referral mechanisms to mainstream services. For example, settlement services should not try to address housing issues. Housing issues should be referred to Tenants Advice Service who have the legal knowledge of tenants' rights.

Family and domestic violence and child protection are serious issues CaLD communities and particularly for newly arrived families. Family violence can have significant implications for the successful settlement of families in WA. Cultural differences about what is appropriate and not appropriate in Australia underpin issues of domestic violence and child discipline. Community services providers and community leaders need to provide greater leadership to educate communities about what is appropriate in Australia. Child Protection authorities also need to understand cultural differences and work with families to address these issues.

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<sup>14</sup> Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN). Racism and Discrimination Policy Statement August 2010

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.