



STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

A Report on the Victorian Multicultural Commission  
Forums for Service Providers 2015



# FOREWORD

Cultural diversity is one of our state's greatest assets. As people who work directly with multicultural communities, service providers are often the catalysts for realising the great potential of our diversity.

Each day, community and health services aim to meet the needs of Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds and facilitate their full participation in Victorian society. By providing culturally appropriate services, and continually improving these supports, service providers assist to build capacity and create stronger, more cohesive Victorian communities.

To hear directly from those involved in service delivery, the Victorian Multicultural Commission facilitated consultation forums with community and health service providers and peak bodies during April – May 2015.

I am proud to present the findings of these forums in this report, *Strengthening Social Cohesion – Meeting Community Needs*, which raise significant insights for the improvement of services for our multicultural communities.

Conducted by the Commission's Research and Coordination Unit, the forums aimed to gather the voices of organisations across metropolitan and regional areas of Victoria, including holding a major event in Melbourne and two regional forums in Narre Warren and Bendigo.

The Commission sought the feedback of a wide range of service providers and peak bodies through four key topics concerned with how the delivery of services assists integration and social cohesion for multicultural communities. These topics were identified through the Commission's Regional Advisory Council meetings, previous research and consultations.

Participants contributed insights on the daily challenges of delivering services with funding insecurity and the increasing diversity of the Victorian community. Importantly, these reflections extended to ways to strengthen services and make them more accessible, inclusive and culturally appropriate for multicultural communities. Participants also shared their visions for how we might enable services to meet the complex challenges of family violence and discrimination and bias and help to build greater social cohesion.

Those who attended the forums gave generously of their time, I would like to thank the staff of each organisation for their willingness to participate and share valuable experiences in the interests of providing better service supports and building stronger communities.

*Meeting Community Needs* is the second in a suite of three reports on the findings of community consultations held by the Commission in 2014 – 15. It follows *Engaging Our Youth Our Future*, which presented the findings of consultations with young people, and precedes a final report on community forums for women, which is intended for release shortly.

The Commission is committed to continuing to work closely with our sector as experts on the frontline. I look forward to our ongoing engagement to capture insights and solutions that can improve participation for Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds and further strengthen the social fabric of our state's communities.



**Helen Kapalos**

Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

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## The VMC has adopted the following concept understandings for this report.

### Diverse and Diversity

These terms refer to people from backgrounds that are culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse and are used in this report to denote all cultural groups, including those often referred to as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).<sup>1</sup> Diverse and diversity can be considered more inclusive terms.

### Cultural Competence

A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals; enabling that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in crosscultural situations.<sup>2</sup>

### Multicultural

Australia's multicultural policy encompasses government measures designed to respond to the nation's cultural and ethnic diversity. It values cultural diversity, and enables people to practice their culture free of discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Multicultural Australia is also a powerful description of the evolution of the national identity to which we all contribute in our everyday lives.<sup>4</sup>

### Systemic Discrimination

When policy, procedure or practice caters to the majority group it can exclude marginalised and minority groups. Systemic discrimination relates to patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that form part of the structures of organisations, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for certain groups. Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*, all organisations have a legal responsibility to ensure non-discrimination in a range of areas including the way services are delivered.

The VMC has a statutory obligation to research, report and advise the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on systemic community issues relating to the objectives of the Commission in accordance with the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, s.8. This includes issues identified by regional advisory councils (RACs) or through other community consultations, relating to the adequacy of government services, settlement support or service delivery for diverse communities.

### Social Cohesion

According to Jensen (1998), social cohesion includes domains of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy. In measuring social cohesion the Scanlon Foundation uses an approach, influenced by the work of Jane Jensen and Paul Bernard, which incorporates similar domains of belonging, social justice and equity, participation, acceptance and legitimacy, and worth.<sup>5</sup>

The VMC Multicultural Forums for Service Providers utilised topics compatible with these domains in order to formulate workshop discussion questions. Forum topics were:

- Our Organisation,
- Our Clients,
- Family Violence, and
- Discrimination and Bias.

For the following additional concept understandings, please refer to **Appendix 1**:

### Access & Equity

### Asylum Seekers and Refugees

### Community

### Family Violence

### Social capital

### Social needs

### Substantive Equality

### Systemic Discrimination

1 The terms diverse and diversity are so defined under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.

2 Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989.

3 Australian Government, Department of Social Services, 2015.

4 Shergold, 2015.

5 Markus, 2014.

# GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ASLIA Vic</b>	Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association of Victoria
<b>BCHS</b>	Bendigo Community Health Services Inc.
<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and linguistically diverse
<b>CCS</b>	Complex Case Support (Humanitarian Entrants)
<b>DELWP</b>	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Victoria)
<b>DIBP</b>	Department of Immigration and Border Protection (Commonwealth)
<b>DHHS</b>	Department of Health and Human Services (Victoria)
<b>DSS</b>	Department of Social Services (Commonwealth)
<b>ECCV</b>	Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
<b>FECCA</b>	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
<b>HILDA</b>	Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey
<b>HSS</b>	Humanitarian Settlement Services
<b>ISV</b>	Islamic Society of Victoria (Preston Mosque)
<b>JRF</b>	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
<b>LCCLC</b>	Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Authority
<b>LLEN</b>	Local learning and employment network
<b>LCMS</b>	Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Service
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NDIS</b>	National Disability Insurance Scheme
<b>NEC</b>	New and emerging communities
<b>NEMBC</b>	National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council
<b>NESB</b>	Non-English speaking background
<b>NHMRC</b>	National Health and Medical Research Council
<b>RAC</b>	Regional Advisory Council (VMC)
<b>TIS</b>	Translating and Interpreting Service (National)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>VCAT</b>	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
<b>VEC</b>	Victorian Electoral Commission
<b>VEOHRC</b>	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
<b>VIRWC</b>	Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition
<b>VMC</b>	Victorian Multicultural Commission







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the findings of community consultations which the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) conducted with service providers and peak bodies during April and May 2015. Altogether, the VMC conducted a series of 21 community consultations during the period December 2014 to June 2015. This included 10 forums for young people, eight forums for women and three forums for service providers and peak bodies. A report on the forums for young people – *Engaging Our Youth Our Future* – was released in November 2015.<sup>6</sup> The final report on the forums for women is intended for release shortly.

Community consultations are a statutory function of the VMC in accordance with the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* (the Act), s.8. The VMC is also required to “promote access by Victoria’s diverse communities to services made available by governments and other bodies” (s.3). Fulfilling this function, the VMC researches, reports and advises the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on systemic community issues relating to matters identified via community consultations and regional advisory councils (RACs).

## MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The overarching theme for the VMC consultations with service provider and peak body representatives was “Strengthening Social Cohesion – Meeting Community Needs”. This theme set the context for workshop style discussions, related to social cohesion principles, and broken down into the following discussion topics:

- Our Organisation,
- Our Clients,
- Family Violence, and
- Discrimination and Bias.

Social cohesion is acknowledged as a multidimensional concept and each VMC discussion topic related directly to the factors that contribute to or disrupt social cohesion. These topics were designed to assist service providers and peak bodies to think about and discuss the ways in which the services that they deliver assist integration and social cohesion for people from diverse backgrounds.

The findings from the VMC forums also help to inform the broader discourse related to social cohesion. They will also be used to inform government policy and programs, designed to meet community needs and foster socially cohesive communities.

Representatives from a diverse range of service provider and peak body organisations attended the VMC community forums, giving generously of their time and providing useful and informed views to aid future policy and program development.

The VMC included family violence as a forum discussion topic in the knowledge that women who experience family violence are also likely to engage with community-based organisations. The dynamics of family violence are complex and multidimensional, and evidence suggests that first responses to disclosure are critical. Research shows that when women disclose family violence, be it to friends or family or services, they need an informed and supportive response, otherwise they may be reluctant to seek support again, placing them at further risk of harm.<sup>7</sup>

The Royal Commission into Family Violence was well underway at the time of the VMC service provider forums.<sup>8</sup> Thus, family violence was also a topic being discussed in the media and out in the community. The VMC has not formulated recommendations in this report that are specific to family violence due to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. In addition, the VMC is also involved in family violence initiatives designed to assist and support women from diverse backgrounds, being developed and informed by the findings from these consultations with service provider and peak body representatives.

6 A copy of this report is available on the VMC website: <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/2016/EngagingOurYouthOurFuture.pdf>.

7 Bagshaw, Chung, Couch, Lilburn, & Wadham, 2000.

8 The Royal Commission into Family Violence was established in February 2015.

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## OUR ORGANISATION

### FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Funding emerged as the most pressing issue and provided a constant challenge for service providers seeking to provide accessible and equitable community and health services to diverse communities. Service providers recognised that there were also fundamental services that ‘government must provide’, by explaining that they ‘should not be competing in the same space for funding to provide similar services that were essential’.

The Partnerships aspect related to collaborative practices, through coordinating and connecting services and clients. VMC forum participants appreciated the need to share their resources and to partner in activities, wherever possible, in order to provide clients with the highest customer service,<sup>9</sup> and to demonstrate ‘value add’ for the organisation and funders.

#### Recommendation 1 – Partnerships

Victorian Government funding models and grants programs to facilitate integrated service delivery through collaborative practice and partnership service delivery models.

### CULTURAL AWARENESS

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This key finding recognised the need for ‘getting serious’ about catering to the needs of diverse groups and communities. VMC forum participants noted that ‘structural change’ was necessary to demonstrate taking the needs of diverse communities ‘seriously’. It was suggested that ‘achieving lasting change’ required acknowledgement of ‘structural cultural bias’. Participants proposed the introduction of accountability measures to address this issue.

#### Recommendation 2 – Cultural Awareness

All Victorian Government Services and funding streams to support culturally responsive workforce development, including cultural awareness training accountability measures.

### LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

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In this key finding service providers were looking for levels of resourcing that would enable them to provide appropriate supports in order that local community leaders could assist the integration of new arrivals. This related to service providers taking responsibility, as community leaders themselves, for sourcing community support and developing initiatives to link people in to existing local communities. This included initiatives to facilitate engagement with community leaders from diverse backgrounds. It reflected a desire to build constructive relationships between service providers and community leaders, as well as facilitating the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

#### Recommendation 3 – Leadership

Resource agencies to lead in the establishment of local support networks, in order to aid the successful settlement and early integration of new arrivals and migrants in Victoria.

### EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

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Employment is important to successful settlement outcomes that also aid community participation and integration. Through regular client interaction, service providers are well versed in the barriers to employment experienced by new arrivals, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). This included the importance of English language skills that aid community integration and access to local labour markets.

#### Recommendation 4 – Employment Initiatives

Develop a Whole of Victorian Government response that promotes novel and collaborative approaches to the employment aspirations and entrepreneurial prospects available to culturally and linguistically diverse groups in Victoria.

<sup>9</sup> *The Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, requires providers of services to: take reasonable and proportionate steps to eliminate discrimination as far as possible; not to discriminate when they deliver services; and, to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities so that they can participate or access a service, including when providing information.

# OUR CLIENTS

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The two dominant key findings for *Our Clients* were interrelated – cultural competence and settlement support. Organisations acknowledged their need to understand the diversity of local populations. Settlement support needs, including funding needs, emerged as a key finding in relation to how services to clients from diverse backgrounds could be improved. VMC forum participants raised cultural competence in terms of resourcing to enable them to provide culturally appropriate responses to meeting their clients' needs.

### Recommendation 5 – Cultural Competence

The Victorian Government to assist service providers with timely information as it becomes available including cultural background information about groups to be settled in their area of responsibility, together with adequate resourcing to meet the communication needs of diverse groups and community subsets.

## SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Settlement services providers were well represented at all of the VMC service provider forums. Therefore, it was to be expected that settlement support would arise as a major theme, and related to improving settlement supports. VMC forum participants raised settlement support in the context of increased and increasing cultural diversity, and how this impacted their ability to meet client needs within current economic and funding environments.

### Recommendation 6 – Settlement Support

Strengthen settlement support infrastructure through targeted strategies that will improve social cohesion in the settlement of new and emerging communities throughout Victoria.

## INTEGRATED SERVICE PATHWAYS

Interestingly, partnering solutions were raised in forum discussions related to both 'Our Organisation' and 'Our Clients'. From an organisational aspect this related to the challenges and from a client perspective it related to improving service outcomes. With the focus on service delivery in both instances, it was not altogether surprising that these separate discussions resulted in similar partnering solutions. Partnerships therefore, were also about collaboration and recognising that no one organisation can meet all individual and/or community needs. There was also some overlap between settlement support and partnerships.

### Recommendation 7 – Integrated Service Pathways

Develop accessible and integrated pathways that enable clients to access all available services and entitlements, such as via a 'one-stop-shop'.

## ACCREDITATION

Accreditation related to labour markets and the employment needs of clients. This included the need to recognise skills and qualifications gained overseas. Service providers advised that they themselves want to access this local labour supply, in hiring bilingual workers for example. Accreditation was a small element (6%) of client related findings. However the points raised have been raised elsewhere by VMC RAC members and at other VMC community forums (by young people and women at forums in 2015).

### Recommendation 8 – Accreditation

The Victorian Government to lead nationally on processes to recognise overseas qualifications for all migrant groups, by effectively resourcing the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This recommendation commends the work of the ECCV, *Qualified but not Recognised Discussion Paper*, 2014, who recommended the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU) be adequately resourced to provide better face-to-face community level advice, assistance and networking opportunities in line with its original role.

# FAMILY VIOLENCE

Australia's national approach to preventing violence against women is through public health initiatives, with primary prevention at the heart of the approach, aimed at preventing the problem from occurring in the first place. The public health approach is encapsulated within the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, which seeks to reduce violence by improving the ways that governments work together to create a more cohesive response, to increase support for women and their children, and to create innovative and targeted ways to bring about change.

The *Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence* made recommendations to prevent the occurrence and escalation of family violence, and to build respectful family relationships. The recommendations of the *Royal Commission* were handed down on 29 March, 2016, and are far reaching. Due to the extensive nature of these recommendations the VMC has not attempted to make any recommendations of its own. The particular needs of Victoria's diverse communities and community subsets will be met by the *Royal Commission's* comprehensive recommendations.

In addition to the outcomes of the Royal Commission the *National Plan, Second Action Plan, 2013-2016*, has committed funding through actions to ensure that the needs of people from diverse communities are better considered and addressed. At the same time the VMC and the Office for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC), are working to develop tailored family violence strategies that both draw on a human rights framework, and advance culturally responsive practice.

## COORDINATED RESPONSES

Participants suggested coordinated case management that involved 'joined up' services, such as police, child health nurse, and schools coordinating the care of family members. This also entailed 'understanding myths' and 'understanding family violence in the context of different cultures', as well as taking account of the value of mentors for survivors of family violence.

Coordinated responses also included suggestions related to cultural competency and forming partnerships. This entailed government departments being more responsive to the needs of particular community subsets, not assuming a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, and being more 'inclusive' to the needs of diverse community subsets.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Funding support for community education initiatives was suggested in terms of raising community awareness. Service providers at Melbourne suggested storytelling or narratives as an effective tool in communicating constructions of violence against women and their children, in the Australian context. It was also noted that it is equally important for service providers to understand the different ways that violence against women can be perpetrated in other cultures, such as female genital mutilation, as well as through violations of human rights, such as arranged marriages. Local forums were suggested as an avenue into community social structures and a means of 'advertising' the help and support services available.

## PRIMARY PREVENTION

Participants shared information about local public health programs relative to multicultural communities. The Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Service (LCMS) for example, advised that they conduct 'confidence building' courses for men and women (separate classes) to teach respectful relationships, while also seeking to address the issue of family violence. The program attempts to empower women, and to raise levels of self-awareness in both men and women of what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour in a relationship.

The Bendigo Community Health Service Inc. (BCHS) run a program for young Afghani men, to help them to understand the 'rules of Australia', including in relation to the treatment of women. As unaccompanied humanitarian entrants, it was found that after some time, many young men would return to Afghanistan to find a wife, and bring them back to Australia. The BCHS program challenges preconceived notions about the roles within marriage.

# DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS

## INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Participants raised intercultural understanding as a means to building greater social cohesion through shared understandings, such as through opportunities to share the success stories of migrant families who contribute to local communities, and take the focus away from the 'dangerous' element', shaped through national and international reporting of terrorism and extremism, such as 'the war on terror'. Suggestions included the use of inclusive language, education and awareness raising, promoting respectful relations and providing the social supports that aid integration.

### **Recommendation 9 – Intercultural Understanding**

Promote greater intercultural understanding through strategies that create opportunities to acquire knowledge about different cultures, encourage respectful cross-cultural relations and facilitate social support networks to develop community harmony.

## REPRESENTATION

This key finding related to the right to authentic representation, particularly to counter negative media portrayals of diverse community groups and subsets. VMC forum participants also raised the need for people from diverse communities to have opportunities where they can represent and speak for themselves. This included the right for proportional representation in the workforce.

### **Recommendation 10 – Representation**

Seek to raise community awareness about the social and economic benefits to Victoria of our diverse communities.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

This key finding was about creating 'culturally safe' organisations, where service providers are appropriately equipped through cultural competency/ cultural awareness training, which participants observed ought to be a requirement, and where service providers should be accountable. There was an acknowledged underlying reluctance to use interpreters. The barriers cited related to 'unfamiliarity' with sources and choices.

### **Recommendation 11 – Cultural Competence**

Compile a directory of currently available accredited cultural competency training programs as a resource, and engage a multicultural body to coordinate compilation and update the resource as required.

### **Recommendation 12 – Cultural Competence**

Victorian Government Departments to set a high standard in service delivery to diverse communities by actively embracing accredited interpreters and translated materials to ensure that services are wholly inclusive and accessible to all Victorians, regardless of levels of English competency or skill.







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# INTRODUCTION

## CONTEXT

During the period April to May 2015, the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) carried out three regional forums with service providers and peak body representatives, at Bendigo, Central Melbourne, and Narre Warren. The VMC also simultaneously conducted multicultural forums for women at these and other locations and many female representatives attended both the women's and the service provider forums.<sup>11</sup>

The forums attracted a broad representation of service providers including representatives from:

- Victoria Police
- Community Legal Centres
- Ethnic Community Councils
- Community Health Centres
- Polaron<sup>12</sup>
- Local employment agencies
- The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)
- Lentara Uniting Care
- Safe Futures Foundation
- Local Government Authorities (LGAs)
- The Australian Greek Welfare Society
- The Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Local learning and employment networks (LLENs)

Peak body representation included the Refugee Council of Australia, Victoria Legal Aid, Catholic Care, the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC), National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council (NEMBC), and the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association of Victoria (ASLIA Vic).

*"Thank you for a place to discuss issues with different organisations."*

*Participant, Narre Warren 2015.*

Venues and locations were chosen to enable the VMC to reach a broad cross-section of representatives and gain a wide variety of perspectives. Melbourne city centre was chosen as a central location to facilitate attendance by service provider and peak body representatives from across the Melbourne metropolitan area. The City of Casey provided generous support to the VMC by hosting forums at Casey Civic Chambers, Narre Warren and Bendigo Community Health Services Inc. (BCHS) at the Bendigo Community Health Centre, Bendigo. All forums were well attended.

Operating under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* (the Act), the VMC is the voice of Victoria's multicultural communities and is the main link between them and the government. The VMC provides independent advice on multicultural affairs to inform legislative and policy frameworks, and service delivery to multicultural communities.

The VMC engages regularly with multicultural community representatives in order to be informed on all new and emerging issues that relate to policy and systemic service delivery matters affecting these communities. In addition to community forums, the VMC conducts regular consultations through its network of Regional Advisory Councils (RACs).<sup>13</sup>

*"Excellent opportunity for networking and sharing information with people committed to multicultural issues. VMC staff were great in organising forums and facilitating valuable discussion."*

*Participant, Melbourne, 2015.*

Community consultations are a statutory function of the VMC in accordance with the Act (s.8). The VMC fulfils its statutory obligations by conducting research, preparing reports and advising the Minister for Multicultural Affairs (the Minister) on systemic community issues identified by RACs and other community consultations. At RAC meetings, members provide the VMC with a regular flow of information about matters affecting local multicultural communities across Victoria, including new and emerging communities (NEC) and settlement matters.

11 A total of eight multicultural women's forums were held concurrently with the service providers forums, so that eleven forums were conducted overall during the period April-May 2015. A separate report Women's Voices Guiding Our Future will follow this report on the service provider forums.

12 Based in Melbourne, Polaron is a leading provider of language, research and project management solutions to the corporate sector.

13 In 2012, the VMC established eight Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) across the State. RACs provide advice to the VMC on settlement, multicultural affairs, service delivery and citizenship issues, advocate on behalf of multicultural communities; and promote the benefits of diversity at the local level. Each RAC has up to 13 appointed members including local residents and representatives from service providers, community organisations, businesses and local government. Each RAC meets three times per year.

All of the information gathered through consultations is duly collated and analysed to provide evidence based research and advice to the Minister, with special focus on systematic issues, community-wide settlement, and service delivery and planning issues. Ensuring that multicultural communities are regularly consulted enables the VMC to be informed on contemporary matters pertinent to policy and service delivery, and to fulfil its statutory obligation to keep the government appropriately informed.

## 1.1. Servicing Diverse Communities

Victoria is home to one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world, and is also one of the fastest growing and most diverse populations within Australia. At the time of the 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing more than a quarter (26.2%) of Victoria's population was born overseas and represented over 200 countries.<sup>14</sup>

*“The biggest challenge today is continuing services in the face of funding cuts and cost shifting.”*

*Participant, Melbourne, 2015*

People from diverse backgrounds may include recent arrivals, migrants and refugees who have lived in Australia for some time, and people whose parents or grandparents were in earlier waves of migration, sometimes referred to as second or third generation Australians.

Victoria's migration intake is predominantly skilled migrants, followed by those who have settled through family reunion. The state has also received between 30-35 per cent of Australia's total humanitarian intake; 36,399 arrivals through the humanitarian stream within the past decade.<sup>15</sup>

Some humanitarian entrants have significant and particularly complex needs that can affect their settlement experience and ability to participate in Australian society. The Complex Case Support (CCS) Program delivers specialised and intensive case management services to humanitarian entrants with exceptional needs.<sup>16</sup> The top six countries of birth for CCS clients in 2012-13 were Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan,

Myanmar (Burma), Sudan and Ethiopia. Most referrals to the CCS program come from settlement service providers, community and health organisations and government agencies (such as health services and child protection services).

*“The organisational challenge is to provide services to an increasingly diverse client base, and keep in touch with new waves of migrants.”*

*Service provider, Melbourne, 2015.*

All service providers and peak body representatives who participated in the VMC forums had experience working effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. They attended the forums in the main with a view to sharing good practice, as well as seeking to provide the Victorian Government with information about the difficulties they face in seeking to provide accessible and inclusive services to people from diverse backgrounds. Service providers told the VMC that their greatest challenge was in securing adequate and sustainable funding to maintain service levels in the face of Victoria's increasing cultural diversity.

## GLOBAL MIGRATION

In recent decades net overseas migration has consistently accounted for more than half of Victoria's population increase, adding to the vibrancy of our multicultural society and economy. The fastest rates of growth in diversity over the past two decades took place between the Censuses of 2006 and 2011, with current rates of migration projected to continue.

*“The numbers of homeless and stateless victims of globalisation grow too fast for the planning, location and construction of camps to keep them in.”*

*Zygmunt Bauman, 2007.*

14 The next ABS Census will take place on 9 August, 2016. The VMC is working closely with the ABS to ensure that people from diverse communities understand the census. The first results from the 2016 Census are to be released mid-2017.

15 Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014.

16 Many refugees and humanitarian entrants arriving in Australia share a background of traumatic experiences. Complex Case Support (CCS) provides extra help for people with complex or high needs not met by other settlement services. The Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services administers the CCS program as a specialised and intensive case management service to support humanitarian entrants.

As more recent patterns of migration indicate an increase in the range of source countries for new migrants, diversity in Victoria will continue to grow. For example, the Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2013) noted that Australia now receives more skilled migrants from source countries such as India, China, the Middle East, and West or South Asia than in the past, and more refugees from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.<sup>17</sup>

The impact of global migration is mitigated through the work of international institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The development of the international human rights system, including international treaties and conventions, has provided avenues for promoting social policy change at a national and state level.<sup>18</sup> The UN works to improve people's well-being by promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, irrespective of race, sex, language, or religion.

The UN's Millennium Development Goals have contributed to the reduction of poverty throughout the world. A new development agenda post-2015 seeks to build on this work, promoting prosperity, economic opportunity, improving social wellbeing, and providing environmental protection in improving people's lives throughout the world.<sup>19</sup>

**“Almost all migrants to Australia (85%) settle in a city of more than 100,000. Half of them settle in Sydney or Melbourne.”**

*Kelly and Donegan, 2015.*

In Victoria the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, sets out the basic rights and freedoms of all people in the state. It aims to foster a fairer, more inclusive community by requiring the Victorian Government, LGAs and other public authorities to consider human rights when they make laws, develop policies and provide services. Section 19, Cultural Rights, recognises that people can have different family, religious or cultural backgrounds; and they are able to enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion, and use their languages.

Migration has been an important contributor to Australia's social and economic development. Current Australian migration policy is focused on economic imperatives with an emphasis on skilled migrants who are more likely to be proficient in English and have tertiary qualifications.<sup>20</sup> Employment, access to and participation in labour markets can therefore be viewed as a prime focus and a measure of successful migration. Permanent migration to Australia is facilitated under three migration categories: skilled permanent migration, family reunion, and refugee or humanitarian entrants.

In keeping with our international obligations, Australia accepts predetermined numbers of humanitarian entrants. These migrants can face greater challenges in successful settlement. Statistics demonstrate that first generation humanitarian entrants experience greater unemployment and lower labour force participation than those arriving through other migration categories, and the Australia-born population.<sup>21</sup>

This may be a result of the disruptive nature of their relocation and settlement. For example, people from refugee backgrounds may have experienced living in camps or detention centres, experiences which, like long term joblessness, can be de-skilling. They may also have been unable to access education and employment opportunities pre-settlement, which can result in a lack of confidence and preparedness to enter labour markets.<sup>22</sup> Government services seek to redress these deficits in some measure through a range of settlement services. The Australian Government administers a range of settlement services, and funds settlement service providers to deliver these services, aimed at supporting refugees and newly arrived migrants. Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS), administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), provides early settlement support for refugees during the first 6 to 12 months after arrival, and up to five years overall.<sup>23</sup>

17 For settlement arrivals statistics 2014-15, Victoria see **Appendix 2** (extracted Australian Government, Department of Social Services).McClelland, 2010.

18 McClelland, 2010.

19 Adapted United Nations, Promote Sustainable Development. Accessed 27 November 2015: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/promote-sustainable-development/index.html>.

20 Thomson, 2014.

21 Hugo, 2011.

22 Ibid.

23 For the full range of settlement services refer to **Appendix 3**.

## 1.2. Multicultural Context

Few countries have been more influenced by international migration in the contemporary era than Australia.<sup>24</sup> All migrants come with expectations, and the experience of everyday life in Australia can be quite different to pre-migration imaginings and impressions. This can happen whether migration is voluntary and planned, such as through the skilled migrant intake, or when resettlement arises from a particular set of circumstances. Refugees and humanitarian migrants, for example, may have had little time to prepare, having been informed of the country of destination and travel arrangements at short notice. As a result they may arrive with mixed emotions; relieved at the offer of a safe destination, but still traumatised and perhaps largely unprepared for the transition to life in Australia.

**“For an age of unprecedented mass displacement, we need an unprecedented humanitarian response and a renewed global commitment to tolerance and protection for people fleeing conflict and persecution.”**

*António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015.*

Bauman (2012), described the plight of refugees as a ‘double bind’ writing that, “they are expelled by force or frightened into fleeing their native countries, but refused entry to another.” In effect, he said, they “lose their place on earth.” The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015) reported that an estimated 13.9 million individuals were newly displaced due to conflict or persecution in 2014.<sup>25</sup> The annual total was 59.5 million displaced persons worldwide – a number similar to the population of Italy and large enough to form the 24th largest country. Indeed, large enough to be described by the UNHCR as a ‘nation of the displaced’.<sup>26</sup>

Children aged 18 years and under constituted 51% of the refugee population in 2014. The number of asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied or separated children in 2014 was around 34,300, mainly by Afghan, Eritrean, Syrian, and Somali children; the highest number on record since the UNHCR started collecting such data in 2006.

The main acceleration of displaced persons has emanated from the escalation of war in Syria, currently the world’s largest driver of displacement. The UNHCR maintains that resettlement, involving the relocation of refugees from an asylum country to a third country, is the only durable solution to the problem.<sup>27</sup>

**“Multiculturalism has proved a particularly durable framework for successfully settling newcomers.”**

*Paul Smyth, 2010.*

Under the Humanitarian Program, Australia accepted 11,600 persons in 2014, and 13,750 persons in 2015. In September 2015, the Australian Government announced that it would provide 12,000 additional humanitarian places in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. These 12,000 people are also to be granted a permanent visa. The first families to be granted visas arrived in Perth on 16 November 2015. Australia also provided support to more than 240,000 Syrian and Iraqi people who were forced to flee their homes or seek refuge in neighbouring countries.<sup>28</sup>

Australia’s approach to the settlement of migrants and humanitarian entrants includes providing support based on need, fostering participation in Australian society as soon as possible, fostering welcoming communities and drawing on the valuable skills and expertise of civil society to provide services and support.<sup>29</sup> All people resettled under the humanitarian program are eligible to access healthcare (Medicare), income support payments, English language tuition, torture and trauma counselling and settlement services.

24 Feist, Tan, McDougall, & Hugo, 2015.

25 UNHCR data presented based on information available as of 8 May 2015.

26 Displaced persons include refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees (refugees and IDPs), stateless persons, and others of concern to UNHCR by country/territory of asylum.

27 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015.

28 Department of Social Services, Settlement and Multicultural Affairs. Accessed 25 November 2015: <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs-programs-policy/syrian-iraqi-humanitarian-crisis>

29 Ibid.

The UNHCR suggests that local integration is realised only when refugees are fully integrated as members of the host community through legal, economic, social, and cultural processes. Further, that local integration places obligations on both refugees and host governments, to live up to the norms, rules, and regulations of the host country.

This approach to local integration accords with Australia's commitment to a multicultural future and its aims. The national multicultural policy encompasses government measures designed to respond to the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Australia. It is an approach to acculturation that values cultural diversity, and enables people to practice their culture free of discrimination.

It is not assimilation which is based on the belief that ethnic groups should 'blend in with the mainstream culture'. Similarly, the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* recognises that all Victorians come from diverse backgrounds, and values the richness that such diversity brings to the Victorian community.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.3. Settlement Challenges

Many of the service providers who attended the VMC forums were providers of settlement services. Community health centres, LLENs and LGAs provide services for multicultural communities within their local region, and others might service a particular need for a particular population, i.e. the Australian Greek Welfare Society. Principles of access and equity are central to providing services that meet the needs of diverse groups, in a way that is wholly inclusive and assists people to fully participate in the life of their local community and economy.

**"I believe one of the greatest challenges for our political leaders is to ensure that counter-terrorist measures do not diminish our humanity for asylum seekers fleeing conflict and discrimination."**

*Professor Gillian Triggs, Human Rights Awards speech, December 2015.*

Responding sensitively to people's needs can be a first step in practitioner's developing cultural knowledge and acquiring the necessary skills to interact on a culturally sensitive basis with clients from multicultural backgrounds. Gaining cultural competency can also be an ongoing process. Although every interaction with people from different cultures should be viewed as a learning experience, initial research or training that enables service providers to be appropriately equipped is preferable.<sup>31</sup>

Understanding the impact of the migration experience and the settlement process is therefore important to ensuring effective intervention when working with people from multicultural backgrounds, particularly NEC. The literature identifies certain stressors, associated with the migration and settlement experience that place people under significant pressure. The common stressors for migrants can include:

- the loss of support systems and networks, such as extended family and friends,
- making decisions about where to live, and the need to find suitable housing,
- accessing labour markets,
- financial stress, due to unemployment or underemployment,
- seeking to understand systems and practices, significantly different from their country of origin, and
- having to learn a new language.<sup>32</sup>

The literature also identifies a range of stages that migrants experience when adapting to life in their new country.<sup>33</sup> The time period and the ways in which different people experience these stages can vary. The stages include:

- a *honeymoon* phase: a period marked by high expectations and a positive outlook which can last from a month to a year,
- a *frustration* phase: a period of dissatisfaction with a realisation of unmet expectations and of problem-solving/coping strategies which are no longer effective; a vulnerable phase which may also be marked by anger, frustration and withdrawal and can last from 2-5 years; the role of professionals in assisting adjustment is important,<sup>34</sup>

30 For greater detail of the national and Victorian approaches to multiculturalism refer to **Appendix 4**.

31 Queensland Government Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, 2010.

32 Ibid.

33 Lynch & Hanson, 2004.

34 Babacan & Gopalkrishnan, 2005.

- a *coping* phase: which follows the honeymoon and frustration stages, in which trust in the new society begins to emerge, together with the learning of new norms about the new society, even if the person is not altogether comfortable with them, and
- lastly an *adjustment* phase: in which the person begins to function effectively and comfortably, having developed better understanding of the new cultural environment and a sense of belonging to it.

## ROLE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Local communities have a substantial role to play in assisting the successful integration of diverse migrant groups. In its longitudinal survey of new and established resident groups the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) found that the characteristics of the local neighbourhood are very important factors in terms of life satisfaction, for both men and women. The survey reported that neighbours helping out and doing things together have large positive effects on life satisfaction.<sup>35</sup>

“Social interactions produce and distribute social value (both positive and negative) because the need to communicate and cooperate in groups and communities requires emotional support, interpersonal esteem (or respect) and the sense of belonging (or membership).”

*Bill Jordan, 2010*

The findings are similar to those made by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) in the United Kingdom who found that ‘attachment to place’ can function as important emotional ‘glue’ which fosters kindness.<sup>36</sup> This research recognised that communities also need to be able to evolve, so that people can cultivate the sociability associated with neighbourliness. Importantly, it also noted the need to strike an appropriate balance between people feeling free to express vulnerability by asking for help, while maintaining their dignity.

The JRF study noted that an environment of neighbourliness is characterised by people’s awareness of each other, by a respect for each other’s privacy and by a readiness to take action if help is needed. Apparently, people had reported feeling that they had to present as capable and independent in order to maintain their dignity. However, if people were able to retain a sense of personal independence and dignity they were more likely to ask for and accept help. It was through general conversations and activities that people were provided with opportunities to express their needs indirectly, and maintain their dignity.<sup>37</sup>

In creating an environment of neighbourliness and assisting newcomers to integrate, the value of public events cannot be understated. Local multicultural events reflect an openness and general ‘invitation to belong’ for diverse groups and community subsets. The value of this type of event is that it helps to progress understanding and inclusion by raising awareness of other cultures and shared celebrations, in an atmosphere of openness that also promotes a sense of belonging. Such occasions provide participants with a shared focus for discussion, and facilitate thoughtfulness in local neighbourhoods and communities. This, in turn, gives a sense of cohesion by also providing overlapping social networks.<sup>38</sup>

## CAPACITY BUILDING

The VMC asked service providers and peak body representatives about their organisational needs and their ability to service clients in the face of current migration trends – with increasingly diverse source countries, and constrained funding environments. This was in order to formulate recommendations that would respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse client base, as well as the organisational needs to meet the expanding client base. The VMC was provided with feedback, especially in relation to resourcing and the viability of continuing to meet the basic needs of clients, within current funding environments.

The needs of different cohorts vary and these needs also impact levels of social capital. For example, new arrivals have more immediate needs than clients from more settled community subsets. Being dependent on insecure rental accommodation for instance, creates further impacts for lower socio-economic groups, causing them to be more mobile, which in turn creates lower levels of social capital.

<sup>35</sup> Wilkins, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Allen, Spandler, Prendergast, & Froggett, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Those in more settled communities, homeowners for example, with more secure housing, are likely to display higher levels of social capital.<sup>39</sup> According to Putnam (2000), measures of informal social connections that contribute to social capital include activities such as playing sports and entertaining at home. Activities that build social capital therefore, are generally more accessible to existing residents.

**“We dream of a reliable world, one we can trust. A secure world.”**

*Zygmunt Bauman, 2012.*

One service provider suggested that linking new arrivals into existing communities by facilitating introductions and providing greater access to network groups, would also improve access to services by creating broader awareness of available services. Forum participants told the VMC that the general approach taken by service providers is to foster and support self-reliance. AMES Australia provides settlement services, operating from a strengths-based model, which recognises that clients have their own strengths and are “professionals of their own lives”.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the focus is on improving people’s lives through the processes of settlement.

## PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION

Access to labour markets and paid work is vital to successful settlement and integration to the community. Meaningful and financially rewarding employment aids social inclusion at the individual and community level, and social cohesion at a societal level. A study by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003), found that employment and a regular income, together with stable housing, were factors that were important in helping refugees re-establish what they considered ‘a normal life’. However, studies have also demonstrated that labour market outcomes for humanitarian migrants were not as good as those of skilled or family entrants.<sup>41</sup>

**“Cost is a barrier to disadvantaged groups to be able to participate. For example childcare cost discourages further education and employment opportunities.”**

*Participant, Narre Warren, 2015.*

Due to these circumstances, refugees may be reliant upon government income support in early settlement, but statistics demonstrate this reliance tends to fall during the first three and a half years in Australia.<sup>42</sup> Migrants often experience a transition period during the settlement process in which they may be required to take lesser jobs out of necessity, despite possessing a variety of skills, experience and qualification. AMES has reported that new arrivals often take jobs in cleaning, retail, and domestic help in instances where other community groups may not.<sup>43</sup>

In their study of social inequality, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) considered income inequality as both an indicator and a determinant of the scale of social stratification in a society, describing social stratification as “fundamental orderings based on power and coercion, and privileged access to resources.” They suggested that social stratification affects health and numerous social outcomes at the broad level of society. The qualities they used to measure social stratification were similar to those used by the Scanlon Foundation (2015) to measure social cohesion.

Social stratification was measured by the qualities of social relationships, such as trust, social capital and hostility and racism.<sup>44</sup> In their findings, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) associated income inequality with social corrosion, noting that “the scale of income differences has a powerful effect on how we relate to one another.”

**Figure 1** illustrates income inequality.

**Income inequality** relates to how much income is received by a person or household.

In terms of average income a person in the *highest* income group has around **five times** as much income as somebody in the *lowest* income group.

The people most likely to be found in the *lowest* income group include:

- older people,
- sole parents and single people,
- people without paid work, and
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

39 DiPasquale & Glaeser, 1999.

40 Thomson, 2014.

41 Cobb-Clark, 2006.

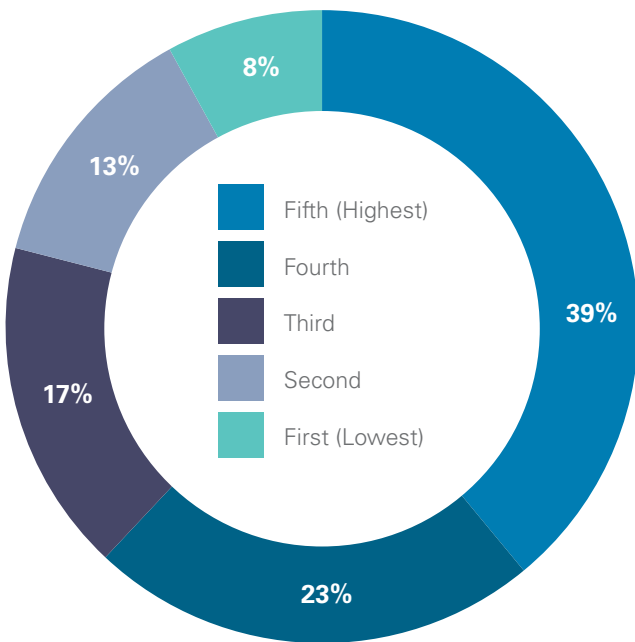
42 Vandenheuval & Wooden, 1999.

43 Thomson, 2014.

44 Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010.



**Figure 1: Distribution of Income over Quintiles in Australia**



Source: ACOSS *Inequality in Australia Factsheet 2015*

Note: A quintile is a statistical value representing 20% of the population.

Another way to measure social relationships is by utilising the social cohesion domains of belonging, social justice and equity, participation, acceptance and legitimacy, and worth.<sup>45</sup> There is convergence however, in indicators of social stratification and social cohesion, especially in terms of trust and social capital, while hostility and racism have clear implications for belonging, social justice and equity.

Certain factors can also contribute to the vulnerability of particular groups experiencing disadvantage, especially those from non-English speaking background (NESB). The disadvantages which can impact on people's ability to participate and to engage in the community include low skills, low income, poor health and lack of access to services.<sup>46</sup>

Factors contributing to added vulnerability include:

- disrupted education or employment opportunities as a result of displacement,
- having low economic resources,
- poor English skills and literacy,
- being disconnected from friends and family,
- having ongoing health conditions caused by deprivation or torture and trauma, and
- feeling unsafe in the community as a result of lack of tolerance of diversity.<sup>47</sup>

The impact of experiencing disadvantage therefore affects a person's ability to participate, including social outcomes – at individual agency level and at community level – impacting measures of social inclusion and social cohesion. However, the effects of disadvantage can be alleviated by the provision of timely, accessible and appropriate services that meet the needs of individuals and families, and assist in building community resilience.

Research shows that services and clients interact in reciprocal ways, learning from one another. AMES has concluded that new migrants are not passive bystanders, but actively use their agency, demonstrating high levels of ingenuity and resilience to create a new life for themselves and their families.<sup>48</sup>

Being able to capitalise on agency therefore, is an important aspect to supporting self-management in the longer term, by helping people to help themselves through timely involvement. Thus, the interactions that service providers have with their clients are vitally important - in the types of services and support provided, and especially in the ways people are treated. To be respectful, services should be delivered in both a strengths-based and culturally responsive manner reflecting the dignity and integrity of the individual client.

These are principles relevant to all aspects of service delivery, and especially important for those most disadvantaged groups, including newly arrived migrants and refugees.<sup>49</sup> Further, services should also support the important positive relationships that are formed between professional staff and clients.

## PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Supporting people to act, to use their own agency, entails service provision that is people centred, and focuses on human agency and social opportunity.<sup>50</sup>

Agency is also a key concept of the 'capability approach' advocated by Sen (1999), who understood it, as the capacity to act and bring about change. The capability approach has been important in debates about the nature of social inequality and relative poverty.<sup>51</sup> The capability approach is also useful in articulating the language of human rights. Nussbaum (2003), argued that "capabilities give important precision and supplementation to the language of rights"; and thus secure rights in areas of social justice. This means putting people in a position of capability to function in that area.<sup>52</sup>

45 Markus, 2015.

46 Australian Government Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2011.

47 Ibid.

48 Thomson, 2014.

49 Australian Government Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2011.

50 Drèze & Sen, 2002.

51 Dean, 2009.

52 Nussbaum, 2003.

“Income may be the most prominent means of a good life without deprivation, but it is not the only influence in the life we can lead.”

*Amartya Sen, 2000.*

The concepts of capabilities and agency freedom were developed as important ideas when thinking about the purpose of economic and social development.<sup>53</sup> Sen argued that poverty or disadvantage was an objective curtailment of a person’s capabilities – “of her capacity and freedom to choose and to act.”<sup>54</sup> The aim of the approach is to evaluate what people are able to be and to do, and a central aspect to realising this aim is having the freedom to make decisions in matters that affect their lives. This includes the freedom, or social right, to hold others to account.<sup>55</sup> Sen also argued that it was important to focus on what people can ‘actually do’ – the substantive freedoms that they have. In marrying this to the language of rights Nussbaum (2003) argued that, “we should not grant that the society is just, unless the capabilities have been affectively achieved”

The capability approach contains three central concepts – functioning, capability and agency:

- a *functioning* is being or doing what people value and have reason to value,
- a *capability* is a person’s freedom to enjoy various functionings; to be or do things that contribute to their wellbeing, and
- *agency* is a person’s ability to pursue and realise goals she values and has reason to value.<sup>56</sup>

Agency is an important notion in evaluating “what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important.”<sup>57</sup> The substantive role of freedom – what people can ‘actually do’ – focuses attention on social development and the value of empowerment and responsibility.<sup>58</sup>

Having the freedom to make certain choices also depends on the circumstances that people find themselves in and the resources available to them.

The public policy imperatives which emanate from such a standpoint must relate to the values, priorities and trade-offs that build an environment that is conducive for people to flourish. The key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand people’s capabilities – “their freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing and being.”<sup>59</sup>

The policy principles, relating to the provision of services and human development, to support this aim include:

- *Equity*: seeking equity in the space of people’s freedom to live valuable lives. Equity draws attention to those who have unequal opportunities due to various disadvantages, who may require special measures to enable them to have the same level of capabilities.
- *Efficiency*: the optimal use of existing resources to expand capabilities for individuals and communities.
- *Participation and empowerment*: involving the processes in which people act as agents, individually and as groups. This principle implies that people need to be involved at every stage, not merely as beneficiaries but as agents who are able to pursue and realise goals that they value.
- *Sustainability*: advancing human development such that outcomes progress in all spheres – social, political, financial – endures over time. Cultural liberty and respect for diversity are important values that can contribute to socially-sustainable progress.

## 1.4. Meeting Community Needs

An initiative of the VMC, the Multicultural Forums for Service Providers and Peak Bodies (the forums) were conducted in a workshop format, designed to facilitate contributions from all participants. The services represented involved professionals working with diverse client groups that included recent arrivals, humanitarian refugees, asylum seekers, second and third generation migrants and people with refugee ancestry.<sup>60</sup>

53 Sen, 2001.

54 Dean, Bonvin, Vielle, & Farvaque, 2005.

55 Alkire & Deneulin, 2009.

56 Ibid.

57 Sen, 1985.

58 Deneulin, 2009.

59 Sen, 1992.

60 Having at least one parent from a refugee background.

The overarching theme for the consultations was *Strengthening Social Cohesion – Meeting Community Needs*. The theme was broken down into four broad discussion topics, each with two overarching discussion questions. The first question was designed to identify the challenges related to that topic, and the second question sought solutions to the challenges identified. The outcomes of the discussions have been used to inform the key findings and recommendations of this report.

The aim of the discussions was twofold:

- to clarify organisational needs by identifying the issues facing organisations in seeking to provide their services to a diverse client base; and
- to ascertain opportunities for intervention by gaining organisational perspectives with a view to better understanding client interactions.

Incorporated within these aims was the means to identify client related needs that may not fall within the scope of a particular service. Thus, the ability to identify ways in which these issues arose, and how pathways were facilitated in terms of linking clients in to other more appropriate services. For example, through case management, client and service provider develop a rapport and a measure of trust, and within such trusted relationships, instances of family violence may be disclosed.

**“The challenge is to integrate newcomers to Bendigo into services and programs. Building cultural intelligence within the first 5 years is important.”**

*Bendigo Community Health Services Inc.,  
VMC Forum Bendigo 2015*

At the Bendigo forum for instance, the TAFE representative informed the VMC that, ‘having built a level of trust’, students were more likely to disclose family violence to a teacher within the confines of the relationship. This had happened and students were provided with support and triage.

Therefore, the forums sought to also gauge how service providers are faring in attending, not only to the presenting client issues, but also the underlying contexts that may emerge. The Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS) advised the VMC that they

had identified particular needs in relation to young unaccompanied Afghani men regarding the need to understand respectful relationships in the Australian context. As a result of being attentive to this underlying context, BCHS now integrates respectful relationships and human rights information training into all of their programs.

The ways through which persons arrive can also affect their settlement experience. There are three main humanitarian entrant groups – offshore; maritime arrivals; and onshore entrants.<sup>61</sup> Meeting the needs of new arrivals can be especially challenging due to migration histories, especially for humanitarian entrants whose journeys are not always straightforward. The differences of interest that affect the various groups are varied and include the following:

- the range and level of services available,
- pre-settlement experiences, including period spent in detention (centre or community detention), and
- circumstances surrounding the entry pathway, such as:
  - the ranges of background vulnerability and individual experiences (the levels of trauma, time spent in refugee camps pre-settlement), and
  - the time spent in Australia by onshore entrants before entering the humanitarian stream (e.g. international students unable to return due to political problems emerging in their home country).<sup>62</sup>

Discussions arising at the forums consequently sought to tease out some of the complexity around the needs of new arrivals, and those of more established communities. Earlier waves of refugees will have made settlement progress, but may also continue to face difficulties in the community, through constrained labour or housing markets for example.

Newly arrived humanitarian entrants require intensive settlement supports, including on-arrival assistance, case coordination, accommodation services and short term trauma counselling. These services are provided through the Australian Government’s Settlement Services Activity Grants Program. Funding is provided for a range of settlement services that include coordinating support services, casework, information, advice and advocacy, referrals to mainstream services, and support for ethno-specific communities.

61 *Offshore* – denotes those arriving through offshore based resettlement schemes such as referrals from the UNHCR; *Irregular maritime arrivals/IMA* – denotes those arriving by boat without visas; and *onshore* – denotes those who arrive on other visa classes and then seek asylum. The current DIBP administration uses the term *Non Illegal maritime arrivals* (non-IMA) to distinguish applications for asylum by people who originally arrived by air, and *Illegal maritime arrivals* (IMA) to denote people who arrived in Australia by sea and screened into a refugee status determination process.

62 Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012.

“Government wants to see organisations support each other and work together. They should also allocate a chunk of funds to diversity to link services, education, and diverse organisations.”

*Participant, Bendigo, 2015.*

This assistance is available for newly arrived humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants in their first five years of life in Australia. The focus is on supporting self-reliance, fostering social participation, economic wellbeing, personal wellbeing and community connectedness to assist migrants to participate equitably in Australian society.<sup>63</sup>

Forum discussion topics and questions are outlined in **Table 1**. Participants selected the topic(s) of most interest to them. Each forum discussed exactly the same questions under each topic.

The forums were also supplemented with an online survey which extended the reach of the consultations to invitees unable to attend a forum. The survey information complimented the forum data and 24 responses were received. In order to maintain consistency in the final analysis, survey questions were aligned closely to the forum questions.

The questions designed as discussion starters for forums, were not wholly transferable to an online survey questionnaire, where short brief questions work better for more immediate responses. This meant that the nuanced information gained through the forum discussions was not replicated in the online questionnaire. However, the online survey did elicit some useful qualitative data and this has been used in charts to further illustrate certain discussion points.

**Table 1 – VMC Service Provider Topics and Questions**

TOPIC	QUESTIONS
<b>Your Organisation</b>	What challenges does your agency/organisation face? In your experience what are/were the most successful policy or program initiatives?
<b>Your Clients</b>	How do you ensure culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive service delivery? How can services to CALD communities be improved?
<b>Family Violence</b>	Do clients report incidents of family violence to your organisation? Under reporting and barriers to disclosure of family violence are significant issues especially in CALD communities. Discuss why.
<b>Discrimination and Bias</b>	What experiences of discrimination are reported to your agency? What do you think can be done to reduce acts of discrimination and bias?

## THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides detailed findings of the challenges that service providers face in meeting the needs of clients from diverse backgrounds, including NEC in Victoria.

The report structure adheres to the forum topics discussed at the forums, and provides information on discussion outcomes.

The views of participants are drawn together to formulate the key findings and recommendations.

- Section 2 – organisational themes
- Section 3 – client base themes
- Section 4 – family violence
- Section 5 – discrimination and bias

<sup>63</sup> Australian Government Department of Social Services, *Settlement Services Guidelines Overview* (2015), Accessed 23 February, 2016: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/09\\_2015/families-and-communities-settlement-services-programme-guidelines.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/09_2015/families-and-communities-settlement-services-programme-guidelines.pdf).





2

## OUR ORGANISATION

## 2.1. Overview

The VMC regularly consults communities in order to fulfil its objectives and functions under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* (the Act). In addition to consulting service providers, the VMC also conducted ten forums for young people and eight forums for women in 2014-2015. The following objectives illustrate the role of the VMC in consulting communities, especially in relation to service providers.

The objectives of the VMC relating to the provision and accessibility of services for diverse communities include to:

- promote full participation by Victoria's diverse communities in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria,
- promote access by Victoria's diverse communities to services made available by governments and other bodies, and
- promote a better understanding of Victoria's diverse communities.

Similarly, the functions of the VMC include responsibility to:

- research, report and advise the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on systemic community issues relating to the VMC objectives, including those that relate to the adequacy of government services, settlement support or service delivery for diverse communities, and
- advise the Minister on factors inhibiting the development of harmonious community relations and on barriers to the participation of Victoria's diverse communities in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria.

Recent migration trends to Victoria indicate an increase in the range of source countries for new migrants. Such a growth in diversity has an impact upon the ability of service providers to meet the needs of all groups and community subsets. A major finding of the VMC consultations was that service providers are competing for similar 'pools' of money, but with greater diversity in terms of client base, and with significantly greater levels of need.

Participants told the VMC that, not only have funding streams not kept pace with the needs of the communities that they serve, but that more of them are competing for the same types of funding or the same 'pool of money'. The VMC learned that as a result of these factors many successful pilot schemes were

not picked up despite gaining traction and changing lives. Once the short period of funding concluded, the program would also conclude, before a new client cohort could benefit.

**"I came to the forum because I have a passion and interest in reducing discrimination and improving services to CALD communities."**

*Participant, Melbourne, 2015*

Related to this was the time invested in completing funding applications, and acquittals when successful. Participants told the VMC that the time required, and experience in making applications, were two major factors that were distractions from the actual expertise or work of the organisation. The labour intensive nature of the applications process and the need to make additional and continual applications to ensure a service or program could run, proved prejudicial to the provision of services and affected clients. While participants understood the nature of being accountable for public monies, feedback to the VMC was that these application and acquittal processes were not the best use of their resources.

**"More than half (53%) of all refugees worldwide came from just three countries: the Syrian Arab Republic (3.88M), Afghanistan (2.59M), and Somalia (1.11M)."**

*UNHCR, 2015*

Service providers added that, in their opinion, there were some fundamental services that 'government must provide'. They explained that they should not be competing in the same space for funding to provide similar services that were considered essential. This seemed to also arise in light of the service needs of new arrivals, such as the intensive support that is generally provided in the initial six months for new arrivals.<sup>64</sup> Participants told the VMC that the need for 'health education and information' was 'ongoing for all newcomers', explaining the nature of these client needs, which were not only immediate on arrival, but necessary in the longer term. This stems from the emergence of associated trauma down the track, and or the lack of knowledge about services available to help.

<sup>64</sup> McDonald, Gifford, Webster, Wiseman, & Casey, 2008.



When constructing funding streams and programs, the short term availability can be useful for targeted community interventions and services. However, for those more significant services and programs that can assist in building social capital and develop socially cohesive local communities, longer term thinking and funding is more productive.

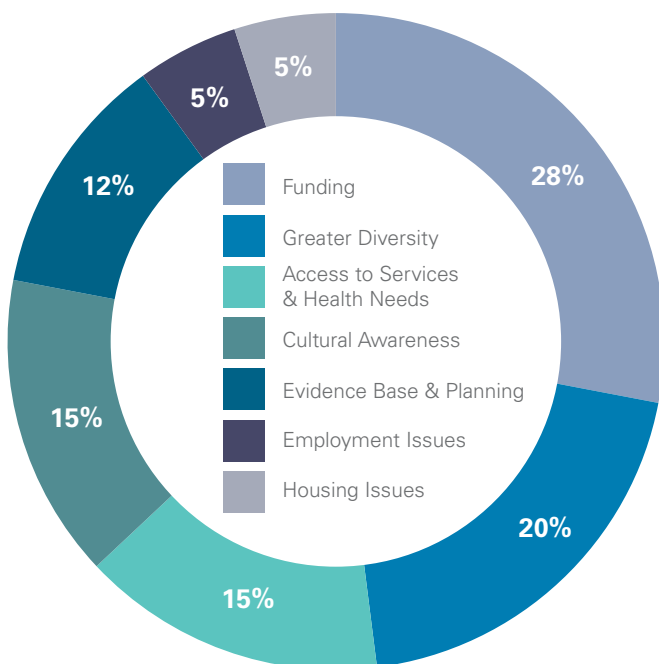
## 2.2 Current Challenges

Service providers and peak body representatives were asked about the challenges facing their organisations and, in a bid to identify any emerging trends, whether these challenges were different now than five years ago. The VMC discussion questions were:

- What challenges does your agency/organisation face?
- Are challenges different now to five years ago?

Participants discussed the challenges from their respective professional viewpoints, reflecting on their organisational needs and planning, and how this in turn can impact upon their ability to provide the services required by clients. Service providers and peak body representatives told the VMC that improving the equity and effectiveness of services is a major challenge in current funding environments. They expressed the view that they are expected to do more with less – ‘more productivity expected with less funds, and without dropping services’.

**Figure 2: Service Provider Current Challenges**



Forum participants told the VMC that the challenges of operating within current constrained funding environments impacted organisational abilities to meet the needs of diverse client groups. Participants further explained that this impacts upon the well-being and social cohesion of the communities they serve.

Funding was the most pressing issue and proved to be a constant challenge for service providers across Victoria in seeking to provide accessible and equitable community and health services to diverse communities. Participants from BCHS advised the VMC that integrating new arrivals into services and programs was a real challenge, as cohorts of new individuals and cultural groups arrived.

Many of the challenges raised by service providers related to NEC. The UNHCR (2012), advised that current trends in the forced displacement of people are testing the international system like never before, and that global social and economic trends indicate that the displacement will continue to grow in the next decade, taking on new and different forms.

The 1951 Refugee Convention established the scope of state responsibility towards refugees, and resettlement is an important means by which states can share responsibility. The UNHCR (2012) noted that, while there is ‘no legal obligation for states to participate in resettlement’, it is however, ‘an instrument of responsibility sharing’.

Adapting to the laws, customs and social standards of a new society can be confusing for new arrivals, and service providers assist clients by explaining the monetary, regulatory, medical, education and employment systems to support settlement.

**Table 2** summarises the issues faced by organisations and raised by participating service providers and peak bodies at the VMC forums.

**Table 2 – Current Challenges Facing Service Providers**

<p><b>Funding Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'little funding, time consuming writing grant applications'</li> <li>• 'more productivity expected with less funds, without dropping (compromising) services'</li> <li>• 'maintaining funding is a challenge'</li> <li>• 'lack of funding'</li> <li>• 'funding, relying on donations, grants'</li> <li>• 'more funding' needed</li> <li>• 'funding cuts – cost shifting'</li> <li>• 'funding – too many organisations vying for funding'</li> <li>• 'applying for grants'</li> <li>• funding should be linked to diversity – funds to link services to education to diverse organisations and programs to ensure continuity</li> <li>• service provision is scarce when funding is scarce</li> </ul>
<p><b>Greater Diversity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 'challenge is to integrate newcomers to Bendigo into services and programs - building cultural intelligence is important within first 5 years'</li> <li>• 'identifying discriminatory issues'</li> <li>• services need information about the diversity of new arrivals to be able to prepare and respond appropriately - disseminating information (Governments need to share information that enables services to plan ahead)</li> <li>• 'bringing diverse communities together in work and networking'</li> <li>• 'high reliance' of newcomers differs from earlier migrant waves<sup>65</sup></li> <li>• 'very diverse community to provide services for'</li> <li>• challenge is 'services keeping in touch with waves of migrants'</li> <li>• 'difficult conversation around the building of a mosque (Bendigo) – anti-mosque movement opened up conversations'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to Services and Health Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health effects: 'changed diet in settling communities affects health; BCHS identified 19 out of 21 women (from NESB) at risk of diabetes through weight gain'</li> <li>• 'increase in service demand, insufficient staff, resources'</li> <li>• 'understanding health of refugees' and 'effect on people post-detention' (after years in camps and or detention)</li> <li>• 'health education and information program needs ongoing for all newcomers'</li> <li>• 'online forms generally in English and not accessible'</li> <li>• 'forms from government are lengthy and not CALD appropriate'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural Awareness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'identifying discriminatory issues' related to greater diversity</li> <li>• 'cultural competence' (of organisation)</li> <li>• 'good integration of Karen people into the services as providers/workers' (Bendigo)</li> <li>• 'use the Koori strategy as a model for diversity'</li> <li>• need to identify unconscious bias and structural cultural bias</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence Base and Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'capacity building and building connections with agencies'</li> <li>• 'evidence based approach'</li> <li>• 'resources to identify barriers'</li> <li>• 'sustainability of community services'</li> <li>• 'collecting and collating data to support service delivery'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employment Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'migrants have no referrals, their skills and qualifications not recognised'</li> <li>• employment opportunities and information about work rights</li> </ul>
<p><b>Housing Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• housing needs</li> <li>• 'housing costs, applications'</li> </ul>

<sup>65</sup> Due to pre-settlement journeys new arrivals may have experienced significant trauma, following violence and torture, the impacts of refugee camps, and the impact of detention before re-settlement in a local community.

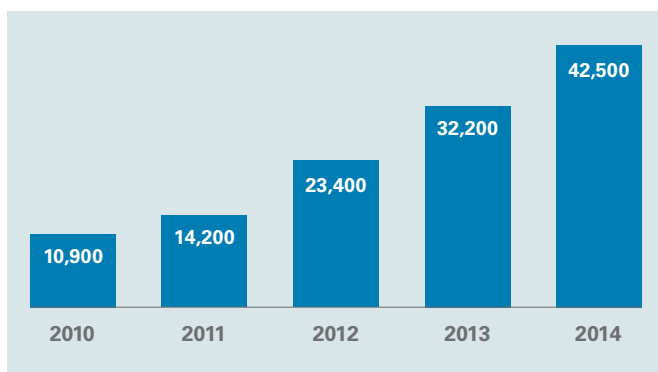
## Providing Services to Diverse Communities

What happens on the global stage reappears inside the local arena as distant influences impinge on personal lives and daily activities.<sup>66</sup> Service providers in Victoria are dealing with the outcome of events in other parts of the globe. The UNHCR (2015), reported that, during the period 2010-2014, the number of individuals forced to leave their homes each day due to conflict and persecution increased four-fold globally.

In 2014 alone, conflict and persecution forced an average of 42,500 individuals each day to leave their homes and seek protection elsewhere, either within the borders of their own country or in other countries. The repercussion of these patterns of forced displacement at the global level, is a trickle-down effect, to nearby states as a first point of refuge and through re-settlement programs to states across the world that share the responsibility.

During the year, the UNHCR submitted 103,800 refugees to states for resettlement. According to the statistics, 26 countries admitted 105,200 refugees for resettlement during 2014 (with or without UNHCR's assistance). The United States of America admitted the highest number (73,000), Canada (12,300), and Australia (11,600).<sup>67</sup>

**Figure 3: Displaced Persons Per Day Worldwide**



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2014

Since 2005, the Australian Government has been actively seeking to settle new arrivals (migrants and humanitarian entrants) in regional and rural areas, in part due to concerns about the long-term viability of these communities.<sup>68</sup> In Victoria, this has occurred alongside an increasing trend toward the secondary migration of refugee families that initially settled in metropolitan Melbourne.

Service providers advised the VMC that 'understanding the health needs of refugees' was particularly important. They told the VMC that they were familiar with the effects to clients, of pre-settlement such as torture and trauma, and the impacts of refugee camps and later detention experiences. Participants advised that the 'effect on people post-detention', raised challenging issues for them to deal with as service providers. The health status of refugees (physical and mental health) can be severely impaired prior to and during the journey to eventual safety and security.

According to the literature, maximising the success of refugee programs requires that resettlement and relocation policies and strategies need to be informed by a commitment to the long-term sustainability of refugee communities.<sup>69</sup> This aspect was confirmed by forum participants who advised that the 'increase in service demand' that results from the resettlement of migrants and refugees in the regions is not reflected in funding programs and streams.

Some participants attended with a view to being proactive and finding out the issues that services were facing in adjoining regions. Officers from the Aged and Disability services at Moorabool Shire Council attended at the Bendigo forum. They advised the VMC that the shire is 'slowly becoming multicultural', and that Council wants to 'be prepared for a time when diversity increases in the region'.

Moorabool Shire is a fast-growing semi-rural municipality nestled between Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. It is a popular tree change destination, reflecting the diversity of earlier migrant waves – German, Dutch and Italian - with few however, in terms of new migrant groups. Despite Commonwealth preferences to settle migrants in rural and regional Victoria there are many LGAs similar to Moorabool who may be feeling ill-equipped to handle growing diversity.

"A refugee is someone who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

*The 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR*

66 Giddens, 1991.

67 UNHCR, 2015.

68 McDonald, Gifford, Webster, Wiseman, & Casey, 2008.

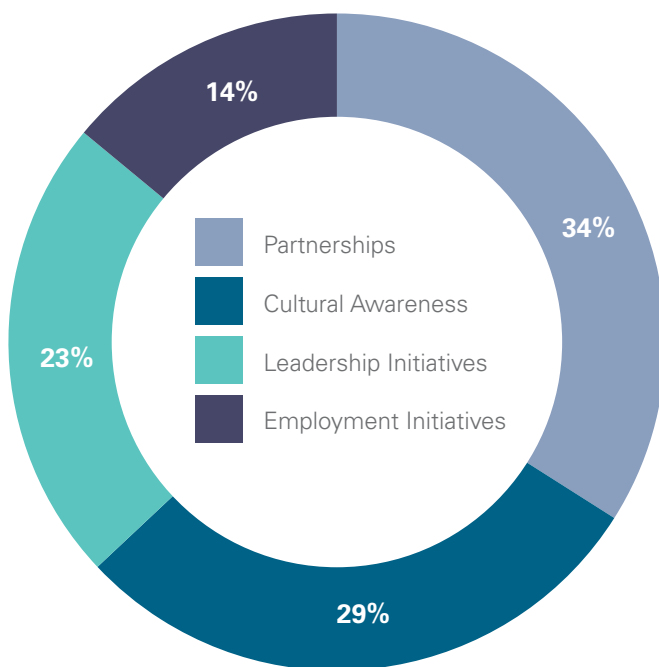
69 Ibid.

## 2.3 Key Findings and Recommendations

Having identified the challenges organisations face, forum discussions turned towards seeking solutions to those challenges. **Figure 4** below illustrates the outcome of these discussions. Two discussion questions helped to focus these conversations.

- In your experience what are/were the most successful policy or program initiatives?
- What does your organisation need to be able to improve your service?

**Figure 4: Improving Capability**



Participants appreciated the need to pool their resources and therefore, ‘partnerships’ was the top solution. ‘Cultural awareness’ and seeking structural cultural change that would assist them in the long run with providing culturally appropriate services, and avoid structural cultural bias was second (29%).

‘Leadership initiatives’ that would seek to include community leaders, through a co-design approach, to seek lasting solutions was third (23%).

‘Employment issues’, brokering viable employment solutions for new arrivals to promote participation, build social capital and local economies was fourth (14%). Issues related to employment were raised at forums by service providers who were either active

in that space (i.e. Careers Central Victoria), or involved in providing training (i.e. TAFE, Local Learning and Employment Networks).

Each key finding is further illustrated below with the comments, ideas and suggestions offered by forum participants. These solution focussed themes, respond to the issues raised at *2.2 Current Challenges*.

### PARTNERSHIPS

Service provider and peak body representatives told the VMC that they appreciate the need to share their resources and to partner in activities wherever possible in order to provide clients with the broadest service. This involves seeking to make the best use of all available resources, including financial, professional expertise, time allocation, and so on, demonstrating value add for the organisation and funders. Partnerships were also about collaborative practice through coordination and connection.

#### Coordination

- Better coordination of services to meet community needs.
- Encourage greater communication across sectors.
- Facilitate effective coordination.

#### Connection

- Get serious about levels of diversity by seeking to link organisations (work together and pool resources).
- Utilise networks and other means to inform and connect people to services.
- Use local (ethnic) radio to provide information in diverse languages; recognise the ability of local community based programs to meet local community needs.<sup>70</sup>
- Conduct ongoing consultations to inform programs and assist services to meet demands.<sup>71</sup>
- Meet local needs by seeking to cater for all languages and abilities, i.e. use storyboards (CALD COM), online videos, and information sessions with independent interpreters.

<sup>70</sup> This suggestion by forum participants aligns with a VMC research project prepared for the Department of Justice regarding communicating information to diverse communities regarding raising awareness on powers of attorney legislation. Following the report, the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) successfully applied for Victoria Law Foundation funding, for a project to be held during Law Week 16-22 May 2016, to increase understanding of POA in Victoria’s CALD communities. The VMC report, *Understanding and Use of Powers of Attorney in Victoria’s CALD communities* is available on the VMC website: <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/Kathleen/POA.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> This relates to the statutory role of the VMC and the recommendations of this report will assist government departments to meet the community needs of people from diverse backgrounds.

## Partnership Examples

Peak body and service provider representatives offered the following information about their own projects:

- The Cancer Council use bilingual educators and service workers, low investment dollars, high impact return.
- The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), Democracy Ambassador program:
  - a VEC initiative in partnership with Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), the program sought to break down barriers to voting within African communities;
  - barriers included low English language skills, lack of familiarity with the Australian voting and parliamentary systems, and/or negative experiences from their country of origin; and
  - the project engaged and trained community educators, including Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Sudanese and South Sudanese community members, to deliver sessions on political literacy and civic participation.
- The Omar bin Al Kattab Mosque, Preston (Preston Mosque) and Darebin City Council – Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):
  - signed in 2009 between Darebin City Council and the Islamic Society of Victoria (ISV), the MOU formalised a working relationship to ensure mutual respect, community harmony and effective solutions to local community issues; and
  - included articulation of a shared vision, values, and commitment in relation to promoting a respectful and constructive relationship that would assist council and mosque in working together on projects and benefit the community.

## Partnership Suggestions

VMC forum participants at Melbourne and Narre Warren offered the following partnership suggestions, to promote social cohesion.

- establish an 'Intercultural Centre', a venue where all Victorians from diverse cultures can meet and mingle,
- provide structured friendship group support to minimise isolation and aid the integration of new arrivals to the local community,
- provide a neutral space for women to gather and interact, and
- facilitate networking forums for service providers similar to VMC forums so that service providers can explore and facilitate their own partnership solutions to meet local community needs.

## Recommendation 1 – Partnerships

### Victorian Government funding models and grants programs to facilitate integrated service delivery through collaborative practice and partnership service delivery models.

This recommendation seeks to encourage and build productive cooperative partnerships that:

- improve information sharing and generate good practice models between agencies,
- streamline service delivery through inter-agency coordination,
- share resources where appropriate and workable, and
- formalise arrangements through joint funding applications or memoranda of understanding (MOU).

## CULTURAL AWARENESS

Cultural awareness was about recognising and catering fully to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds in ways that break down existing structural cultural bias. This key finding recognises the need for 'getting serious' about catering to the needs of diverse groups and communities. Forum participants noted the need for 'structural change' that takes diverse community needs 'seriously'. VMC forum participants offered the following suggestions on 'taking diversity seriously'.

### Policy Approach

- Recognise and act upon the need for cultural change – 'get serious' – create policies that will enable this.
- Make organisations accountable for meeting the needs of diverse communities.
- Encourage a more overt push regarding the need for interpreters, translated materials and other communication aids.
- There is a need for an overarching framework that is overt and highly visible.
- Create a 'Diversity Action Plan' and implement, that includes:
  - funding/budget allocations to promote a whole of Victorian government approach to embracing multiculturalism,
  - approach at various society levels, get 'buy in' to embed multiculturalism throughout the community, beginning in schools,
  - practice acceptance of all people from diverse backgrounds from the highest level, and
  - begin with schools – demonstrate acceptance as a regular feature of schools' culture, all schools including Catholic, Independent and Government schools, i.e. Casa Culture schools program, inspires respect.

## Recommendation 2 – Cultural Awareness

### All Victorian Government Services and funding streams to support culturally responsive workforce development, including cultural awareness training accountability measures.

This recommendation seeks to challenge and change inherent structural cultural bias in service provision, through measures that embed cultural competence in the workforce.

- Culturally competent organisations are able to ensure that:
  - all clients receive high quality and culturally appropriate care and service, and
  - staff are equipped with the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to deliver culturally competent services.
- Cultural competence is a framework that seeks to improve the delivery of services to clients from diverse backgrounds.
- Cultural competence helps to assess and improve all aspects of organisational operations including management and governance structures, service delivery and staff development.

#### Accountability Measures

- Organisations could develop a cultural responsiveness plan as part of their regular strategic planning cycle, strategic plan, quality improvement and accreditation processes.
- The plan can be incorporated into/embedded within other organisational plans, and include annual cultural competency measures to be reported against.

#### Build relationships with ethno-specific community organisations

- Building relationships with ethno-specific community organisations, for example could greatly enhance the ability of service providers to remain culturally responsive, especially considering the needs of new and emerging communities.
- Include ethno-specific community organisations in information sharing through professional networks, mailing lists, newsletters and other communication instruments.

#### Good Practice Examples

- The Department of Human Services Access and Equity Framework 2013-17, *Delivering for All*.<sup>72</sup>
- The Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health offer training programs on cultural competence including an interactive online training portal, *Diversita*.<sup>73</sup>

## LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

The leadership key finding related to service providers taking responsibility for sourcing community support and developing initiatives that help to link people in to existing local communities. This also related to the need to engage more fully with community leaders from diverse communities. It reflected a desire to build constructive relationships between service providers and community leaders, as well as facilitating the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

#### Support Integrated Leadership Initiatives

- Provide supports for local community leaders to assist in the integration of new arrivals.
- This kind of support also helps to develop trust and build mutually beneficial relationships between service providers and community leaders, and benefit new arrivals from NESB.
- This is a way to educate new arrivals about their new community, and assist integration locally to systems and services to further aid successful settlement.
- Link people into local communities and systems through mentoring and providing role models – community aiding community horizontally, rather than ‘top down’ hierarchical structure.
- Families need to ‘regroup’ and ‘rebuild’ following pre-settlement experiences which may have had a negative impact on the family structure and impacted relationships.
- Meet family needs and include children and young people in the solutions – ‘harness their creativity’.
- Seek to replicate successful programs through funding programs, e.g. Ballarat City Council Multicultural Ambassador Program.
- Assist community leaders to utilise Council grant writing support in order that projects are useful, supported by the local community, and aid social inclusion and social cohesion.

<sup>72</sup> *Delivering for All* is a four year framework which reinforces the Department of Human Services’ commitment to equity and to ensuring its services are accessible and support all Victorians to participate in the community and the economy. Available at: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/plans-and-strategies/key-plans-and-strategies/delivering-for-all>.

<sup>73</sup> Information on training programs at the Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health available at: <http://www.ceh.org.au/training/>.

### Recommendation 3 – Leadership

#### Resource agencies to lead in the establishment of local support networks, in order to aid the successful settlement and early integration of new arrivals and migrants in Victoria.

This recommendation promotes social cohesion through encouraging well-integrated migrant communities that are also well positioned to advance inter-cultural understanding and cooperation across diverse populations.

Assisting service providers to set up strong leadership initiatives involves resourcing, to ensure coordinated and integrated supports for new arrivals and other vulnerable community members. This could be facilitated by providing:

- new resident welcome packs and or ‘welcome wagon’ type neighbourhood activities,
- encouragement and support, working with individuals and families to access local networks,
- introductions to local members of their own ethnic community or community subset, and
- a local buddy, mentor or other ‘go to’ individual (i.e. sourced through local volunteer system, religious group, or similar body).

### EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Employment was raised by forum participants in terms of successful settlement outcomes that also aid community participation and integration. Through regular client interaction, service providers are well versed in the barriers to employment experienced by new arrivals, especially those from NESB.

An important aspect of access to labour markets relates to English language skills. This aspect is covered in greater depth in the final section of this report, *Discrimination and Bias*, but has direct relevance to employment issues for diverse community members.

**Figure 5** illustrates United Kingdom statistics related to ‘difficulty in speaking English’. This graphic has been included because it provides an illustration of the implications for groups from NESB. Poor English language skills can have direct bearing on migrants’ income earning potential. Similar to the UK situation, the evidence demonstrates that in Victoria, people with poor English language skills may struggle to gain a foothold in local labour markets, or secure employment that is below their capabilities and at a lower income.<sup>74</sup>

The VMC also receives regular information through its RAC networks regarding barriers to employment and incidents of discrimination in local economies throughout the regions. In terms similar to the cultural awareness key findings above, forum participants expressed the view that ‘getting serious’ about multiculturalism also meant assisting people from diverse cultures to access labour markets and achieve

gainful employment. The suggestions and ideas contributed by forum participants related mainly to achieving those ends.

### Employment Initiatives

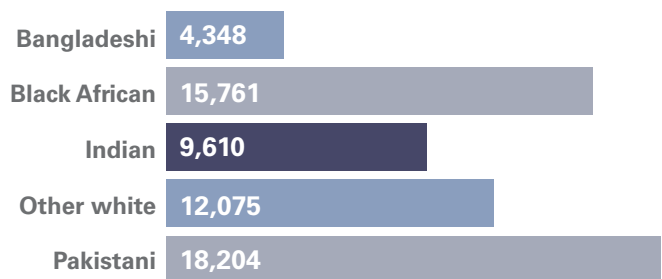
- Recognise that long term funding is necessary to secure meaningful employment initiatives - short term programs and successful ‘pilots’ only go so far;
  - Participants at Bendigo told the VMC about a successful program with a local poultry farmer. However, ‘short term funding showed a lack of support’, and provided ‘no opportunity for the program to succeed’,
- Create a ‘Migrant Community Employment Fund’ to foster better employment outcomes by assisting employers to appreciate the mutually beneficial gains of a multicultural workforce – ‘win win’,
  - The benefits for employers include, greater productivity, widening cultural customer base, and opportunities to pursue global markets via in-house cultural expertise, and
  - For employees, involvement in growing local economies, acceptance into local communities through employment participation, and opportunities to build social capital.

**Figure 5: Understanding Society, United Kingdom.**

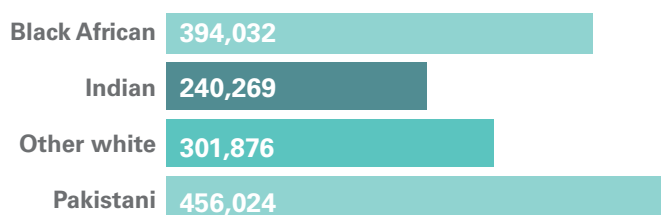
Support to learn English could reduce persistent poverty. Difficulty in speaking English increases the chance of being in persistent poverty by 4%.

**A total of 59,034 people are in persistent poverty and have difficulty in speaking English.**

#### People in persistent poverty who have difficulty speaking English



#### People in persistent poverty from broad ethnic minority groups



Source: *Understanding Societies*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

74 Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria Inc., 2014.

## Recommendation 4 – Employment Initiatives

### Develop a Whole of Victorian Government response that promotes novel and collaborative approaches to the employment aspirations and entrepreneurial prospects available to culturally and linguistically diverse groups in Victoria.

This recommendation recognises that Victoria's economic and cultural aspirations are not exclusive, but rather work together as mutually reinforcing goals.<sup>75</sup> Strategies could include activities to enhance job prospects and or entrepreneurial opportunities. Many migrants contribute to Victoria's economic viability through a myriad of small businesses.

Employment aspirations could be enhanced through Victorian Government agencies:

- seeking collaborative openings with the VEOHRC, Department of Training, Business Victoria, Tourism Victoria and similar agencies to advocate to employers regarding the benefits of employing individuals (of all genders and all age groups) from diverse backgrounds,<sup>76</sup> and
- facilitating work experience through funded placements that enable migrants to gain local experience, and improve their long term job prospects.

Entrepreneurial prospects could be enhanced through Whole of Victorian Government strategies, such as:

- the VMC, Business Victoria, Creative Victoria and similar agencies sharing motivational, innovative and creative business stories of individuals, families, and cooperative groups (urban and rural) that inspire others,
- encourage entities such as Business Victoria and Creative Victoria to make their website and general information services more accessible to people from diverse backgrounds in order to encourage take-up of grants and business supports such as the Small Business Mentoring Service, Tech and Design Grants, and similar, and
- the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to:
  - provide financial assistance through local government funding arrangements to aid the economic development and business enterprise of individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds within their boundaries, and
  - assist local not-for-profit organisations to auspice people from diverse backgrounds in seeking funding for entrepreneurial activities.

75 See The Boston Consulting Group, Victoria's Creative and Cultural Economy Fact Pack, 2015. Retrieved 29 February, 2016: [http://economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0014/1231403/219720-94-150402-Creative-cultural-economy-fact-pack.PDF](http://economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/1231403/219720-94-150402-Creative-cultural-economy-fact-pack.PDF)

76 Similar to the Migration Council's *Friendly Nation* initiative. Further details available at: <http://australianmigration.com/news/migration-council-to-help-rapidly-resettle-the-extra-12000-syrian-refugees-coming-to-australia/>.







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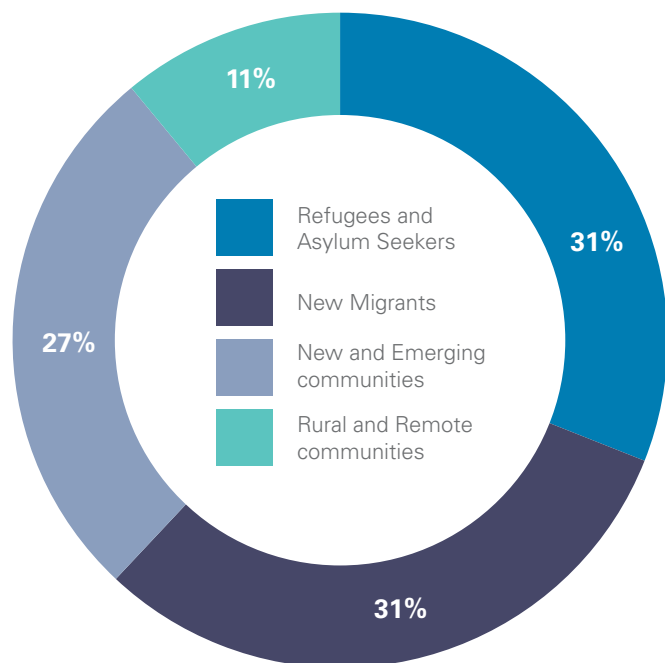
## OUR CLIENTS

### 3.1. Overview

The VMC forum questions related to Your Clients were designed to find out how service providers seek to provide culturally appropriate and sensitive service delivery to their client base, especially those newly arrived groups who may not have prior knowledge of the services available to them. This report captures the information from the perspective of the service providers. Another VMC report, *Women’s Voices Guiding Our Future*, will capture the information from the client perspective.<sup>77</sup>

When policy, procedure or practice caters to the majority group it can exclude marginalised and minority groups.<sup>78</sup> These practices can also send an unintended message to people from diverse backgrounds, that their needs are less important. This section identifies the challenges that service providers face in their daily interactions with clients from diverse backgrounds, as well as their ideas and suggestions about the ways that service delivery could be improved. Providing equitable access to services for clients of all backgrounds can require adjustments as new groups begin to populate local communities.

**Figure 6: Service Provider Client Base**



Source: VMC, online service providers survey responses

77 The VMC Report *Women’s Voices Guiding Our Future*, 2016.

78 Government of Western Australia, Equal Opportunity Commission, Fact Sheet: What is Substantive Equality – addressing and preventing systemic discrimination in service delivery. Accessed 23 December 2015: <http://vivid.blob.core.windows.net/eoc-sitefinity/fact-sheets/what-is-substantive-equality.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

79 Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia, 2014-2015.

80 Section 3 (d).

The Australian Government’s guidelines for equitable access to services, *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy: Respecting diversity*. Improving responsiveness outlines a set of minimum obligations that government departments and agencies must address in order to effectively cater to the diverse needs of culturally and linguistically diverse clients.

The Plans are structured around six dimensions – *leadership, engagement, performance, capability, responsiveness and openness* - on which departments and agencies must report. The first Agency Multicultural Plans covered the period from 1 July 2013 to 31 December 2015.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA, 2015), provides independent feedback from diverse communities on their experiences of government service delivery, including through its annual *Access and Equity Reports*, intended for government audiences.

FECCA reported on two dimensions, *responsiveness* and *engagement*, when providing this feedback:

- *Responsiveness* obligations include the need to ensure that policies, programs, community interactions and service delivery (in-house or outsourced) are effective for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- *Engagement* obligations include the need to ensure effective communication and interaction between diverse community groups and respective programs and agencies, including in languages other than English.<sup>79</sup>

**“Equal rules for unequal groups can have unequal results.”**

*Substantive Equality, WA Equal Opportunity Commission, 2015.*

In Victoria, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (the Act) protects people from discrimination in places that provide services. Thus, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of race, religious belief or sex. An objective of the Act is to promote and facilitate the progressive realisation of equality.<sup>80</sup> Section 44 covers the equitable provision of goods and services.

Substantive equality recognises that while some systems and processes may outwardly appear as non-discriminatory, they may not in fact be fully responsive to the needs and aspirations of different people and groups, and as a result can unintentionally create further inequalities.<sup>81</sup>

The VMC multicultural forums found that service providers are aware of the needs of their diverse clients and seek to provide culturally appropriate service delivery wherever possible. While readily admitting that they do not always get it right, the main finding from the forums was that service providers and peak bodies are committed to identifying and eliminating structural cultural bias.

### 3.2 Delivering Culturally Sensitive Services

Service providers and peak body representatives were asked how they identified the major issues affecting culturally sensitive service delivery. The VMC discussion questions were as follows:

- How do you ensure culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive service delivery?
- What are the major issues impacting your local CALD communities?

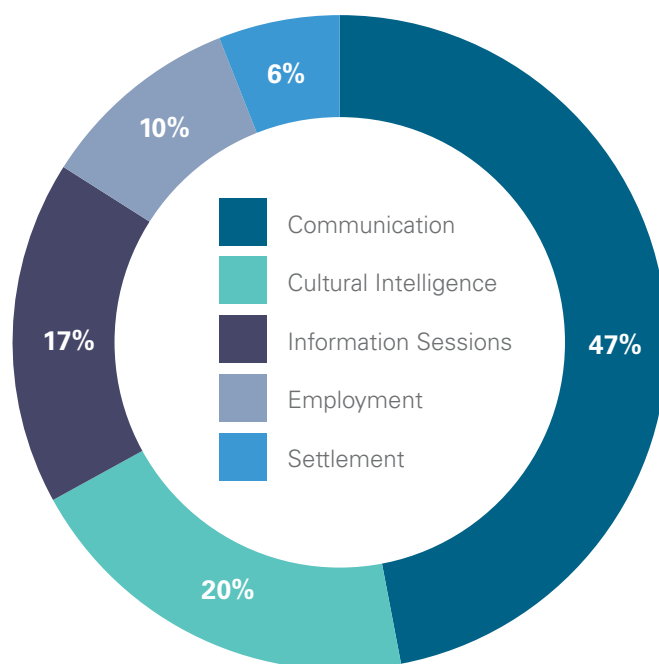
Communication, involving the use of interpreters and translated materials, was the number one issue identified by service providers in seeking to provide culturally appropriate service information and delivery. It was also identified as the major impediment to people from diverse backgrounds participating in the local community, and has been raised consistently at RAC meetings.

At the Melbourne forum the Australian Greek Welfare Society identified low literacy levels in older people from Greek backgrounds. Low levels of literacy in Greek impacted upon their ability to also be literate in English. This service provider reported that many 'don't understand and can't read' although they utilise ethnic community radio. As a result of low literacy in this elderly community therefore, 'some are isolated, and lack support'.

**Figure 7** illustrates the issues reported by service providers in meeting client needs. Analysis of responses clearly showed that communication (47%), or English language ability is a major issue. The communication issue also tends to impact upon other service delivery issues including cultural intelligence.

The need for cultural intelligence (20%), information about the ethnicity or ancestry of the local client base also rated highly. Forum participants, even those more seasoned service providers, expressed the view that there is still much for them to learn, especially in relation to Victoria's growing diversity.

**Figure 7: Meeting Client Needs – Challenges**



81 Government of Western Australia Public Sector Commission, Public Sector Commissioner's Circular No.2015-01, 1 February 2015. Accessed 23 December 2015: [https://publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2015-01\\_substantive\\_equality\\_-\\_implementation\\_of\\_the\\_policy\\_framework\\_addressing\\_systemic\\_discrimination\\_in\\_service\\_delivery\\_1.pdf](https://publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2015-01_substantive_equality_-_implementation_of_the_policy_framework_addressing_systemic_discrimination_in_service_delivery_1.pdf)

Information sessions - providing information to clients early in the settlement process was also relatively high (17%). Employment matters (10%), and settlement issues (6%) were lesser issues reported. **Table 3** below lists the main issues affecting culturally sensitive service delivery.

**Table 3 – Meeting Client Needs: Main Issues Raised**

<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is assumed that established communities have adequate support.</li> <li>• Ensuring staff know interpreting services (i.e. are aware of, can access etc.).</li> <li>• Regular training needs for service providers.</li> <li>• Education for services about how to access interpreters – lack of familiarity with Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translated materials:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ VEOHRC cater for 30 different languages;</li> <li>◦ also use pictures and diagrams to create a visual story;</li> <li>◦ can't do all materials – too much – need to be selective;</li> <li>◦ (need to) focus on newer languages/new and emerging communities; and</li> <li>◦ interpretation: multiple dialects creates a problem – becomes a resourcing issue as population diversity increases.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There can also be language barriers between the generations, especially when young people attend school and learn English.</li> <li>• Indian community:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ need English language classes;</li> <li>◦ parents arriving, rely on children about what they can do here – can lead to isolation, worried about going out;</li> <li>◦ more confident where people speak Hindi for example; and</li> <li>◦ thus having information ready at the airport on arrival could be a solution.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of (qualified) interpreters (in certain languages).<sup>82</sup></li> <li>• Older Greek community, low levels of literacy in native language – ‘don't understand and can't read’ – (many) use community radio. Some are isolated and have no support.</li> <li>• Reduced funding impacts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural Intelligence</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to address cultural intelligence/information flows about migrants, such as between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and service providers.</li> <li>• New arrivals may have particular needs that need to be identified and conveyed.</li> <li>• Ongoing cultural awareness/intelligence for staff – non-government, non-existent.<sup>83</sup></li> <li>• Demand is growing, therefore problems (issues) will increase.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Create) culturally sensitive environments:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ includes need for child protection that is culturally sensitive to children from diverse backgrounds;</li> <li>◦ create greater cultural sensitivity in homecare; and</li> <li>◦ children need a sense of their cultural identity as they grow up.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Need to understand families cultural mores and pre-settlement journeys in order to properly assist and meet needs – ‘where do they fit with family values, culture, previous experience, etc.?’.</li> <li>• The needs of community subsets within cultural groups can be overlooked, which can lead to isolation and unmet needs.</li> </ul>

82 Noted at Melbourne and Narre Warren.

83 Raised consistently at all three forums – Bendigo, Melbourne and Narre Warren.

<b>Information sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities need advocacy for rights and services – make services aware of the issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ people do not complain because they do not know their rights – not vocal enough to their detriment;</li> <li>◦ necessary to raise the impact of not meeting needs;</li> <li>◦ people need to recognise where to go and what services;</li> <li>◦ (migrants) not aware of who can assist, or where to go for information; and</li> <li>◦ ‘even carers unaware of services’ – especially if carer is a family member.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Information is available on internet, not sure if it reaches all of community.<sup>84</sup></li> <li>• However, gap in technology literacy.<sup>85</sup></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Practitioner (GP) can be good ‘signpost’ – many families rely on the children to provide them with information.</li> <li>• Footscray Community Legal Centre provided evidence at the Melbourne MSPF about their engagement with different local ethnic populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ gained knowledge through one-on-one interaction with clients (importance of face-to-face interaction);</li> <li>◦ stressed the importance of outreach services – going to the communities; and</li> <li>◦ provided information sessions with later follow up to reaffirm and clarify any misunderstandings.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth unemployment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ students coming from refugee camps with education gaps, they can’t keep up (at risk of disengagement), and</li> <li>◦ students missing school because they need to work to provide for their family.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No workplace experience.</li> <li>• Untapped skills and professions – relates to non-recognition of overseas qualifications; being unable to follow usual trade or profession can lead to taking lower income position, i.e. cleaner.</li> <li>• Underemployment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ leads to further related issues such as, difficulties in securing accommodation, health effects (stress) and lower income; and</li> <li>◦ difficulty is maintaining sufficient income to meet all of these costs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Settlement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newly arrived, some have no English and have difficulty in understanding Australian (social support) systems.</li> <li>• Each new group has its own needs and what worked for one group may not work for another.</li> <li>• Isolation and transport needs impact on other needs, e.g. going to the Doctor and having to rely on public transport in a rural setting.</li> <li>• Complex issues, housing issues or waiting lists, low income and not able to access (private) rental market.</li> </ul>

84 Melbourne MSPF.

85 Narre Warren MSPF.

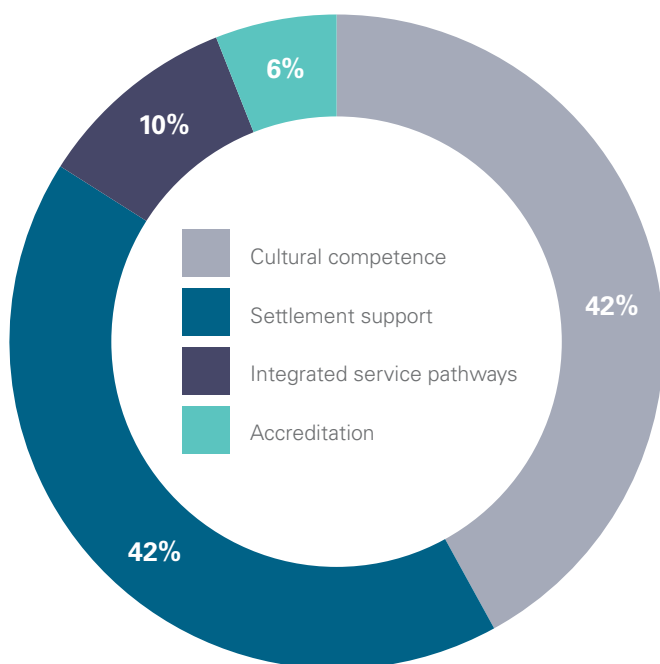
### 3.3 Client Responsive Services

Teasing out these client related issues further, forum participants discussed some potential solutions to the challenges raised. Discussions were guided by two related questions:

- How can services to diverse communities be improved?
- How can peak bodies collaboratively assist in improving service access and awareness?

Responsiveness and engagement were the two main factors identified by FECCA (2015) when providing feedback on government services. In discussing the ways to improve services to diverse communities, VMC forum participants identified client needs in terms that illustrated their responsiveness as an organisation, as well as their ability to engage with clients. ‘Cultural competence’ (42%) and ‘settlement support’ (42%) were dominant and interrelated themes, with consideration of subsidiary themes of ‘integrated service pathways’ (10%) and ‘accreditation’ (6%).

Figure 8: Responding to Client Needs



‘Cultural competence’ related to the need to know your client base, including the need for ready access to information about the diversity of local community subsets, including new and emerging communities. Participants told the VMC that ‘organisations must be open to cultural training’ and need ‘in-service training about cultural protocols’.

Culturally responsive services also require that organisations comply with legislative instruments such as the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic). These acts require organisations to:

- provide equitable access to services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and
- consider equitable service that does not directly or indirectly discriminate against people on the basis of limited English proficiency language.

Settlement support included funding needs as discussed previously at Section 2, Organisational Themes. It also included creative ways to support new arrivals such as through child care support for women to enable them to attend courses that could improve confidence levels, as well as facilitate more general community participation and integration.

### 3.4 Key Findings and Recommendations

The two main key themes that emerged regarding client base needs were interrelated – ‘cultural competence’ and ‘settlement support’. Organisations acknowledged their need to understand the diversity of local populations. Settlement support needs, including funding needs, emerged as a key finding in relation to how services to clients from diverse backgrounds could be improved. Although tied to settlement support in these discussions, the funding issue was also raised under organisational themes, and is of major concern for service providers.

“To more effectively and humanely respond to today’s ‘crisis’, we need to understand and implement in political discourse – as we have in economic discourse – the interconnectedness and oneness of humanity.”

*Karen Bravo, The Conversation, 2015.*



There is support in the literature for these concerns. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC; 2005), commented that levels of resourcing were not appropriate to overcome constraints that affect program planning, professional development, language services and community development, while also noting that 'short-term project funding generally does not allow time for change or sustainability of positive outcomes'. The NHMRC concluded that, in the context of more diverse populations and the longer time required to undertake respectful and adequate consultation and preparation, short-term funding becomes prohibitive beyond establishing processes.

Participants at Narre Warren suggested that funding for settlement planning should be increased to five years for all refugees. Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) are generally provided for the first six months, and extended in cases of particular need.<sup>86</sup> HSS include coordinated support services, casework, information, advice, advocacy, referrals to mainstream services, and support for ethno-specific communities. This assistance is available for newly arrived humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants in their first five years of life in Australia.<sup>87</sup>

Subsidiary themes of 'integrated service delivery' and 'accreditation' related to better use of resources and skills. Integrated service delivery was suggested as a means to improve services to diverse communities and accreditation was related to the education and employment needs of people from diverse backgrounds.

**“Individuals need access to social services. Well-structured access allows the service provider to respond more effectively to the needs and expectations of the target groups.”**

*Althaus, Bridgman & Davis, 2007.*

The four key themes are expanded upon below with comments, ideas and suggestions offered by forum participants. These are solution focussed themes, responding to the issues raised above at 3.2 Delivering Culturally Competent Services above.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

This key finding arose in relation to improved service delivery to people from diverse backgrounds. VMC forum participants raised cultural competence in terms of resourcing to enable them to provide culturally appropriate responses to meeting their clients' needs. Participants were well aware of their own needs for cultural competency. Following are the suggestions and ideas offered by participants.

### Cultural Intelligence

- Cultural awareness and education for community and workers, services; cultural competence training,
- Health services raised the issue of being prepared for new arrivals, suggesting the usefulness of a 'community profile' that provided background and demographic information on diverse community subsets in their local catchment,
- Programs to help service providers to better understand the histories and issues facing clients from diverse backgrounds; improved networking could assist in keeping pace with ongoing cultural change, and
- Provide services with guidance and service manuals that include knowledge on the diversity of the local community, especially relevant to new arrivals settling in the catchment.

### Service Delivery

- Service provider workers should be more reflective and representative of the local community diversity – 'more bilingual workers would be a good step',
- A program to accredit more people in the local community as interpreters could be a solution, otherwise the cost of interpreters can be prohibitive,<sup>88</sup>
- Provide translated information materials, especially reflective of local diversity; also consider visual communication (videos etc., to cater for increasing diversity in client base), and
- Local people need to understand the diversity in their community; public information sessions, also start early in schools – include cultural education in the curriculum.

86 AMES Australia, Humanitarian Settlement Services information. Accessed 30 December 2015 at: <https://www.ames.net.au/settling-in-australia/humanitarian-settlement-services.html>.

87 Australian Government Department of Social Services, Settlement Services Guidelines Overview (2015), Accessed 23 February, 2016: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/09\\_2015/families-and-communities-settlement-services-programme-guidelines.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/09_2015/families-and-communities-settlement-services-programme-guidelines.pdf).

88 While including this participant suggestion, the VMC is aware of the impact on matters of anonymity and confidentiality in engaging local interpreters.

## Recommendation 5 – Cultural Competence

**The Victorian Government to assist service providers with timely information as it becomes available including cultural background information about groups to be settled in their area of responsibility, together with adequate resourcing to meet the communication needs of diverse groups and community subsets.**

Cultural competence can be seen as a dynamic process involving individual and organisational learning, attitudinal and behavioural change, systems and process development, commitment and leadership.

This recommendation seeks to foster inclusive and culturally responsive local services by acknowledging service providers as partners in caring for the Victorian community at all levels, needing suitable supports that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

It seeks to ensure understanding, appreciation and respect of cultural differences and similarities within, among and between groups.

This could be achieved by resourcing:

- the VMC and OMAC to jointly produce fact sheets with up-to-date information on settlement groups and numbers,
- the VMC to produce background information on different cultures, similar to those produced by Care Australia,<sup>89</sup> and the European Commission<sup>90</sup>, including likely pre-arrival experiences, tailored to local diverse cohorts,
- the VMC, through an upgrade of its website, to make available briefing notes or bulletins as information becomes available on various diverse cultures, and
- including broad publicity about the availability of these resources including through other government websites, peak body websites and similar.

## SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Settlement services providers were well represented at all of the VMC service provider forums. Therefore, it was to be expected that settlement support would arise as a key finding, and related to improving settlement supports. VMC forum participants raised settlement support in the context of increased and increasing cultural diversity, and the impact on their ability to meet client needs in current economic and funding environments. Their suggestions and ideas are summarised below.

### Resourcing Effective Settlement

- Help people to understand their entitlements and how they can be accessed.
- Provide assistance that links people effectively into the local community.
- Establish network groups – for services and community members.
- Facilitate introductions to more established community members.
- Extend the AMES ‘community guide’ program to provide one-on-one support, beyond six months.<sup>91</sup>
- Increase settlement planning funding to five years.
- Recognise that women often have additional caring responsibilities that can delay successful settlement and create isolation. This can be remedied by assisting women from diverse backgrounds to:
  - access courses at LLENs and local Councils by supporting caring responsibilities and providing childcare to enable women to attend; and
  - attend LLEN courses and activities that can improve social connectedness, language skills, and in time assist access to labour markets.

89 Available at: <https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Factsheet-Emergency-Brief-July-2014.pdf>.

90 Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf).

91 AMES Australia, *Community Guides Program* provides settlement support in the client’s own language during the first six months of resettlement in Victoria. Community Guides are former refugees who are able to help new arrivals from their home country to settle more effectively in their new environment.

They assist clients by:

- Providing an initial orientation to the local area.
- Providing support in securing accommodation.
- Accompanying clients to register with key services such as Centrelink, Medicare, schools and English Language centres, opening a bank account, health services and any other if needed.
- Helping clients access local information and linking them with community groups.
- Teaching clients how to use public transport.

## Recommendation 6 – Settlement Support

### Strengthen settlement support infrastructure through targeted strategies that will improve social cohesion in the settlement of new and emerging communities throughout Victoria.

All migrants contribute to economic growth and consequently the wellbeing of all Victorians.

Hugo (2011), noted that the success of Australia's Humanitarian Program is not only measured by how many people we resettle, but also to what extent refugees are able to rebuild their lives and contribute to the Australian community. Supporting the successful settlement of all migrants is therefore in the best interests of all Victorians.

To create support infrastructure requires:

- involving migrants in the planning, management and delivery of appropriate programs,
- seeking to identify their fears and understand their needs,
- developing tailored responses as required to meet community needs, and
- supporting the transition to the workforce for humanitarian entrants, especially through building English language proficiency and providing adequate supports to pursue further education.

Send an overall message of inclusion by capitalising upon Refugee Week 14-20 June 2016 to build good will towards humanitarian entrants.

The theme for Refugee Week 2016 is a line contained in the second verse of the national anthem: "with courage let us all combine". This theme celebrates the courage of refugees and of people who speak out against persecution and injustice. It serves as a call for unity and for positive action, encouraging Australians to be good hosts by welcoming refugees and acknowledging the skills and energy they bring to Victoria.<sup>92</sup>

## INTEGRATED SERVICE PATHWAYS

Interestingly, partnering solutions were raised in forum discussions related to both 'Your Organisation' and 'Your Clients'. From an organisational aspect this related to the challenges and from a client perspective it related to improving service outcomes. With the focus on service delivery in both instances, it was not altogether surprising that these separate discussions resulted in similar partnering solutions. Partnerships therefore, were also about collaboration and recognising that no one organisation can meet all individual and/or community needs.

From a client perspective it was also about making connections and linking people into the services they need, as well as utilising available resources to best advantage. This included extending the reach of services by publicising information about availability and suitability.

There was some overlap between settlement support and partnerships. Participant suggestions and comments are summarised below.

### Integrated Service Pathways

- Provide better integrated service pathways, and enable agencies to work together for (optimal) outcomes, such as via improved local service provider networks.
- Share staff resources wherever possible and appropriate, i.e. bilingual worker as a shared resource.
- Service providers told the VMC that rural and regional centres need a 'one-stop-shop' to help provide 'effective and accessible' services.
  - Community hubs, for example, co-locate services which helps people to understand the broader picture of (all) entitlements, how to get them and where to go.
- Partner with local media to publicise information; utilise community radio networks, some will provide access for service providers as a community service.<sup>93</sup>
- Join forces to advocate to the Commonwealth to inform future settlement and multicultural policy needs.

<sup>92</sup> Resources available at: <http://www.refugeeweek.org.au>.

<sup>93</sup> A representative from the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) attended the Melbourne VMC forum. A peak body representing ethnic community broadcasters across Australia, NEMBC advocates for multiculturalism and media diversity and helps people connect to and maintain their language, culture and identity. Each state capital has a multilingual community radio station and there are hundreds of general community radio stations in cities and towns broadcasting multilingual and multicultural programs. This unique and extensive network of locally produced programs provides vital support for Australia's diverse communities. Further information available online at <http://www.nembc.org.au/>.

## Recommendation 7 – Integrated Service Pathways

### Develop accessible and integrated pathways that enable clients to access all available services and entitlements, such as via a ‘one-stop-shop’.

This recommendation recognises the difficulties expressed by service providers in response to current migration trends, which the VMC was told are different to previous migration patterns, being more culturally diverse.

Contemporary migrants also have different reasons for moving to particular areas or regions. Humanitarian entrants receive support through planned settlement programs; skilled migrants emanate from a variety of backgrounds; and others (including some humanitarian entrants) gravitate to an area following affordable housing, work or family members already settled there.

Providing integrated pathways therefore is also about meeting the needs of all migrants and to this end a ‘one-stop-shop’ that facilitates the co-location of a number of essential services is preferable. A ‘one-stop-shop’ could be a ‘virtual’ or a physical locality that operates to share resources and information.

The goal of a ‘one-stop-shop’ or community service hub would be to:

- provide information about entitlements, and rights and responsibilities, as well as information about local facilities and services,
- garner support from all quarters of the community including LGAs, local ethnic community councils, chamber of commerce and similar. For example, one study found that real estate agents described being able to offer some assistance to new migrants about local services and community practices,<sup>94</sup>
- offer service providers with onsite collaborative opportunities to meet existing and emerging community needs, and
- strengthen individual and family capability, and building community capacity.

## ACCREDITATION

Accreditation related to labour markets and the employment needs of clients. It was also raised in regards to the need to recognise skills and qualifications gained overseas. Service providers advised that they want to access this local labour supply. Accreditation was a very small element (6%); however the points raised have been raised elsewhere by VMC RAC members and at other VMC community forums (young people, and women only forums in 2015). Participant’s comments and ideas are summarised below.

- Improve skill recognition so that people can access labour markets.
- Improve pathways to recognise prior learning and overseas qualifications in order to also improve access to employment opportunities.
- Seek global intergovernmental agreements on the recognition of qualifications obtained outside of Australia.
- Develop pathways to improve adult literacy in people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

## Recommendation 8 – Accreditation

### The Victorian Government to lead nationally on processes to recognise overseas qualifications for all migrant groups, by effectively resourcing the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit.<sup>95</sup>

This recommendation recognises the global nature of contemporary labour markets, which also impact local labour markets. The Victorian labour force is made up of skilled workers and professionals from around the world. People who become displaced also become an untapped resource of available labour in the global marketplace.

Implementing this recommendation requires developing strategies to:

- remove the barriers that migrants face in gaining access to employment in their field of expertise, due to non-recognition of overseas qualifications,
- acknowledge that for some community subsets, English language instruction is a prerequisite to gaining access to local labour markets,
- develop on-going accredited English language skills training for migrants, including those migrants who are already gainfully employed, by working together with employers,<sup>96</sup> and
- provide assistance to humanitarian entrants to source their original documentation or institutional equivalent – many refugees are well educated and qualified; however, pre-settlement journeys can be precarious and documents lost or stolen en route.

<sup>94</sup> Feist, Tan, McDougall, & Hugo, 2015.

<sup>95</sup> This recommendation commends the work of the ECCV, *Qualified but not Recognised Discussion Paper*, 2014, who recommended the Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU) be adequately resourced to provide better face-to-face community level advice, assistance and networking opportunities in line with its original role.

<sup>96</sup> Developing English language ability increases the prospects for employment. The evidence demonstrates that English language competence is a strong predictor of securing registration and employment (EECV, 2014.)





4

## FAMILY VIOLENCE

## 4.1 Overview

The VMC included family violence as a forum discussion topic in the knowledge that, women who experience family violence are likely to engage with community-based organisations under circumstances where trust is engendered, which can facilitate disclosure of family violence.<sup>97</sup> This was confirmed at all service provider and peak body forums, where discussions of family violence elicited evidence of disclosure in a wide variety of circumstances, in which service organisations provided 'a safe place to talk'. The BCHS confirmed that they come into contact with women experiencing family violence through sexual health clinics and other community programs. At Melbourne, the VMC was informed that in the Chinese community, elder abuse was a problem, especially emotional and financial abuse.

The VMC also heard about the difficulties experienced by service providers in seeking to meet clients' needs in the face of increasing diversity, levels of need and stretched resources. Statistics demonstrate the number of people from refugee backgrounds, including asylum seekers, in the Australian community is significantly higher than at any time during the past three decades; driven by a series of international events and changes to Commonwealth immigration policy. Victoria has the largest intake of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, comprising more than a third (38%) of all arrivals.<sup>98</sup> The evidence demonstrates that:

- Victoria settles around a third of all refugees nationally through the Humanitarian Program.
- Approximately 44,880 people have arrived as refugees in Victoria through the Humanitarian Program over the past 10 years, including approximately 23,203 in the past five years.<sup>99</sup>
- There are currently over 11,000 asylum seekers in the Victorian community awaiting determination of their refugee status.<sup>100</sup>

Globally, family violence may be the most common violation of the rights of women and children. According to recent global prevalence figures, 35% of women worldwide have experienced either family violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. On average, 30% of women worldwide reported having experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by a partner, and 38% of murders of women worldwide are committed by an intimate partner.<sup>101</sup> The *Counting Dead Women Australia* researchers of *Destroy the Joint* count every single violent death of women in Australia. They do this to fill a gap in data collection, as well as to honour the women who have lost their lives as a result of violence. In 2014 researchers counted a total of 84 violent deaths of women, and a total of 79 violent deaths of women in 2015.<sup>102</sup>

**“There is a severe lack of awareness for those in CALD communities about legal rights and protections related to family violence in Australia.”**

*Service provider participant, Narre Warren, 2015.*

Research conducted by the InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (2010), suggested that “the incidence of family violence...is not higher” for people from NESB, while noting however, that the stresses caused by moving to Australia can increase the risk of family violence. The literature also demonstrates that migrant and refugee women in Australia are known to face particular barriers accessing services aimed at preventing and responding to family violence.<sup>103</sup> There are also added complexities that can affect help seeking behaviour, such as cultural values and immigration status. Women from a range of migrant and refugee communities have reported that men use their partners' dependent visa status to invoke fear of deportation as a means of manipulation and intimidation.<sup>104</sup>

97 Vaughan, et al., 2015.

98 Department of Health and Human Services, 2015.

99 This data does not include people from a refugee background arriving through the Family Migration Program (for example, partner or orphan visa) or other migration streams (such as the Skilled Migration Stream).

100 Statistics derived from Department of Health and Human Services, 2015.

101 WHO Violence against Women, Factsheet No.239. Accessed 5 January, 2015: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

102 Destroy the joint is counting dead women. Information available at: <https://www.facebook.com/DestroyTheJoint/timeline>

103 Vaughan, et al., 2015.

104 Pease & Rees, 2008; Ogunsoji, Wilkes, Jackson, & Peters, 2012.



As a result of these complexities migrant and refugee women are often reluctant to report family violence. The factors influencing this include:

- the availability of appropriate interpreter services;
- limited support networks,
- reluctance to confide in others,
- isolation,
- lack of awareness about the law,
- ongoing abuse from the immediate family,
- cultural and/or religious shame, and
- religious beliefs about divorce.<sup>105</sup>

The VMC asked forum participants about three aspects of family violence – how they, as service providers, came into contact with incidents, the context of disclosure, and their ideas and knowledge about the interventions that are useful in diverse communities.

## CASE STUDIES

Following the Melbourne forum the VMC was invited to speak with women who experienced family violence and who were asylum seekers. Interviews took place at The Salvation Army, Crossroads Family Violence Service, North Coburg in June 2015. The interviews were conducted utilising Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) interpreters. Case workers also remained for the duration of each interview.

One asylum seeker explained that she ‘knew police could help’. However, the family of her Australian ex-partner (mother and sister) frightened her. They told her ‘scary things’ about what would happen if she pursued police intervention. The family, she said, ‘made matters worse’.

“Police suggested an ‘intervention order. I did not understand what this meant. I felt safer with an intervention order in place.”

*Asylum Seeker Interviewee, Melbourne, 2015.*

Another asylum seeker explained that it was her son (15 years old at the time) who ‘sought help for the family’. ‘He rang the police’, she explained. The son had come to the notice of police and child protection services following an incident at a school camp where he was involved, together with other students, in what was deemed to be inappropriate behaviour. The parents of the boys concerned were asked to come and pick them up from the camp. The interviewee did not have transport and her husband, the boy’s father, refused to go and pick him up. It was at this point that police and child protection became involved. Following this initial interaction with police, the boy was sufficiently assured, and ‘had enough confidence, that they could help his family’.

This asylum seeker had extended family members already living in Victoria, including her mother. However, none of them had permanent visa status. She explained that she did not want to ‘risk involving them’. She further explained that she, ‘did not want her mother to know what was happening’. Instead, she told the VMC, she ‘put on a brave face and kept up appearances to save her own family from being concerned or worried about her’.<sup>106</sup>

She also did not want to ‘put her family in danger’. It transpired that her ex-husband had threatened her life. She clearly believed this was not an idle threat and she was also fearful for her extended family. However, she told the VMC that, ‘her family now understands and is very supportive’ following intervention and safe refuge.

At the time of the interviews these asylum seeker women, were also experiencing insecure visa status. This meant that, in addition to family law matters they were also dealing with immigration matters, and each had two separate lawyers managing these different matters.

“I want a peaceful life and the freedom to stay in Australia”

*Asylum Seeker Interviewee, Melbourne, 2015.*

<sup>105</sup> Pease & Rees, 2008.

<sup>106</sup> Full transcripts of interviews is at **Appendix 6**.

## **The National Plan, Second Action Plan 2013-2016, Actions:**

- Funding the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children to strengthen the focus on CALD women and communities and deliver a CALD-specific primary prevention project.
- Continuing to work with The Line<sup>107</sup> to create special resources for CALD young people and communities.

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2010-2022* (the National Plan) provides a national policy framework to reduce violence against women and their children. Its vision is for Australian women and their children to live free from violence in safe communities. The National Plan seeks to achieve significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children over its 12 year span. Following completion of the First Action Plan (2010-2013), the Second Action Plan (2013-2016) included a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, and women from CALD backgrounds, including new arrivals and women on temporary visas.

The Second Action Plan seeks to drive a holistic response to reducing violence against women and their children, by recognising other cultural forms of family violence including female genital mutilation, forced and servile marriage, trafficking and human slavery. It also recognises other groups experiencing family violence, such as women with a disability, women at risk of or experiencing homelessness, children, and settlement services for refugee and migrant women. VMC forum participants from settlement services provided information relative to this latter group.

## **Royal Commission into Family Violence, Victoria**

In February 2015, the Governor of Victoria appointed a Chair and two Deputy Commissioners to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Commission inquired into practical recommendations on how Victoria's response to family violence could be improved, and provided its report and recommendations to the Governor of Victoria by on 29 March 2016.<sup>108</sup>

The VMC service provider forums took place as the Royal Commission into Family Violence began. The VMC prepared a submission to the Royal Commission highlighting the particular factors contributing to levels of family violence in CALD communities. The submission was informed by forum findings, and included information related to:

- pre-settlement experiences, including trauma and dislocation,
- social isolation in rural, regional and urban CALD communities,
- impact of low English proficiency, including use and availability of interpreters,
- lack of culturally-appropriate support services and early intervention programs, and
- cultural attitudes contributing to the prevalence of family violence in CALD communities.<sup>109</sup>

In its submission, the VMC also highlighted the lack of an evidence base relative to diverse communities. The VMC service provider forums included a discussion question related to data: do organisations record ethnicity and family violence incidents related to them by clients? This question was an extension of discussions related to under-reporting and non-disclosure. While there was only one response which commented on the systemic nature of the 'issue of collecting CALD information' at the forums, 86% of respondents to the accompanying online survey stated that their organisation 'collects details of ethnicity on client administrative files'.

<sup>107</sup> The Line is a primary prevention behaviour change campaign for young people aged 12 to 20 years. The Line encourages healthy and respectful relationships by challenging and changing attitudes and behaviours that support violence. See more at: <http://www.theline.org.au/about-us#sthash.aUMz2Ry3.dpufz>.

<sup>108</sup> The report was tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, 30 March 2016.

<sup>109</sup> This relates to differences in individual v collective cultural mores, i.e. cultural values that may prioritise community and family over the abuse of women (Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004).

Collecting data on cultural and linguistic diversity can help to identify specific needs, review, plan and deliver services that meet their specific needs. The data can also be used to substantiate funding applications for CALD-specific programs and services.<sup>110</sup> Currently, it appears that, client administrative data<sup>111</sup> does not capture rates of family violence in diverse communities, due in part to a lack of prompts in data systems across service providers.

## 4.2 Reporting of Incidents

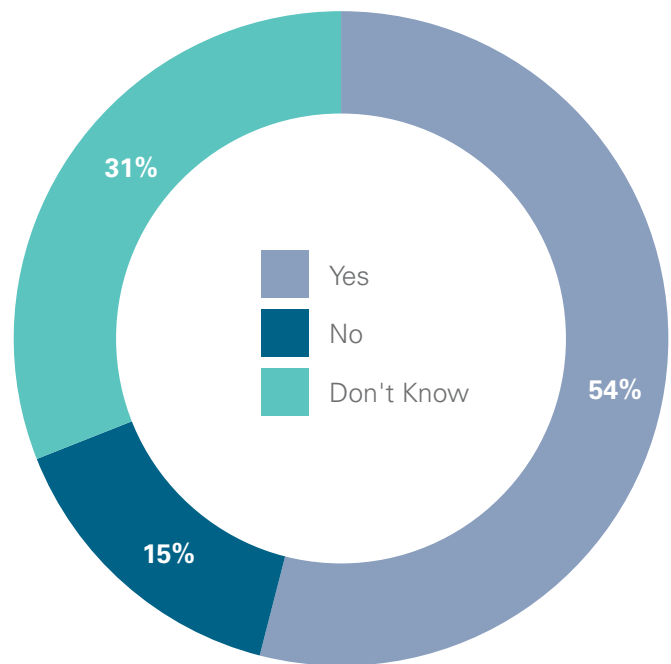
In exploring the topic of family violence with service providers the VMC asked the following questions to guide discussions.

- Do clients report incidents of family violence to your organisation?
- How does your organisation come into contact with family violence incidents?
- What is the impact of community attitudes in CALD communities?

Participants reported that, in the main, disclosure occurred within an ongoing confidential client relationship in which trust was established and built over time, providing clients with a 'safe place to talk'. A representative from Bendigo TAFE told the VMC that students disclosed incidents to them and they were able to provide triage support and referral to further support. Service providers explained that, in general, their clients are reluctant to discuss family violence. Community health workers advised that they 'usually hear about family violence incidents via relatives, other community members, hospitals, schools, police or friends'.

A representative from the BCHS advised that this was also likely to be 'in crisis', or following a crisis situation. Other ways community health services heard about family violence was via the sexual health clinic, family services, some youth services, general practitioner, and or refugee health nurse.

**Figure 9: Community Attitudes as a factor in Family Violence**



Source: VMC, online questionnaire responses

The literature suggests a reluctance among migrant and refugee women to conceptualise family violence in ways that emphasise aggression, as well as varying understandings of the concepts of family violence.<sup>112</sup> This is consistent with the findings of the VMC forums. For example, participants at Bendigo advised that 'some forms of family violence, such as emotional abuse, are not recognised'. At the Melbourne forum participants advised that, 'some don't understand what constitutes family violence in Australia'. At Narre Warren, participants told the VMC that in some communities family violence was considered part of the 'cultural norms' and 'family business'.<sup>113</sup>

However, the VMC was also advised by forum participants that 'education' was a key to disclosure, through informing people about family violence in the Australian context. At the Melbourne forum participants told the VMC that people were more likely to report incidents of family violence 'mainly after media releases', following radio and news media releases. Disclosure could also take place within the context of 'talking about relationships'. At Bendigo, community health workers told the VMC that they integrate 'respectful relationships' into all programs.

110 Office of Multicultural Interests, Department of Local Government and Communities, Western Australia, 2014.

111 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (Cat. 4529.0.00.002, 2013) reports that, *administrative by-product data* is the chief source of information about formal system responses to family violence. These data are obtained from the formal agency systems providing services in response to family violence incidents. Agencies, such as the criminal justice system, health services, and child protection services, keep a record of their clients, services provided and outcomes, providing opportunities to source information about the workloads, resourcing and performance of the systems.

112 Vaughan, et al., 2015.

113 Research demonstrates that within resettled migrant and refugee communities there may not be shared understanding of what constitutes family violence (Crandall et al., 2005; Shui-Thorton et al., 2005, Sullivan et al., 2005; cited in Vaughan, et al., 2015).

## “The responsibility has fallen to most service providers and support centres to report/ inform Victoria Police of family violence reports on behalf of a CALD client.”

*Participant, Narre Warren, 2015.*

Forum participants acknowledged that humanitarian entrants faced additional difficulties which can impact upon resettlement experiences. Experiences of grief and loss may not arise until quite some time following resettlement. It may not be until life settles down again after a lengthy period of disruption that people are able to reflect on the experience and circumstances that brought them here.<sup>114</sup> This issue has also been consistently raised at RAC meetings in relation to the mental health needs of newly arrived groups.

The importance of ongoing care to support social and emotional wellbeing cannot be understated in supporting successful resettlement. The evidence shows that pre-settlement, families may have experienced human rights violations, systematic violence and persecution, displacement, loss or separation from family and friends, and limited opportunities to participate in education.<sup>115</sup> They may also have spent years in refugee camps with limited protection, moving from one unstable situation to another, and with limited control over their lives in this environment.<sup>116</sup> It is in the context of this lack of control that migrant and refugee women may experience family violence amid a sense of powerlessness.

## “People arriving in Australia from CALD backgrounds may have limited or no understanding of Australia’s laws in relation to domestic and family violence and sexual assault, or their own rights in Australia.”

*Hearing Her Voice, DSS, 2015*

Service providers at Bendigo informed the VMC that, coming from the camps, families tended to lack structure and routine. They told the VMC that ‘children are up late, watching television’ including ‘inappropriate content and news reports of conflict’. They reported a ‘lack of realisation of boundaries’ and ‘lack of (family) routine structure’. Thus, organising family life often has to be restructured or relearned for these families.

Migrant and refugee women are also particularly vulnerable to a form of family violence that relates to their uncertain citizenship status, involving a perpetrator’s use of migration and visa status to wield control. In studies, women reported that partners’ use their dependent visa status as a means of manipulation and intimidation by invoking fear of deportation of the woman and/or her children.<sup>117</sup> This was certainly the case with the asylum seeker women who spoke to the VMC at the Salvation Army Crossroads Service, whose partners used violence and coercive behaviour to maintain control.

While everyone faces a range of challenges in their daily lives, people from refugee backgrounds may experience these challenges more intensely due to increased vulnerability as a result of past trauma and pre-settlement experiences. This means that daily responsibilities become added stressors as their lives return to some normality and routine. Added stressors include dealing with daily responsibilities in a new culture including navigating the care of infants, adolescents and the elderly, relationship and parenting issues, and labour markets.

The different ways in which migrants and refugees experience acculturation can also impact upon the prevalence of family violence. Acculturation may coincide with intensifying strains within households that give rise to other behaviours known to be associated with family violence, such as alcohol use/misuse, reduced family support networks, and cumulative stressors in relationships between spouses as they negotiate changed expectations of gender roles.<sup>118</sup>

114 This relates to the ongoing impacts of their own traumatic experiences, including reactions to the traumatic experiences of family and friends. Families may be affected in many ways, including unhealthy coping mechanisms, e.g. domestic violence, alcohol, etc. *Learn about Torture and Trauma*, NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). Accessed 8 January 2015: <http://www.startts.org.au/resources/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-trauma/learn-about-torture-and-trauma/>.

115 Bowles, 2005.

116 Zwi & Chaney, 2013.

117 Ogunsiji, Wilkes, Jackson, & Peters, 2012.

118 Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans, & Cohen, 2006.

Institutional expectations may further inhibit or prevent some women from seeking help, due simply to cultural differences such as, by giving attention to individual, 'personal wellness', rather than any 'collective wellness'.<sup>119</sup> In Australia, for instance, social services are more likely to follow an individualistic view of empowerment, and as a result access is often constructed for those above a certain threshold of social capital. Emphasis on the individual to proactively construct independence can be an inappropriate starting point for women with low social capital. However, once rapport is established with a particular service provider, it can provide a safe environment for disclosure of family violence. Forum participants confirmed this was indeed the case, including the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre who reported the importance of being a 'familiar' organisation.

**"The emphasis on the individual to proactively construct independence is often inappropriate for those with low social capital. Family violence survivors are often disempowered and without sufficient resources."**

*J.S. Coleman, 1988*

### 4.3 Under-Reporting and Barriers to Disclosure

According to the literature, organisations often overlook the ways in which community constructions may 'collude' with domination over women in community subsets, constraining family violence prevention.<sup>120</sup> Forum participants were asked to discuss the issues of under-reporting and non-disclosure of family violence incidents in relation to the following two discussion starters.

- Under-reporting and barriers to disclosure of family violence are significant issues especially in CALD communities. Discuss why.
- Why do/don't those who experience family violence disclose?

The migrant experience can cause family relationships to undergo major changes. For example, people from refugee backgrounds experience immense

hardship and trauma in journeys to safety, but their experiences also facilitate the development of qualities that can assist resettlement, including resilience and resourcefulness, adaptability and a strong commitment to the family and value of community.<sup>121</sup>

**"Addressing family violence in diverse communities must be done in differentiated ways, to 'pierce the veil of culture'."**

*Burman, Smailes & Chantler, 2004.*

Adapting to a settled life after traumatic experiences can also result in significant change that impacts thinking around gender roles. While challenges to rigid gender roles following migration have been widely thought to increase the risk of family violence, there is also evidence that dissolving strict expectations of gendered behaviour can be protective, as couples become more aware of women's rights and increased autonomy.<sup>122</sup> The BCHS advised the VMC that it builds 'rights and responsibilities' into its community programs, such as the community kitchen. In this way community health workers seek to embed human rights into all such programs and assist men and women in community subsets to recognise what constitutes family violence in the Australian setting.

Another deterrent suggested by forum participants was 'a fear of what happens next'. The outcome of leaving an abusive relationship may be difficult to conceptualise and predict, adding uncertainty to the stressors. A significant barrier to reporting can be fear related to cultural values that prioritise community and family over the abuse of women so that the risk of community sanctions is a deterrent.<sup>123</sup> At Narre Warren participants advised the VMC that 'community attitudes', especially 'patriarchal cultural norms and hierarchy' impact on levels of reporting.

Forum participants also referred to a 'culture' of family businesses. This culture pressurises women to keep the family together, and includes cultural prescriptions about what is 'private' family business such as pressure not to disclose or expose violence or seek any outside assistance.<sup>124</sup> Forum participants discussed this in terms of 'shame' and 'stigma' as reasons for non-disclosure – bringing shame on the family and the community by reporting. One service provider at Melbourne described this as a 'culture of not reporting' and 'keeping it in the culture of the family'.

119 Gutiérrez, GlenMaye, & DeLois, 1995.

120 Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004.

121 McDonald, Gifford, Webster, Wiseman, & Casey, 2008.

122 Zakar, Zakar, Faist, & Kraemer, 2012.

123 Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004.

Fear was another issue raised by forum participants at all forums, as a barrier to disclosure. 'Fear of the law and the police', fear of 'repercussions', being 'too scared' to report. At Narre Warren, participants talked about 'multi-generational perpetrators' of family violence, such as a mother-in-law pressuring the husband, her son, and perpetuating the abuse. Participants also cited 'fear of losing their children' as a constraining factor.

'Insecure visa status' and 'fear of being deported' were valid fears cited at the Melbourne forum. Participants told the VMC that women are 'disempowered' and 'lack knowledge of where to go' for help and support. Some women also fear that their children 'can get to stay with the husband'. They also fear that it will be they who are removed, not the perpetrator, if they file a report.

Structural issues can also impact on the safety and wellbeing of migrant women, and severely restrict help seeking for family violence. Analysing United States immigration policy, one researcher found that the state's reliance on public record evidence (court documents, medical reports, police reports, etc.) in migrant women's applications for residency rights did not take into account how fear of deportation, fear of losing children, and perpetrators' threats and controlling behaviours effectively prevented women from using service systems that would require such explicit evidence.<sup>125</sup>

**"The support worker knew the system. Oh my God, that was key to me ... you know what to say, what not to say."**

*Nielson and Renou, 2015.*

Thus, women also make rational decisions not to report family violence because sometimes the 'costs' of reporting are too high. Rational choice theory, a framework that presupposes that decisions to report are rational, can help to clarify differences between various communities and individuals in choices to report family violence. Women perform a cost/benefit analysis of their situation to help make a decision about help seeking. The 'benefits' of reporting include protection (for themselves and others), retribution, and whether assistance is likely to achieve their goals, especially if police authorities are involved.<sup>126</sup>

These benefits are weighed against the complexity of the 'costs' that inhibit reporting such as, fear of reprisal, the emotional and financial strains of legal processes, and desires to protect or reconcile with perpetrators. The VMC was told that the woman may want the perpetrator reprimanded but not removed altogether. At Melbourne participants talked about 'giving power to a third party' as an unknown factor. Reporting might mean the 'loss of the main breadwinner' and that could have further negative ramifications for the woman and her children.

Survivors of family violence have indicated that any desire to pursue professional support is also influenced by a 'lack of confidence around anonymity' and fear of social recognition. This relates to feelings of stigma and shame that are also weighed against bringing their community into 'disrepute', fears of personal vilification or ostracism. Balancing the 'benefits' and 'costs' of reporting also takes place within the context of collective cultural values that prioritise the collective (community and family) over the abuse of women.<sup>127</sup>

Service providers advised the VMC that 'empowering women is essential' to facilitate disclosure of family violence. 'Education' was also suggested, for 'schools to provide education on human rights', so that emerging generations are better informed. Although that might be a beginning it is not the whole story. The Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre (LCCLC) conducted court-based surveys into the effects of the legal system on women experiencing family violence over a three year period. Their report charts the journeys undertaken through family violence legal proceedings and gives voice to the women's experiences.

This research determined that the women surveyed felt a huge sense of injustice as a result of their experiences and attempts to seek the protection of the law. Some women had had to leave their homes and others had also lost connection with their children and/or their communities, who had chosen to support the perpetrator, supporting the findings of the VMC in this regard.<sup>128</sup> The 'costs' for these women were extremely high.

The report recommended restorative justice as a way to improve perpetrator accountability and subsequent restoration for women and children, for some instances of family violence. Restorative justice approaches have been utilised in Australia since the 1990s with positive impacts relevant to perceptions of fairness, being treated with respect and having a say.<sup>129</sup>

124 Vaughan, et al., 2015.

125 Kelly L., 1998.

126 Felson, 2002.

127 Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004.

128 Neilson & Renou, 2015.

129 Ibid.

Restorative justice entails processes that seek to repair the harm caused by crime, and places greater emphasis on the role of victims, validating their experiences. Further, it facilitates a form of communication between the victim and perpetrator in which the victim can describe the harm caused and negotiate for restorative actions.<sup>130</sup>

Offender accountability was a strong theme emerging from this research. Women wanted a broad integrated response to family violence that shifts the focus from them to perpetrators. It was important to women respondents that perpetrators should hear and understand the impacts their violence has had on the women and their children, and to have that harm acknowledged. VMC forum participants at Narre Warren talked in similar terms suggesting that, 'funding for proactive support' or early intervention programs including men's change programs was needed.

#### 4.4 Key Findings

Wrapping up forum discussions on family violence forum participants were asked about interventions:

##### **What works – which interventions help and or reduce occurrences of family violence?**

Australia's national approach to preventing violence against women is through public health initiatives, with primary prevention at the heart of the approach, aimed at preventing the problem from occurring in the first place. This approach entails broad based measures, designed to utilise public policy instruments to change underlying causes, behaviours and attitudes that lead to the perpetration of violence against women.<sup>131</sup>

The public health approach is encapsulated within the *National Plan*, which seeks to reduce violence against women and their children, by improving the ways that governments work together to create a more cohesive response, to increase support for women and their children, and to create innovative and targeted ways to bring about change. In keeping with its terms of reference, the *Royal Commission into Family Violence* also aims to make recommendations which prevent the occurrence and escalation of family violence, and build respectful family relationships.<sup>132</sup>

The public health approach to family violence considers the underlying determinants of violence against women, including:

- *Gender inequality*: such as unequal power relations between men and women, masculine organisational cultures and rigid gender roles,
- *Cultural norms around violence*: such as social norms and practices that support violence, and weak sanctions against violence/violence against women, and
- *Lack of access to resources and support systems*: such as public vs. private social domains, unequal distribution of material resources and limited access to systems of support.<sup>133</sup>

Public health and primary prevention strategies also recognise that some population groups are subject to higher risk of perpetrating or being subject to violence, and particularly vulnerable to the impacts of abuse once it has occurred. Formulating primary prevention strategies therefore, requires careful consideration of suitable approaches that include the needs of these groups. Primary prevention also recognises the necessity for co-design; to engage these groups in the planning and implementation of primary prevention approaches.<sup>134</sup>

These population groups include:

- communities affected by social and economic disadvantage (including rural areas affected by economic downturn and drought), and
- refugee and new arrival communities, and established diverse communities experiencing economic marginalisation either prior to or since arrival.

A program of works that contributes to better understanding and the engaging of diverse populations and community subsets in family violence initiatives is under way. The outcomes of the VMC multicultural service provider forums, also contributes information and analysis that can assist primary prevention planning. At the national and state levels *The National Plan, Second Action Plan 2013–2016: Moving Ahead*, commits the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to deepening understanding of diverse experiences of violence, including the experiences of women from CALD communities.

130 Weilson & Renou, 2015.

131 Walden & Wall, 2014.

132 Royal Commission into Family Violence, Victoria. About us, Accessed 21 January, 2016: <http://www.rcfv.com.au/About-Us>.

133 VicHealth, 2007.

134 Ibid.

VMC forum participants suggested interventions that fell within the parameters of public health approaches. These included coordinated responses, community education and primary prevention activities.

### COORDINATED RESPONSES

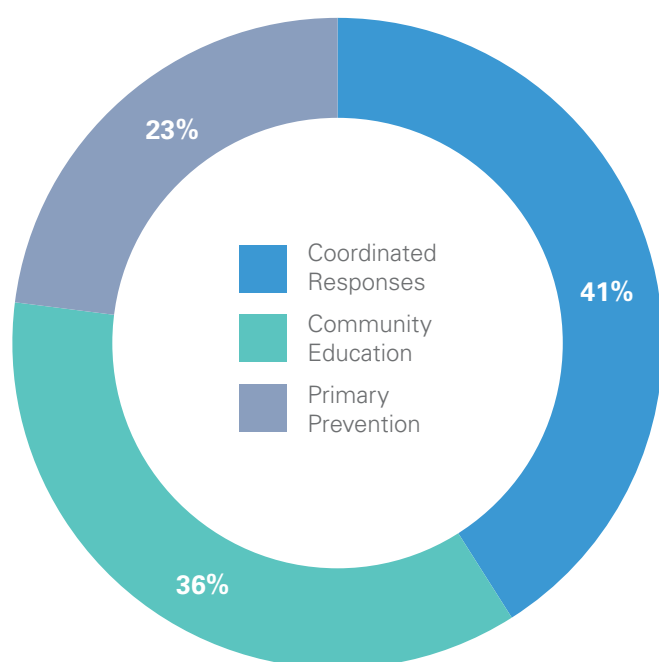
The broad range of service provider and peak body representatives who attended the VMC forums were skilled practitioners, able to provide constructive comment related to coordinated responses to family violence in diverse communities.

#### Coordinated Case Management and Mentoring Support

At the Bendigo forum, suggestions related to coordinated case management that involved ‘joined up’ services such as police, child health nurse, and schools being involved jointly in ongoing management and care of family members. This also entailed ‘understanding myths’ and ‘understanding family violence in the context of different cultures’.

In the process of coordinated and ongoing management, it was suggested that service providers would also assist each other in learning what works for particular community subsets. Forum participants commented on the need to understand how ‘violence’ is understood in other cultures, in relation to the lived experience of people from diverse backgrounds, in order to understand and address misconceptions and ignorance around western notions of violence.

**Figure 10: Service Provider Intervention Suggestions, Family Violence Interventions**



Participants suggested that this knowledge can be utilised and built into programs that address ‘rights and responsibilities’, to aid client understanding. The BCHS advised that it incorporates the learning of complex or challenging information into more relaxed settings, utilising enjoyable activities such as the community kitchens program. Program participants are then able to learn while enjoying a communal activity around cooking, preparing and sharing food.

At Bendigo, participants also suggested that survivors of family violence can be useful mentors for others in their communities, especially if they have been empowered to act. ‘With trust as a major motivator to disclose or to act, the evidence of seeing another woman’s life transformed can be compelling and empowering for other women.’ At Narre Warren participants proposed that mentors, rather than faith-based community leaders, could better represent their communities on matters related to violence against women and their children. There is room however, to involve and equip community leaders by engaging with them in family violence related matters.<sup>135</sup>

Mentors could also be utilised to work collaboratively with service providers to effectively assist new arrivals and established migrant communities. It was also suggested that local government funding streams could be encouraged to have a greater role in funding localised services like training and support for mentors.

#### Cultural Competency and Partnerships

At Melbourne suggestions related to cultural competency and forming partnerships. Service providers discussed the need to identify the complex issues that may contribute to family violence, including elder abuse, financial, verbal, emotional abuse, mental health issues, and drug and alcohol abuse. This entailed government departments being more responsive to the needs of particular community subsets, not assuming a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach and being more ‘inclusive’ to the needs of diverse community subsets. One service provider suggested collaborative partnerships and integration with support agencies as a means to improve services to diverse communities.

The Multicultural Seniors Association of Victoria Incorporated told the VMC that their service delivery was underpinned by a celebration of Indian culture and sensitive to the needs of Indian seniors in the community. They provide classes to break down language barriers to accessing services, such as accessing Centrelink. They also advised that isolation

<sup>135</sup> *Think Prevent* is one example of a program that puts faith leaders, young men and women who would like to be role models, to promote prevention in their community, at the heart of prevention efforts. For further information access online at: <http://thinkprevent.com/>.



is a problem for seniors from diverse communities and suggested providing regular transport, such as a local community bus, to improve community participation. This has also been suggested by members at RAC meetings.

The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council, who attended at Melbourne, suggested that service providers could partner with them to reduce isolation, by utilising community radio as a means of providing information to ethno-specific communities across Victoria. They advised that one-hour multilingual language programs during the week convey local news, local information and local services in different languages. Narratives on elder abuse issues, information on powers of attorney and other rights and entitlements included in these language programs could help to keep seniors better informed of their rights.

### Interpreters and Immigration Matters

Similar suggestions were made at Narre Warren about 'piggy-backing on other services' to maximise access and the reach of services, which could also entail better use of interpreters. Some participants reported that some women from diverse communities are reluctant to disclose family violence, fearing the use of a community member by interpreter services. Such a 'conflict of interest' in small communities relates to fears that an interpreter may know the perpetrator and thus, place the victim in further jeopardy. The VMC has also been alerted to this fear through RAC members.

At Narre Warren participants raised the issue of insecure visa status related to the residential waiting periods entailed in visa application matters, as a barrier to disclosure. Women from community subsets are wary of reporting and seeking intervention, fearing it may jeopardise their immigration applications. The literature confirms this is a valid fear.<sup>136</sup>

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Funding support for community education initiatives was the main issue that service providers brought before the VMC at the forums in terms of seeking to raise community awareness. At Melbourne participants suggested narratives as an effective tool in promoting community education related to Australian constructions of violence against women and their children, and help-seeking strategies. Local forums were suggested as an avenue into community social structures and a means of 'advertising' the help and support services available.

This idea is supported by the literature which suggests that primary prevention can be facilitated by promoting collaborations between family violence and immigrant support services in order to develop community education initiatives that give greater focus to shifting men's attitudes and behaviours.<sup>137</sup> An education focus along such lines could make inroads towards addressing some of the reasons for under-reporting that include shame and fear of being ostracised from their community.

At Bendigo participants reported that 'some family violence is cultural'. This referred to cultural norms such as possible 'regular criticism' from a husband over the wife's perceived faults, including instances of 'not preparing dinner to his expectations'. Participants told the VMC that this behaviour is accepted as 'normal' domestic cultural interaction and not recognised as abusive behaviour by the women.

### Community Programs

At Bendigo, participants understood that no-one except the individuals involved know the experiences they have endured on their journey to Australia and the risky situations they may have been placed in as a result. Living in high risk situations and being subject to the violence of war and terrorist situations, impacts physical and mental health and well-being.

The VMC heard that service providers are mindful of the effects that refugee journeys and subsequent disruptions have on regular family life. They described households with 'little structure' with 'children subject to lax guidelines'. This included a lack of structure around bed times when even small children may still be awake and active until very late into the evening. At the very least they may be subject to unsuitable television programming, and at worst witnessing family violence incidents. Forum participants explained that the parents may not understand censorship or the ratings for Australian television programs, but also may have come from environments with no access to television, such as in refugee camps.

To address these difficult issues in a culturally sensitive environment, the BCHS *Family Support Parenting Program* assists families to strengthen their practical skills for family living and communication, promotes healthy and harmonious relationships and supports families to build on positive strategies to manage the challenges they face.<sup>138</sup>

136 Vaughan, et al., 2015.

137 Wachholz & Miedema, 2000.

138 Bendigo Community Health Services, Quality of Care Report, 2015. Accessed 20 January 2016: [https://bendigocommunityhealth.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/annual-report-2015\\_online.pdf](https://bendigocommunityhealth.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/annual-report-2015_online.pdf).

## PRIMARY PREVENTION

Service providers from the Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Service (LCMS) told the VMC that they conduct 'confidence building' courses separately for men and women from diverse backgrounds. They called the course 'confidence building' as a catch-all term to incorporate teaching respectful relationships while seeking to address the issue of family violence. This involves seeking to empower women, and to raise levels of self-awareness in both men and women of what is and is not acceptable behaviour in a relationship. Role-play is used to help develop self-awareness in the relationship, in order to alert women to the triggers that may be the beginnings of a family violence incident. The course aims to empower and give participants the tools and knowledge in order to take appropriate action to keep themselves and their children safe.

The BCHS advised that they also responded to an emerging need in the community by running a program specifically for single young Afghani men, to help them to understand the 'rules of Australia', including in relation to the treatment of women. Having come here as unaccompanied humanitarian entrants, it was found that, after some time many of these young men returned to Afghanistan in order to marry, bringing their new wives home to Australia. The BCHS program seeks to challenge preconceived notions about married life and prevent the recurrence of any detrimental attitudes towards women from the country of origin being perpetuated in Australia.

This raised another area of concern for the security of women through 'mail order bride' activities where women are more vulnerable due to insecure residency and lack of independent income. At Bendigo participants suggested that women trapped in these circumstances can be from diverse backgrounds including Europe, Russia, Asia, and the Philippines.

**“Clients felt that initial awareness-raising could be reinforced through settlement services. They suggested orientation programs for new arrivals and the Adult Migrant English Program could provide an appropriate setting to further explain Australian law and cultural norms in relation to family violence.”**

*Hearing Her Voice, DSS, 2015.*

At Narre Warren, forum participants suggested funding for 'pro-active support and men's change programs'. Participants proposed 'educational workshops on arrival', provided 'through settlement services' to deliver 'information on legal rights in Australia' and to 'empower women through local employment opportunities'. It was also suggested that such a move would 'provide individuals with a point-of-contact in the future', although it was clear from the representatives of settlement service organisations who attended forums that this was already happening informally.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Due to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and other initiatives, the VMC is not making recommendations at this time. The recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence were to be handed down on 29 March, 2016. These recommendations are far reaching and inclusive of women and their children from NESB and CALD backgrounds.

The Royal Commission received nearly 1000 written submissions, hosted 44 group sessions (with around 850 people each), and held 25 days of hearings with 220 witnesses. From this is a vast amount of evidence and the Royal Commission included needs of Victoria's diverse communities and community subsets in its recommendations.

In addition to the expected outcomes of the Royal Commission the *National Plan, Second Action Plan, 2013-2016*, has committed funding and actions to ensure that the needs of people from diverse communities are better considered and addressed. At the same time the VMC and OMAC, are also working together to develop a tailored family violence strategy that will formulate strategies that draw on a human rights framework, and advance culturally responsive practice.





5

## DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS

## 5.1 Overview

Australia ratified the UN *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* 1966 (the Convention) on 30 September 1975, under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (the Act). The Convention considers that all human beings are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law against any discrimination and against any incitement to discrimination. This includes racial discrimination, where a person or a group is treated differently because of their race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin and this treatment impairs, or is intended to impair, their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Act protects people across Australia from unfair treatment on the basis of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin in different areas of public life, and makes racial vilification against the law.<sup>139</sup>

Marking the 40th anniversary of the Act, the Australian Human Rights Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Tim Soutphommasane led a series of public consultations between February and April 2015, in each state and territory.

According to the *National Consultation Report, Freedom from Discrimination* (2015), the public consultations identified persistent forms of racial prejudice and discrimination, namely:

- discrimination in employment,
- racial vilification and bigotry, and
- social exclusion.<sup>140</sup>

Victoria's anti-discrimination law, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, protects people from discrimination and harassment in areas of public life such as workplaces, schools, clubs, shops or places that provide services. Discrimination is against the law in Victoria when it occurs in an area of public life such as clubs, schools and shops, or in the workplace.

Through its RAC network the VMC receives regular advice to gain a better understanding of Victoria's diverse communities and information on systemic community issues.<sup>141</sup> Between July 2014 and June 2015, RAC findings indicated that diverse communities throughout Victoria continue to face disadvantage and experience barriers to effective settlement and engagement in Victorian society. These findings helped to inform the VMC service provider forum discussion questions on discrimination and bias.

The RAC findings related to discrimination and bias in:

- employment hiring practices,
- education - lack of support in institutions resulting in potential disengagement, and
- restricted access to services due to a lack of cultural competency and reticence to utilise interpreter services.

*“The experience of racial discrimination continues to affect many Australians, in spite of our success as a multicultural society. It is a genuinely complex phenomenon, not born of any one cause, not confined to any one setting and not limited to any one community.”*

*Dr Tim Soutphommasane, Race Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC, November 2015.*

Some of these issues have been dealt with in other sections of this report however they all also relate to unacceptable levels of systemic discrimination and bias. They also closely relate to the persistent forms of discrimination reported to the Australian Human Rights Race Discrimination Commissioner, as noted above. The VMC findings following the service provider forum discussions are consistent with RAC findings and the findings of the Australian Human Rights Discrimination Commissioner.

At Melbourne participants advised that 'discrimination is prevalent in employment, health provision, education and general services'. Participants also reported discrimination in housing markets advising that applicants from diverse backgrounds are not considered in the process or 'charged more' in rent.<sup>142</sup> Representatives at Melbourne from the VEOHRC confirmed that instances of discrimination in education and service settings are reported to them by people from diverse and non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).

*“Racial hatred (sometimes referred to as vilification) is doing something in public based on the race, colour, national or ethnic origin of a person or group of people which is likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate.”*

*Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016*

<sup>139</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, About Racial Discrimination. Further information available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/about-racial-discrimination>.

<sup>140</sup> Soutphommasane, Lim, & Nelson, 2015.

<sup>141</sup> There are three metropolitan and five rural regional advisory councils who meet three times each year. Further information available at: <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/regional-advisory-councils/regions>.

<sup>142</sup> The Victorian Government's *Plan for Fairer, Safer Housing* outlined a vision for ensuring that all Victorians have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. As part of this plan the government is reviewing the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*. The VMC provided a submission to the Residential Tenancy Act Review in 2015, advocating for the housing needs of Victoria's diverse communities.

## 5.2 Experiences of Discrimination and Bias

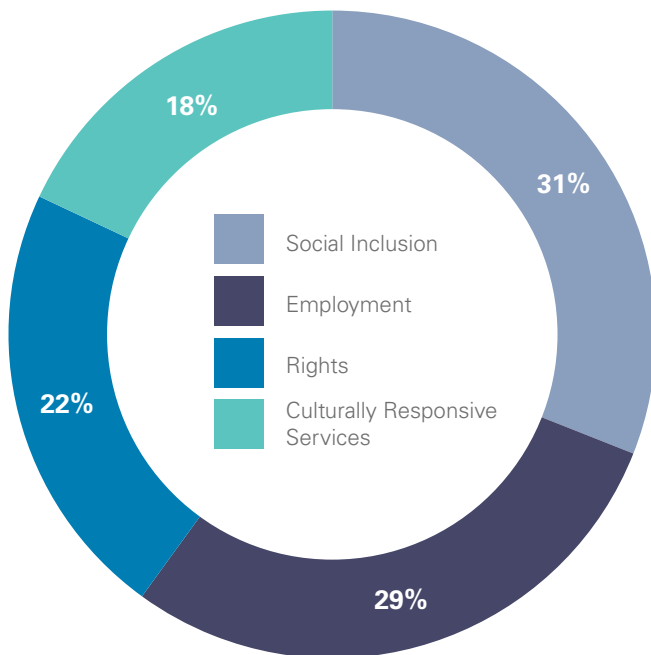
Service provider and peak body representatives were asked about experiences of discrimination that clients report to them, including the circumstances, and whether clients understand their rights in Australia. The discussion questions were as follows:

- What experiences of discrimination are reported to your agency?
  - Circumstances – such a public space, by police, work, school, online, etc.
  - Are clients familiar with their rights and protections in Australia?

Responses related to social inclusion (31%) and employment (29%) were uppermost in discussions, with 'rights', such as racial vilification and protective legislation rating third (22%), and culturally responsive services fourth (18%). See **Figure 11**.

Cultural responsiveness is the preferred term for service development because it reflects the dynamic nature of responding to people from diverse backgrounds. Building organisational cultural responsiveness emphasises the need for services to adapt to client needs rather than clients having to adapt to service systems.<sup>143</sup> By adapting to the needs of clients services can help to reduce incidences of systemic and organisational discrimination and bias.

**Figure 11: Discrimination and Bias – Experiences**



## SOCIAL INCLUSION

The VMC heard of instances of discrimination that affected people's ability to participate within the broader community. At Bendigo service providers spoke of the 'lack of facilities with access for people with a disability'. Overall however, service providers and peak body representatives at Narre Warren provided the richest information in relation to social inclusion.

UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) defined culture as "the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a social group" including the values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, customs, traditions, practices, identity, lifestyle, language and religious faith of diverse peoples.

*The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*

At Narre Warren participants discussed the bias that can occur between different ethnic groups within the same community, which results in some community members being adversely affected and discriminated against within their own local community. They also discussed the gender disparity in community subsets where 'women's lives are more restricted' and they are 'constrained by their husbands and fathers' in requiring permission to do certain things or participate in certain activities.<sup>144</sup>

Such constraints make life doubly difficult they explained, considering that many of these women have greater interaction outside of their local community, such as when they 'take children to school'. They are exposed to different ways of being in the wider community and observe how other women act with greater autonomy. Consequently, the VMC was advised that they may also 'have a better understanding of the dominant culture' than the men, and may 'seek change' as a result of this greater interaction.

143 Aristotle, 1999.

144 This issue was also reported at VMC Forum for Young Women at Dandenong in 2015.

With a specific agenda, to address the particular needs of women from new and emerging communities, the Victorian Immigrants and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC) began to operate a Women's Friendship Café. The aim was to provide safe and welcoming women-only spaces for developing friendship and support, while also learning new skills and gaining knowledge in informal settings. Representatives of the VIRWC attended at Narre Warren and informed the discussions about the needs of women.

'Cost' was raised as another barrier to participation. Service providers offered examples to demonstrate how cost impacted on social inclusion, such as in sporting activities for children, where the associated costs were prohibitive, including club fees, uniform, boots/shoes, and transport. Transporting children in itself could cause problems for larger families where the competing needs of children of different ages had to be balanced. Sometimes younger children take precedence and the older ones must go without unless they can make their own way.

'Childcare costs' were also cited as a barrier to participation in education and training, as well as access to employment. It was suggested that, sometimes the 'culture' of a community program could also be a barrier. Participants also suggested that 'organisations discriminate by not promoting clients' rights'. Systemic discrimination such as this can also arise through unconscious bias.<sup>145</sup> This can arise when an agency employs a community worker tasked with achieving improvements in service provision for a particular community or cluster of communities. While this can be an important strategy, it can also inadvertently perpetuate the marginalisation of minority groups. Developing culturally responsive services entails incorporating responsibility for effective service provision into the agency as a whole.<sup>146</sup>

Despite these barriers to participation, service providers advised that public perceptions are inclined to be influenced by overstated reports of public monies being allocated to CALD communities. The repercussions of such inaccuracies are that, in the arena of public opinion, people from diverse backgrounds may be viewed as a drain on resources.

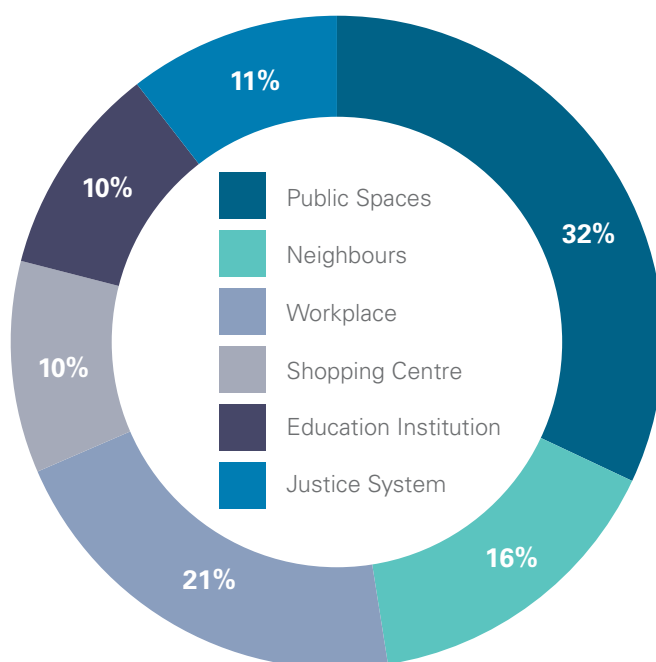
This in turn impacts on local communities, resulting in incidences of racial vilification in public spaces. Influencing the public discourse by promoting the benefits of multiculturalism and structuring statements around an investment in human capital could change perceptions.

## EMPLOYMENT

Discrimination in employment and labour markets arose through practices such as hiring bias, where applications with noticeably ethnic names are sidelined in the recruitment process. This issue has also been raised at RAC meetings and at the VMC forums for young people. At Melbourne service providers advised the VMC that 'getting jobs with non-Anglo names is difficult'. As a result, applicants from diverse backgrounds may change their name in order to be considered, or may even be 'asked to change their name'.

At Narre Warren participants advised that the 'names bias' persists despite employers being aware of their obligations under equal opportunity legislation. Service providers at Bendigo also raised 'the idea that skilled migrants need little support' as incorrect, pointing out that all new migrants need some acculturation and support.

Figure 12: Discrimination and Bias – Circumstances



Source: VMC, online survey responses 2015

145 *Unconscious bias* refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. *Implicit bias* questions the level to which these biases are unconscious especially as we are being made increasingly aware of them. Once we know that biases are not always explicit, we are responsible for them. We all need to recognise and acknowledge our biases and find ways to mitigate their impact on our behaviour and decisions (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

146 Aristotle, 1999.



Once a job is secured, further difficulties related to employment can also arise. At Melbourne participants advised that employers sometimes ‘pay below award rates’. However, people are under pressure and need income – ‘people accept because they need a job’. In workplaces, participants reported, employees from diverse backgrounds can face further discrimination ‘due to religion or race, and called names’.

At Melbourne participants observed that employers have the upper hand, relying on migrants’ unfamiliarity with Victorian labour practices – ‘employers know they don’t know their rights’. However, a VEOHRC representative at the forum advised that they do receive reports about this type of discrimination. The VEOHRC representative told the VMC that ‘colleagues treat them worse if they find out the employee is an asylum seeker’. Another participant at Melbourne advised that the employee could also ‘be denied the opportunity for promotion’.

## RIGHTS

Service providers raised the issue of rights and responsibilities at all three forums in equal measure, in relation to clients reporting incidents of racial vilification, and the legislative instruments available to combat discrimination and bias. At the time of the Bendigo forum there was controversy around the proposed development of Bendigo’s first mosque which had created considerable misunderstanding in the community.<sup>147</sup> Freedom of religion is enshrined as a right under the *Australian Constitution* (s.116) and the *Victorian Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. As the responsible planning authority, the City of Greater Bendigo considered the development under the states’ planning rules, which included community consultations, as well as placing a public notice on the site in accordance with Victorian planning law.

Service providers at Bendigo told the VMC that a ‘difficult conversation around the building of the mosque’ had begun and that it was ‘outsiders imposing their opinion on local issues’. They advised the VMC that generally, community relations between diverse local communities in Bendigo were congenial, and that the growing controversy around the mosque development, engendered ill-feeling in otherwise harmonious communities.

Although residents groups had taken their objections to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), the Tribunal upheld Greater Bendigo City Councils’ planning decision, and ordered that the planning permit could go ahead. The mosque development will include two prayer halls, classrooms, sports hall, café, library and offices, which will also be available for wider community use. Greater Bendigo City Council supports the development of community infrastructure, such as the mosque facilities, that will provide greater opportunity for people to improve their health and wellbeing. Facilities that are shared with the broader community are also cost effective, and give the whole community better access to facilities with less duplication.<sup>148</sup>

The experiences of discrimination and bias reported to service providers in Bendigo at that time must therefore be considered in the light of these tensions that were fueled by community outsiders. The controversy continued throughout the latter half of 2015, a time of heightened awareness of Muslims in the community which also affected other community subsets. Participants raised the issue of other drivers being abusive on the Bendigo roads – ‘when driving people are discriminated against because they may be from another culture, a migrant’. Incidents of racial vilification of Muslim women were reported ‘around the time of the mosque controversy’. Women wearing headscarfs were singled out for racial taunts. Forum participants advised the VMC that people ‘wearing traditional clothes’ would be singled out ‘in public places’ and subjected to ‘people yelling out insults’. During this time service providers expressed their ‘concerns about more established diverse communities being abused’.

At Melbourne participants raised the issue of bias in private rental housing markets. It was reported that discrimination by real estate agents and owners resulted in applications from people with ethnic names being refused. Service providers advised they either ‘can’t rent’ or ‘won’t rent’ to these applicants. In addition, those who were successful were ‘charged more’ in rent.

**“Promote the positives of diversity.”**

*Participant, Bendigo, 2015.*

147 City of Greater Bendigo Factsheet, Mosque Development Q&A. Accessed 4 February 2016: <https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/files/31fb3c50-4645-4715-9ad7-a51b00b552bf/Proposed-Mosque-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

148 City of Greater Bendigo Factsheet, Mosque Development Q&A. Accessed 4 February 2016: <https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/files/31fb3c50-4645-4715-9ad7-a51b00b552bf/Proposed-Mosque-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

Service providers attending at Melbourne from VEOHRC and community legal centres (Footscray and North Melbourne) advised that often people do not want to 'cause trouble' by reporting. Equally, due to 'language and cultural barriers' they often also 'don't know there is a law to protect them'. They also fear for their own safety - 'fearful in public' - when incidents happen in public spaces. These service providers actively encourage people experiencing discrimination to report incidents. 'Awareness and education are increased' gradually, through this process, by word of mouth from one community member to others.

Participants at Melbourne also raised the issue that people from diverse backgrounds reasonably expect service providers to be knowledgeable on the legislation pertinent to rights and responsibilities, and to be able to advise them. Service providers at the Narre Warren forum acknowledged the responsibility that they have to their clients, not only to be informed themselves, but to be able to advise their clients accordingly. 'This responsibility is a legal requirement' they explained.

At Melbourne, the VHREOC representative advised that matters reported to them included sexual harassment claims, and people with a disability experiencing discrimination. They also advised that the level of complaints had increased. This could be due to greater awareness resulting from public discourse around high profile issues related to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), for example.

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Cultural responsiveness arose in relation to service delivery. At the Melbourne forum participants talked about the reality for many migrants, 'removed from family' and being effectively separated from familiar 'backgrounds and cultures'. Participants at Narre Warren noted that culturally responsive service delivery would be achieved once organisational staff 'reflect the broader (multicultural) community'. LGA service staff at Casey and Moreland were cited as good examples, being reflective of the broader municipality.

The importance of providing services that are appropriate, sensitive to client needs and culturally responsive cannot be overstated. Whenever services are provided in an insensitive manner it can reinforce the effects resulting from prior experiences of persecution. This includes authoritative styles or failing to provide clearly understood information, which can reinforce feelings of insecurity and powerlessness.<sup>149</sup>

Having an understanding of migrant journeys, and how these experiences impact individuals, assists service providers to respond appropriately. This was confirmed by service providers at Narre Warren who described the ways in which people can 'feel disempowered when their experiences are not acknowledged'.

Participants provided examples where 'people feel discounted', such as at medical centres or hospital waiting rooms where they might be 'ignored or left waiting'. They described this as 'very poor customer service' and explained that it was a result of medical staff being 'reticent to call out unfamiliar names in waiting rooms'. Translated materials and the use of accredited interpreters was raised at all forums in relation to language barriers which affect access to services. Service providers at Narre Warren advised the VMC that there is a 'reticence generally to use interpreters'.

Participants who were community workers suggested the need for accredited training to ensure that front line staff are adequately equipped. One example of good practice is Life Without Barriers, a not-for-profit organisation working in more than 300 communities across Australia, who deliver services in the areas of disability, out-of-home care, aged care, mental health and support for refugee and asylum seekers, people who are homeless and young people involved with the justice system. The organisation utilises a 'person centred practice approach' – "providing services that are rooted in listening to what people want, and to helping them to live in their communities as they choose."<sup>150</sup>

**"We are setting people up for failure if we do not allow full access by removing barriers."**

*Participant, Narre Warren, 2015.*

## 5.3 Key Findings and recommendations

Having discussed the experiences of discrimination and bias that clients report, forum discussion turned to potential solutions. Although the VMC was interested in all incidents of discrimination and bias under any circumstances, we were also interested in finding out how service based organisations seek to ensure that their own practices are non-discriminatory.

149 Aristotle, 1999.

150 *Life Without Barriers, Our Approach* available at: <http://www.lwb.org.au/who-we-are/publications-and-resources/person-centred-practice-approach/>.

Bearing in mind that unconscious bias can operate systemically - simply because the cultural experiences of Australian educated and acculturated professionals can be very different to the lived experiences of migrants and people from diverse backgrounds – we were interested to hear how agencies seek to mitigate systemic discrimination.

Discussions were guided by two related questions:

- What do you think can be done to reduce acts of discrimination and bias?
- What does your agency do to reduce instances of discrimination and bias?

Victoria has a range of human rights legislation aimed at preventing discrimination, and improving access to services for diverse groups including people from multicultural backgrounds; including the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, and *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. At the core of these legislative instruments is the principle of accessibility to responsive services, seeking to deliver equitable outcomes for every Victorian, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background.

The key findings that emerged supported thinking of multicultural Victoria in terms of our identity as a state and as a nation. Shergold (2015), described multicultural Australia as “a powerful description of the evolution of the national identity to which we are all contributing in our everyday lives.”<sup>151</sup>

The three key findings related to discrimination and bias support a vision of multicultural Victoria as a shared identity through improved ‘intercultural understanding’ (54%); better ‘representation’ (25%) and developing ‘cultural competency’ (21%). ‘Intercultural understanding’, aimed to reduce instances of discrimination and bias through broad based brush strokes; with ‘representation’ and ‘cultural competence’ as supporting mechanisms.

“Intercultural understanding and intercultural competence are more important than ever because they make it possible for us to address the root causes of some of the most virulent problems of today’s societies in the form of misunderstandings across cultural, socio-cultural, ethnic and other lines: discrimination, racism, hate speech and so on.”

Huber, Council of Europe, 2012.

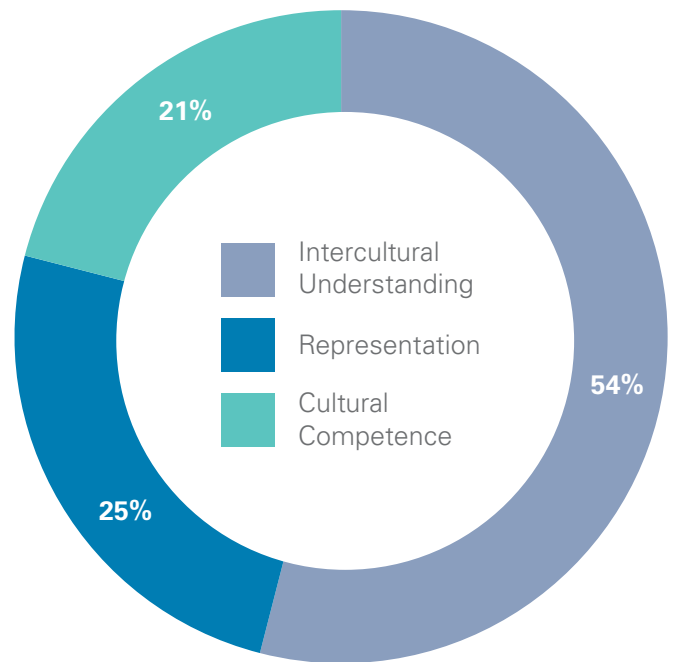
These key findings also support the principles of multiculturalism, as outlined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, section 4:

**Intercultural understanding:** upholds the right of everyone to belong, regardless of cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic background, and affirms the principle that all individuals in Victoria are entitled to mutual respect and understanding regardless of their diverse backgrounds (s.4.3a).

**Representation:** upholds the right to be represented and affirms the multicultural principle that all individuals and institutions should recognise Victoria’s diversity as an asset and a valuable resource benefiting Australia (s.4.3g).

**Cultural competency:** upholds the right to equal access, and supports the principle that all individuals in Victoria are equally entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State (s.4.3d).

Figure 13: Discrimination and Bias – Solutions



In forum discussions promoting ‘intercultural understanding’ related to strategies that would, over time, engender shared understanding across cultural barriers, and produce greater harmony and social cohesion. ‘Representation’ was about seeking to build greater cultural understanding through education, such as positive media representation of different cultures, and by teaching a diversity of languages; other than European languages.

151 Shergold, 2015.

'Representation' was not about a tokenistic response, but related to embedding multiculturalism horizontally, throughout Australian society, to ensure broader understanding of diverse cultures and facilitate far-reaching systemic and societal change.

'Cultural competence' related to responses to the second question, and the responsibility of organisations to provide culturally responsive services. This included the need for cultural competence training, and recognising structural cultural bias.

## INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

In seeking solutions that would combat the effects of discrimination and bias, service providers raised intercultural understanding as a means to building greater social cohesion through shared understandings.

The main thrust of discussions related to grasping opportunities to educate the Victorian community about the diversity in their midst. This could include sharing the success stories of migrant families who contribute to local communities, rather than focusing on the 'dangerous' element shaped through national and international reporting of terrorism and extremism, such as 'the war on terror'.<sup>152</sup>

In promoting greater intercultural understanding participants suggested strategies such as inclusive language, education and awareness raising, promoting respectful relations and providing the social supports that aid integration. Following are the suggestions provided by the service providers at the VMC forums.

### Benefits of Diversity

- Promote intercultural experiences and the positives of diversity.
- Facilitate cross-cultural interactions with the broader community.
- Break down the barriers and learn from one another.
- Provide opportunities for people from diverse cultures to interact and share information about their experiences.
- Assist the forming of intercultural friendships.

### Inclusive Language

- Think about our terminology and the way we can use inclusive/exclusive language, i.e. use of the term CALD communities may imply some community subsets are apart from the broader community.<sup>153</sup>
  - promotional language needs to be more inclusive – we are ALL multicultural – multicultural is our shared identity, and
  - think about our language – "diverse" communities and backgrounds are more inclusive.
- Reframing multiculturalism requires political will – need to influence and challenge policy makers.

### Education

- Facilitate the learning of another language.
- Teach languages other than English from primary school onwards.<sup>154</sup>
- Share intercultural experiences.
- Provide opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to learn about rights and responsibilities in the Victorian/Australian context.

### Respect

- Learn how to pronounce people's names – simple but effective demonstration of acceptance and respect.
- Meet people from refugee backgrounds.
- Community encounters training.
- Facilitate opportunities to link with others through formal and informal network sharing.
- Utilise community based training on diversity and inclusion.

### Support Community Integration

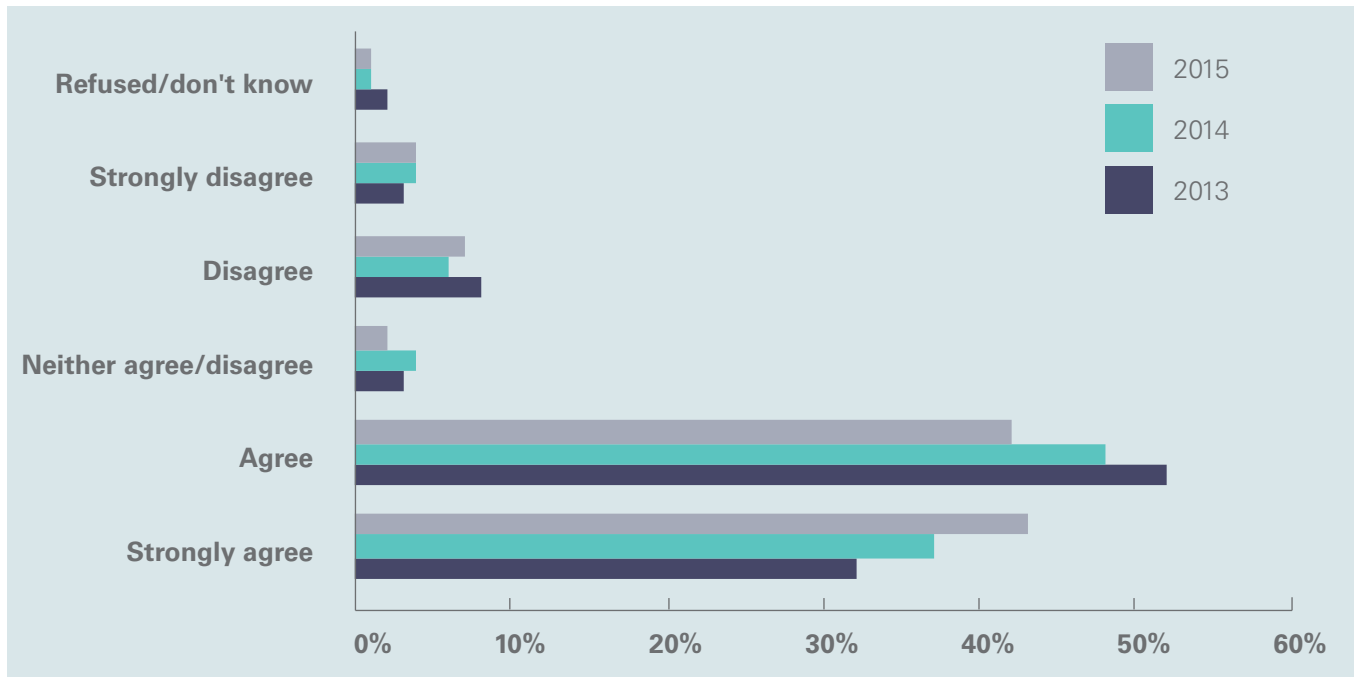
- Link new arrivals with existing communities; provide resources to foster inclusion in local communities.
- Support socially inclusive programs through funding streams that promote intercultural understanding and link communities, i.e. Women's Friendship Group, further promote social cohesion.

<sup>152</sup> Gesson (2015), suggests that the 'language of war' and 'radicalisation theory' are not particularly useful notions when considering acts of terrorism. Gesson observed that the bulk of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) efforts in the War on Terror have concentrated on tracking routes to presumed radicalisation, and suggested that learning instead to treat it as a common crime, is the one thing that could make it less effective.

<sup>153</sup> This comment resonates strongly with the information from young women at the VMC Forum for Young People at Dandenong in 2015, contained in the VMC report *Engaging Our Youth Our Future (2015)*.

<sup>154</sup> The VMC acknowledges that many schools in Victoria already do this.

**Figure 14: Multiculturalism has been good for Australia**



Source: Scanlon Foundation, 2015 Mapping Social Cohesion

- Support Mayors and Councillors in diverse LGAs who may need to be briefed on the issues facing local diverse communities in the municipality, and ways to promote more integrated communities;
  - this could also entail collaborations to bring sports or other programs to particular communities based on need. For example, the Department of Education partnering with local Council Recreation Services to provide activities, and
  - build community through inclusive activities (i.e. local sports clubs and events), which are good for children and families who may stay back for barbeque; facilitates interaction and relationship building in safe environments.

**Recommendation 9 – Promote Intercultural Understanding**

**Promote greater intercultural understanding through strategies that create opportunities to acquire knowledge about different cultures, encourage respectful cross-cultural relations and facilitate social support networks to develop community harmony.**

This recommendation seeks to promote cultural harmony through building understanding of the many cultural groups that comprise the broader Victorian community.

This recommendation could be achieved by:

- the Victorian Government as community leader:
  - developing a broad communications resource that encapsulates a vision for intercultural understanding, e.g. via a logo and or caption such as the Multicultural NSW and NSW Government logos which sit side by side depicting equal importance,



- promoting diversity as a public good within the Victorian community, and
- promoting organisational policies and practices that develop knowledge and understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious differences,
- advocating to the Department of the Environment, Land, Water, Planning (DELWP), to promote the take up of social impact assessments in planning applications in line with the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) position statement for culturally and religiously important planning applications that could be construed as controversial by local

residents, i.e. larger developments (including major social infrastructure proposals), significant change of land use, and controversial uses or increases in intensity;<sup>155</sup> and

- advocating to the DELWP, Local Government Victoria (LGV) for funding for digital place making to promote empowerment and connectedness in local communities, through design interaction that utilises urban screens and data networks to foster intercultural understanding and strengthen social and cultural connections.<sup>156</sup>

## REPRESENTATION

This key finding related to the right to authentic representation, particularly regarding negative media portrayals of diverse community groups. VMC forum participants also raised the need for people from diverse communities to have opportunities to represent and speak for themselves. It was also about having proportional representation in the work force.

‘Representation’ also related to raising awareness around unconscious and implicit bias. Following are participants’ suggestions for more authentic representation.

### Media Sources

- Re-educate media.
- Media – information (that supports positive portrayals of diverse cultures).
- (Better) promotion of interpreting services – social value of accessibility.
- Education, awareness of bias (self-awareness).
- Educate the broader population through public campaigns and social marketing initiatives.

### Self-Representation

- Give people opportunities to speak for themselves and take action.
- ‘Train the trainer’ initiatives and mentoring opportunities to encourage emerging community leaders.

### Diverse Workforce

- Give newcomers a job.
- Get people from diverse communities into responsible positions, e.g. police force.
- Employ bilingual workers, for example, General Practitioners, Real Estate Agencies, etc.
- (Employ) front line bilingual workers in services; language aid schemes.

## Recommendation 10 – Representation

### Seek to raise community awareness about the social and economic benefits to Victoria of our diverse communities.

This recommendation is about breaking down barriers to participation and representation, raising the profile of local communities as multicultural, and building a resilient socially cohesive Victorian community.

Service providers play a key role in promoting socially inclusive communities through programs and services that also facilitates understanding of the lived experiences of migrants. The practices of assorted service providers, working together, can build community resilience through community engagement that also seeks to connect people to others.

In particular, practices of inclusion and belonging at the local level have the capability of expanding local understandings of who belongs in a place.<sup>157</sup>

The Victorian Government can support this recommendation by seeking to ensure that it prioritises projects which not only brings diverse communities together, but does so in inclusive and equal terms.

This recommendation can be achieved by supporting all local service providers (including LGA community services) to:

- provide spaces (indoor and outdoor spaces) for people to encounter one another in safety,
- provide support networks, and
- provide opportunities for people of all ages to:
  - take up leadership roles within programs,
  - contribute to local community decision-making processes through mentoring and partnership opportunities,
  - represent and speak for themselves through creative arts projects, and
  - share aspects of their own culture through festivals, fêtes and other community gatherings.

155 Full wording available at the PIA website: <http://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/250>.

156 O’Callaghan, J. (2015). Planner Tech, Digital place making: connecting people and place with technology, in New Planner Issue No. 104, September 2015. Retrieved 9 March 2016: <http://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/6981>.

157 Garbutt, 2009.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence related to service provision and the ability of organisations to provide culturally responsive services. Participants made the following suggestions.

### Cultural Responsiveness:

- ‘Culturally safe’ organisations, where service providers are appropriately equipped through cultural competency/cultural awareness training. This should be a requirement and service providers should be accountable. For example:
  - one service provider suggested that sometimes local Councillors need cultural awareness training, because they demonstrate bias (religious, other) and as a result can sometimes work against/undermine officers good work,
  - include information sessions for community service providers to assist them to identify discriminatory practice, then they can refer clients appropriately, and
  - include training on recognising unconscious/implicit bias.
- Address the reluctance by service providers to use interpreters. Barriers include unfamiliarity around sources and choices. For example:
  - forum participants mentioned a reluctance by local General Practitioners to utilise interpreters,
  - participants raised issues around the confidentiality of clients (if a member of the ethnic community acts as interpreter), and the need for gender specific interpreters (i.e. female interpreter for women), and
  - transparency – independent and accredited interpreters.

### Recommendation 11 – Cultural Competence

**Compile a directory of currently available accredited cultural competency training programs as a resource, and engage a multicultural body to coordinate compilation and up-date the resource as required.**

This recommendation is about developing ‘culturally safe’ and ‘culturally inclusive’ service provider organisations, and equipping them to serve their local multicultural communities in a culturally responsive manner by integrating cultural responsiveness into organisational and professional development programs.

This recommendation is also about understanding similarities and differences between migrants’ cultural backgrounds and the broader Australian culture. This could include developing:

- understandings around the cultural norms and nuances which may inhibit use of a service, and
- a culturally respectful policy to offer service from a person of the same gender where religious practices required such a response, or where the individual was exposed to sexual abuse prior to settlement.

An accompaniment to the cultural competence resource could be a regular newsletter or bulletin featuring information regarding a particular aspect of settlement, or an in-depth analysis of one culture such as the *Community Information Summaries* available on the Department of Social Services website,<sup>158</sup> and *Refugee Backgrounders* prepared by the United States, Cultural Orientation Resource Center.<sup>159</sup>

### Recommendation 12 – Cultural Competence

**Victorian Government departments to set a high standard in service delivery to diverse communities by actively embracing accredited interpreters and translated materials to ensure that services are wholly inclusive and accessible to all Victorians, regardless of levels of English competency or skill.**

The Victorian Auditor-General (2015) observed that “Public participation is a critical input to government activity, and developing effective strategies, programs and projects. Failing to adequately engage the public risks alienating the community and creating negative impacts through poorly informed and implemented decisions.”<sup>160</sup>

In order to address any reluctance that may exist within the broader community of service providers, the Victorian Government can guide state-wide best practice through setting standards in communication in order to reach all multicultural communities within Victoria, by demonstrating leadership through the utilisation of TIS interpreters.

This recommendation extends to include translated materials and or CALD COM<sup>161</sup> style story boards to ensure that all services and broad community messages are wholly accessible to Victorians.

158 DSS, Settlement and Multicultural Affairs, Community Information Summaries, available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries>.

159 The Cultural Orientation Resource Center has produced numerous publications providing key information about various refugee populations, such as Syrian, Somali, Iraqi and so on, available at: <http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/backgrounders>.

160 John Doyle, Victorian Auditor-General, January 2015. Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better practice guide, accessed 14 March 2016: <http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG.pdf>.

161 City of Moreland CALD COM resources available at: <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/community-services/multicultural-services/caldcom.html>.

The National Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) is an interpreting service provided by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Border Protection to provide interpreting services for people who do not speak English and for agencies and businesses that need to communicate with their non-English speaking clients. TIS National's services include:

- ATIS voice automated voice-prompted immediate phone interpreting.
- Re-booked phone interpreting.
- On-site interpreting.

The TIS National immediate phone interpreting service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year for the cost of a local call for any person or organisation in Australia who needs an interpreter.

Website: <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

### **Free services are delivered through TIS national to:**

- **Private medical practitioners** providing Medicare-rebateable services and their reception staff to arrange appointments and provide results of medical tests. [This includes Temporary Humanitarian Stay (subclass 449); Temporary Humanitarian Concern (subclass 786); Temporary Protection (subclass 785); and Safe Haven Enterprise (subclass 790) visa holders.]
- **Non-profit, non-government, community-based organisations** for case work and emergency services where the organisation does not receive funding to provide these services.
- **Members of Parliament** for constituency purposes.
- **Local government authorities** who communicate with non-English speaking residents on issues such as rates, garbage collection and urban services.
- **Trade unions** who respond to members' enquiries or requests.
- **Pharmacies** for the purpose of dispensing the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medications.
- **Real estate agencies** who are located in an eligible area of new settlement are able to register for the Real Estate Agencies Pilot to access free phone interpreting services through TIS National.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> About the Free Interpreting Service, TIS retrieved 11 March 2016: <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/Agencies/Charges-and-free-services/About-the-Free-Interpreting-Service>.





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The VMC has adopted the following concept understandings for this report.

## Access and Equity

Access and equity reflects the principle that all Australians should be able to access government programs and services equitably, regardless of their cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds. Access and equity is also about social inclusion through the delivery of programs and services for all Australians.

Access and equity also relates to cultural values of inclusiveness in which people can feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. The core value is about public service, and government departments and agencies respecting and properly serving the multicultural diversity of Australia's citizenry, and placing the public at the centre of their considerations and actions.<sup>163</sup>

## Asylum Seeker and Refugees

A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.<sup>164</sup>

A person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."<sup>165</sup>

## Community

Community is a key ingredient in the complex matrix of social organisation and individual self-identity that characterises modern life. As a notion it is organic in the sense that it must grapple with the role it plays in social organisation in the contexts of diversity and value pluralism.<sup>166</sup>

However, it carries important understandings of the ways in which people share their common experiences, goals and interests develop common identities, cooperate to achieve goals, and construct a collective existence. Although a contested term it retains a general meaning for people and power as an explanatory concept.<sup>167</sup>

## Family Violence

The term family violence covers a wide range of abusive and controlling behaviours that aim to control others, and are among the most personal and intimate criminal acts.<sup>168</sup> These are also gendered crimes that have an unequal impact on women. Under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) (the Act) family violence is an offence. The preamble recognises that family violence is a fundamental violation of human rights and is unacceptable in any form, and is not acceptable in any community or culture.

The Act defines family violence as:

- a) behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour:
  - (i) is physically or sexually abusive, or
  - (ii) is emotionally or psychologically abusive, or
  - (iii) is economically abusive, or
  - (iv) is threatening, or
  - (v) is coercive, or
  - (vi) in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person, or
- b) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in a).

<sup>163</sup> Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Toolkit, Australia Government Department of Social Services. Accessed 11 December 2015: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/access-and-equity/multicultural-access-and-equity-policy-toolkit>.

<sup>164</sup> Key Migration Terms, International Organisation for Migration, accessed 5 January 2015: <http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>

<sup>165</sup> Art. 1(A)(2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol. Key Migration Terms, International Organisation for Migration, accessed 5 January 2015: <http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

<sup>166</sup> Little, 2002.

<sup>167</sup> Kenny, 1999.

<sup>168</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013.

The Act also recognises relatives of the family member against whom violence is perpetrated, including parents, grandparents (elder abuse), children, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and relatives by marriage. This extension of the definition is perhaps particularly relevant to the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds whose cultures are collective rather than individually focussed.

## Social Capital

Social capital is a concept that begins from an interest in people's ability to associate with each other. It refers to the civic value in the connections that spring from human interaction, such as trust, reciprocity, norms and networks. The Productivity Commission (2003), referred to this as the 'glue that binds together society in a coherent and positive manner'. Social capital also contributes to social cohesion.

## Social Needs

Social Policy is essentially concerned with meeting *social needs*. These needs are not experienced in isolation but arise from social relationships and social arrangements, including societies' social values and norms. Social needs are the goods, services and relationships we require to satisfy basic needs, such as food, shelter, housing, education etc.<sup>169</sup>

## Substantive Equality

Substantive equality is about everyone's right to equal outcomes, regardless of their characteristics, under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)* (the Act). Working towards substantive equality often means that, where there are specific needs of certain groups in the community, those needs are met by adjusting policies, procedures and practices.

Under the Act, people and organisations can take positive steps to help disadvantaged groups, called 'special measures'. It is not unlawful discrimination to take a special measure that promotes substantive equality for a group of people who have one (or more) protected characteristics, such as race, sex or disability.<sup>170</sup> This is one of the ways the Act promotes substantive equality.

Substantive equality seeks to achieve equal opportunity and equitable outcomes, thus acknowledging the need to sometimes treat people differently to achieve equal results. It takes into account the effects of past discrimination, and recognises that rights, entitlements, opportunities and access are not equally distributed throughout society.

## Systemic Discrimination

When policy, procedure or practice caters to the majority group it can exclude marginalised and minority groups. Systemic discrimination relates to patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that form part of the structures of organisations, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for certain groups.<sup>171</sup> Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*, all organisations have a legal responsibility to ensure non-discrimination in a range of areas including the way services are delivered.

The VMC has a statutory obligation to research, report and advise the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on systemic community issues relating to the objectives of the Commission in accordance with the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, s.8. This includes issues identified by regional advisory councils (RACs) or through other community consultations, relating to the adequacy of government services, settlement support or service delivery for diverse communities.

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169 Althaus, Bridgman, & Davis, 2007.

170 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), Special Measures. Accessed 29 December 2015: <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/exceptions-exemptions-and-special-measures/special-measures>.

171 Government of Western Australia, Equal Opportunity Commission. Fact Sheet: What Is Substantive Equality – addressing and preventing systemic discrimination in service delivery. Accessed 23 December 2015: <http://vivid.blob.core.windows.net/eoc-sitefinity/fact-sheets/what-is-substantive-equality.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.



# APPENDIX 2

Extracted from: Australian Government, Department of Social Services, *Settlement Arrivals Information Settlement Grants Funding Round 2014-15, Victoria*.

*This report provides statistical information related to Settlement Grants (SGs) specific to the SG Target Group in Victoria, eligible for settlement services.*

*The SG Target Group consists of settlers who meet the following criteria:*

*Characteristics:*

- *permanent Humanitarian stream settlers;*
- *permanent Family stream settlers with low English proficiency;*
- *some temporary Family stream settlers with low English proficiency living in rural/regional locations;*
- *dependants of permanent Skilled settlers with low English proficiency living in rural/regional locations;*
- *dependants of some temporary Skilled settlers with low English proficiency living in rural/regional locations;*  
*and*
- *some permanent Other stream settlers;*

## 1. VICTORIA – ALL STATISTICAL DISTRICTS (SD)

SG Target Group Distribution by Statistical Division and Migration Stream

Statistical Division	Family	Humanitarian	Skilled	Total
Barwon	582	992	44	1,618
Central Highlands	270	72	133	475
East Gippsland	146	4	43	193
Gippsland	330	78	84	492
Goulburn	667	619	157	1,443
Loddon	286	270	85	641
Mallee	306	405	32	743
Melbourne	33,366	20,280	0	53,646
Ovens-Murray	153	175	31	359
Western District	139	7	58	204
Wimmera	54	28	38	120
Not Recorded	576	109	0	685
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,875</b>	<b>23,039</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>60,618</b>

## 2. MELBOURNE SD

### Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian	
PRC (China)	7,522	Iraq	3,775
Vietnam	4,526	Afghanistan	3,685
Thailand	1,701	Burma	3,240
India	1,631	Iran	1,967
Lebanon	1,345	Sri Lanka	1,008
Afghanistan	1,257	Pakistan	916
Cambodia	1,110	Ethiopia	572
Ethiopia	903	Thailand	560
Turkey	868	Sudan	417
Japan	840	Malaysia	323

### SG Target Group by Key Settlement Locations and Migration Stream

Statistical Division	Family	Humanitarian	Total
Boroondara City	833	87	920
Eastern Middle Melbourne	3,984	756	4,740
Eastern Outer Melbourne	1,244	1,451	2,695
Frankston City	431	88	519
Greater Dandenong City	3,706	4,124	7,830
Hume City	2,034	3,398	5,432
Inner Melbourne	2,866	602	3,468
Melton-Wyndham	3,483	1,863	5,346
Moreland City	1,151	557	1,708
Mornington Peninsula Shire	212	15	227
Northern Middle Melbourne	1,684	572	2,256
South Eastern Outer Melbourne	2,769	1,981	4,750
Southern Melbourne	2,008	206	2,214
Western Melbourne	4,875	3,393	8,268
Yarra Ranges Shire Part A	273	280	553
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,366</b>	<b>20,280</b>	<b>53,645</b>

### 3. BARWON SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
Thailand	92	Afghanistan	273	PRC (China)	32
PRC (China)	82	Burma	218	Japan	<5
Vietnam	48	Thailand	130	South Africa	<5
Philippines	35	Iran	84	Germany	<5
Japan	30	Pakistan	84	India	<5
Sudan	21	Democratic Republic of Congo	55	Iran	<5
Indonesia	20	Iraq	30	Netherlands	<5
Former USSR	15	Liberia	17	Romania	<5
Hong Kong	14	Sudan	13	Thailand	<5
Afghanistan	11	Tanzania	12	Unknown	<5

### 4. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
PRC (China)	68	Afghanistan	13	PRC (China)	64
Thailand	43	Sudan	11	India	7
Philippines	15	Iran	9	Iran	6
Vietnam	15	Togo	8	Japan	6
Japan	11	Iraq	7	Iraq	5
India	9	Ghana	6	Egypt	<5
Former USSR	8	Zimbabwe	<5	Vietnam	<5
Colombia	7	Kenya	<5	Poland	<5
Poland	7	Pakistan	<5	United Kingdom	<5
Hong Kong	5	Egypt	<5	Argentina	<5

### 5. EAST GIPPSLAND SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
Thailand	29	Not Specified	<5	PRC (China)	15
PRC	28			India	<5
Philippines	21			Iran	<5
Vietnam	21			Japan	<5
Former USSR	9			South Korea	<5
Cambodia	6			United Kingdom	<5
Indonesia	<5			Egypt	<5
India	<5			South Africa	<5
South Korea	<5			Bangladesh	<5
Austria	<5			Colombia	<5

## 6. GIPPSLAND SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
PRC (China)	71	Sudan	22	PRC (China)	28
Thailand	66	Burma	14	India	6
Philippines	24	Afghanistan	8	United Kingdom	6
Vietnam	20	Ethiopia	8	Cambodia	<5
Sudan	19	Thailand	6	Egypt	<5
Japan	12	Iran	<5	Japan	<5
Indonesia	9	Iraq	<5	Pakistan	<5
Cambodia	8	Kenya	<5	Uzbekistan	<5
Former USSR	8	Philippines	<5	Fmr Serbia & Montenegro	<5
India	8	Egypt	<5	Kuwait	<5

## 7. GOULBURN SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
Thailand	100	Afghanistan	389	PRC (China)	57
Iraq	88	Democratic Republic of Congo	48	Albania	25
Afghanistan	74	Pakistan	42	India	23
PRC (China)	65	Iraq	41	Iran	6
Albania	63	Iran	18	Egypt	5
India	43	Kuwait	18	Japan	<5
Philippines	28	Tanzania	15	Argentina	<5
Turkey	27	Syria	7	Kuwait	<5
Japan	12	Congo Republic	5	Pakistan	<5
Indonesia	11	Malaysia	5	Sri Lanka	<5

## 8. LODDON SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
PRC (China)	78	Burma	123	PRC (China)	38
Thailand	35	Thailand	109	India	11
Philippines	28	Afghanistan	14	Sri Lanka	5
India	15	Iran	9	Colombia	>5
Japan	14	Democratic Republic of Congo	<5	Hong Kong	<5
Vietnam	14	Pakistan	<5	Lebanon	<5
Indonesia	12	Zimbabwe	<5	Egypt	<5
Former USSR	9	Liberia	<5	Bangladesh	<5
Afghanistan	7	Bhutan	<5	Iran	<5
Ethiopia	6	PRC (China)	<5	Kuwait	<5

## 9. MALLEE SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
Afghanistan	60	Afghanistan	273	India	11
Vietnam	52	Iraq	37	PRC (China)	<5
Thailand	47	Iran	23	Egypt	<5
PRC (China)	27	Sri Lanka	13	Iran	>5
Turkey	19	Pakistan	12	Sri Lanka	<5
Iraq	13	Burundi	8	Burma	<5
Philippines	12	Democratic Republic of Congo	7	Indonesia	<5
Cambodia	10	Fiji	5	Iraq	<5
South Korea	7	Mozambique	<5	Italy	<5
Taiwan	6	Sudan	<5	Japan	<5

## 10. WESTERN DISTRICT

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
Philippines	28	Burma	<5	PRC (China)	15
Thailand	26	Sudan	<5	Iraq	6
PRC (China)	16	Afghanistan	<5	South Korea	<5
Japan	10	Iran	<5	Afghanistan	>5
Vietnam	8	Pakistan	<5	New Zealand	<5
Former USSR	<5			South Africa	<5
Indonesia	<5			Vietnam	<5
Poland	<5			Egypt	<5
Colombia	<5			India	<5
South Korea	<5			Italy	<5

## 11. WIMMERA SD

Top 10 Country of Birth by Migration Stream

Family		Humanitarian		Skilled	
Thailand	11	Burma	16	Turkey	14
PRC (China)	9	Thailand	6	PRC (China)	10
Japan	6	Burundi	<5	Burma	<5
Philippines	<5	Tanzania	<5	India	>5
Indonesia	<5			Lebanon	<5
Burma	<5			Iran	<5
India	<5			South Korea	<5
Poland	<5			Philippines	<5
Vietnam	<5			South Africa	<5
Bangladesh	<5			Thailand	<5



## FACT SHEET

### Settlement Services

Settling in a new country can be a stressful process for all migrants, especially those from refugee backgrounds. Settlement is a dynamic, multi-faceted, ongoing process of their transition into their new communities. It is a two-way process for both the settlers and their new communities. The Australian Commonwealth Government offers a range of settlement services to support this process and ensure positive settlement outcomes for people of refugee backgrounds and migrants.

#### What are settlement services?

Settlement services are a range of services aimed at supporting people of refugee backgrounds and newly arrived migrants. The Australian Commonwealth Government administers a range of settlement services. The Government funds settlement service providers to deliver these services. People of refugee backgrounds are provided with a particular set of settlement services. Eligibility of settlement services is dependent on an individual's circumstances.

#### What types of settlement services are offered by the Australian Government?

**The Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO):** AUSCO provides refugees over the age of five years pre-arrival advice, practical information and orientation to Australian life. It is delivered overseas by the International Organization for Migration.

**Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS):** HSS provides early settlement support for refugees during the first 6 to 12 months after arrival. It is administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and delivered by HSS providers. It includes basic support such as airport pickup, orientation into Australian life, provision of essential goods, guidance with accessing service (ie-housing, employment, education, health). The level of support needed is identified through Case Management aimed at creating independence.

**Complex Case Support (CCS) Services:** CCS is a flexible case management service that assists refugees with exceptional settlement needs beyond the scope of other settlement services. It works in partnership with other services. It is administered by DSS and delivered by CCS providers. Refugees are eligible to access CCS up to five years after arrival. Clients are referred to CCS by other settlement services or other related service providers and then must be approved by DSS.

**Settlement Grants:** DSS provides Settlement Grants to non-for-profit organisations and local governments assisting eligible migrants in the first five years of settlement to become self-reliant and transition into their new communities. The types of services funded include casework/coordination and delivery of services, community coordination and development, youth settlement services and support for ethno-specific communities. Settlement grants aim to foster social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal well-being and community connectedness.

**Adult Migration English Program (AMEP):** AMEP provides 510 hours of free English language learning to eligible migrants and adults of refugee backgrounds over 18 years and youth under 18 not attending school. AMEP providers are funded by the Department of Industry and Science to deliver the program. It is delivered via classroom, distance learning, volunteer tutor or a combination.

**English as a Second Language Programme (ESL):** ESL is administered by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training. Independent schools are funded to provide migrant children intensive English language education in schools.

**Interpreting & Translating Services:** DSS provides free interpreting services for eligible Australian citizens and permanent residents in communicating with approved community organisations and individual service providers. Settlement Grants service providers are also eligible for the service. It can be accessed through TIS National. Other interpreting services include the Doctors Priority Line, Real Estate Agencies Pilot and phone services for pharmacies. DSS also provides a free translating service for permanent residents, eligible temporary or provisional visa holders and returning Australian citizens to have personal documents translated to English within the first two years of their eligible visa grant date or arrival.

**Diversity and Social Cohesion Grants:** DSCP grants provide funding to community groups and organisations to deliver projects that address social cohesion issues. This grants aim to address such as of cultural, racial and religious intolerance. The grants are administered by DSS under its Multicultural Affairs grants.

#### Are there other types of settlement services?

Although the administration of settlement services sits with the Australian Commonwealth Government both state and local governments also offer some settlement support. These services vary geographically. A National Settlement Planning Framework has been developed to provide a more coordinated approach to settlement planning. It acknowledges the importance of all levels of government in planning for settlement.

## Multiculturalism in Australia

Australia's commitment to multiculturalism emphasises the need to affirm diversity, in accordance with the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in Australia in November 1980. Although the multicultural policy framework is relatively recent, and Australia has been described as having "a history of exclusion", Australian identity has always been diverse. Indeed Marion Dixon (1999), argued that it encompasses at least three central groups: Aboriginal Australian identities; an Anglo-Celtic "core"; and the identities of "new Australians".<sup>172</sup>

As a national policy, multiculturalism encompasses government measures designed to respond to the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Australia. Multiculturalism is an approach to acculturation that values cultural diversity, enabling people to practice their culture free of discrimination. It is not assimilation which is based on the belief that ethnic groups should 'blend in with the mainstream culture'.

The Commonwealth has identified three dimensions of multicultural policy.<sup>173</sup>

**Cultural Identity:** the right to express and share cultural heritage, including language and religion,

**Social Justice:** the right to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth, and

**Economic Efficiency:** the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

The Victorian Government is committed to facilitating a Whole-of-Victorian-Government (WOVG) approach to multicultural affairs by ensuring that the needs of Victoria's CALD communities are conveyed to the relevant bodies and that Government is kept abreast of community concerns. The VMC fulfils this role, under the Act.

The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* recognises that all Victorians come from diverse backgrounds, and values the richness that such diversity brings to the Victorian community. The principles of multiculturalism, under the Act, recognise that all individuals in Victoria (s.4):

- are entitled to mutual respect and understanding regardless of their diverse backgrounds,
- are equally entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State,
- have a responsibility to abide by the State's laws and respect the democratic processes under which those laws are made, and
- should be united in a shared commitment to Australia and to community service.

Further that all individuals and institutions in Victoria should:

- promote and preserve diversity within the context of shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities, and
- recognise Victoria's diversity as an asset and a valuable resource benefiting Australia.

172 Dixon 1999: 18, cited in Lentini, Halafoff, & Ogru, 2009.

173 Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2015.

# APPENDIX 5

## **VMC Online Survey questions**

### **VMC Multicultural Service Provider Forum Discussion Questions**

#### **Strengthening Social Cohesion - Meeting Community Needs**

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) is a statutory authority with responsibility for fostering and promoting multiculturalism in Victoria. We seek to represent the community and provide advice to the Victorian Government on all multicultural issues. Consulting diverse communities is a major part of our role.

During April and May 2015 we conducted a series of Multicultural Forums for Service Providers to discuss their experiences and the issues they face in current market conditions. This survey offers a further opportunity for service providers to contribute their views.

The series of questions that follow are based on the discussion topics covered during the VMC Multicultural Forums for Service Providers.

The survey consists of the four forum topics (Your Organisation - Your Clients - Family Violence - Discrimination and Bias). There are 35 questions and the survey will take around 10-15 minutes to complete.

However you need not answer all questions. You can skip questions at any time.

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important.

#### **1. YOUR ORGANISATION – Challenges**

We are interested in the challenges that your organisation may be facing in relation to maintaining current levels of service delivery or in managing change.

Challenges can arise related to operational requirements, resourcing capabilities, maintaining levels of service and so on.

##### **1. Is your organisation currently facing any challenges?**

Yes

No

Don't Know

##### **2. Please outline some of the challenges your organisation is currently facing.**

##### **3. Are these challenges different to those the organisation faced 5 years ago?**



## **YOUR ORGANISATION – Community Awareness**

This question relates to levels of awareness in the community about your organisation and the services it provides.

**4. Does your organisation undertake any activities to ensure a broad reach to diverse communities and community subsets?**

Yes

No

Don't Know

**5. Please provide information about the activities undertaken to reach diverse communities and community subsets.**

## **YOUR ORGANISATION – Possible Duplication**

**6. Are you aware of any local duplication in the services your organisation provides?**

Yes

No

Don't Know

**7. Please provide information about any services or activities that are duplicated in your region.**

## **YOUR ORGANISATION – Service Gaps**

There may be gaps in the services your organisation is able to provide due to resourcing or other limitations. In an ideal world there may be services and programs that you could provide with optimal resourcing.

**8. Can you identify any current gaps in service/program provision?**

Yes

No

Don't Know

**9. Please provide information about gaps.**

## **YOUR ORGANISATION – Good Practice**

Many good policy ideas and innovative programs germinate in response to demonstrated community needs. Often these can be extended, adapted to changing needs or replicated elsewhere.

**10. Please share information about successful programs with which your organisation was involved.**

Thinking about gaps in services and programs, as well as ability to expand to meet future needs.

**11. What does your organisation need to be able to improve or expand services?**

**This completes the first section. Please proceed to the second section, 'Your Clients':**

## **2. YOUR CLIENTS – Client Base**

**12. Please select the groups that make up your client base.**

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

New Migrants

New and Emerging Communities

Rural and Remote Communities

Other (please specify)

**13. Please list the top three ethnic/cultural groups that your organisation primarily engages with.**

## **YOUR CLIENTS – Cultural Awareness**

**14. Does your organisation seek to provide culturally appropriate services to these client groups?**

Yes

No

Don't Know

**15. Please provide examples of your organisation's culturally appropriate delivery of service and programs.**

## **YOUR CLIENTS – Environment and Issues**

**16. Are there any particular issues impacting unduly on community subsets in your region?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**17. Please outline the community subset/s and the particular issues they face.**

## **YOUR CLIENTS – Good Practice**

**18. Can services to diverse communities be improved overall?**

Yes

No

Don't know

## **YOUR CLIENTS – Good Practice**

**19. Please outline the improvements you would like to see - imagine no restrictions to good practice.**

## **YOUR CLIENTS – Collaboration**

20. Do you see collaboration as a viable means to improve service access and awareness in your region?

Yes

No

Don't know

## **Your Clients – Collaborative Practice**

21. Please provide some examples of successful collaborative ventures.

**This completes the second section. Please proceed to the third section, 'Family Violence'.**

## **3. FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Family violence touches many communities. Continuing traditions of stereotypes and conceptions of what it means to be a woman or a man are often embedded in social systems. Your organisation may encounter individuals experiencing family violence - whether or not you provide specific family violence services.

22. Does your organisation come into contact with clients experiencing family violence?

Yes

No

Don't know

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE – Incidents**

23. Please provide information about the ways that clients who may be experiencing family violence are identified by staff at your organisation.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE – Community Attitudes**

Different cultural subsets may retain particular attitudes to family violence. In others the migration experience may have involved trauma. Lack of knowledge as to what constitutes family violence can exacerbate these attitudes which can also affect help seeking behaviour.

24. Are community attitudes a factor impacting upon particular ethnic groups?

Yes

No

Don't know

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE – Community Attitudes**

25. Please provide examples that illustrate these particular community attitudes.

Under-reporting and barriers to disclosure of family violence are significant issues especially in culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE – Barriers to Disclosure**

26. In your experience as a service provider what are the reasons for non-disclosure?

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE – Programs**

27. Have you encountered interventions that help to reduce incidences of family violence?

Yes

No

Don't know

28. Please provide examples of interventions that work to reduce incidents of family violence.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE – Data Collection**

There is a lack of data which identifies community subsets experiencing family violence. Building the evidence base is necessary to establish the need for, and inform the development of services and programs tailored to meet the needs of these communities.

29. Does your organisation collect details of ethnicity on client administrative files?

Yes

No

Don't know

**This completes the third section. Please proceed to the final section 'Discrimination and Bias'.**

## **3. DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS – Circumstances**

30. Do clients relate incidents of discrimination to your organisation?

Yes

No

Don't know

31. Please select the circumstances of these incidents? (You can choose more than one)

Public spaces

Shopping Centre/shops

Education Institute (school, college, university, etc.)

Interactions with law enforcement (police, courts)

Workplace

During sport (player or spectator)

Interaction with neighbours

Other (please specify)

## **DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS – Legislation**

Australia has legislation to protect against discrimination and bias - Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

In Victoria the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, and the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 provide protections against forms of discrimination.

**32. In your opinion are clients familiar with their rights and protections in Australia?**

Yes

No

Don't know

## **DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS – Protections**

The existence of legislative protections does not prevent individual instances of discrimination and bias, although it offers redress.

**33. What do you think can be done to reduce acts of discrimination and bias?**

## **DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS – Good Practice**

**34. Does your organisation take positive steps to reduce instances of discrimination and bias with clients and prospective clients?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**35. Please provide examples of good practice that seeks to reduce instances of discrimination and bias.**

**This is the final question. Please proceed to submit your responses.**

**Your response will be collated to provide information to the Victorian Government.**

**Thank you for participating in this survey.**

# APPENDIX 6

## Interviews to inform the Service Provider Consultation Findings in relation to Family Violence and Asylum Seeker Women

Interviews conducted at The Salvation Army, Crossroads Family Violence Service, 828 Sydney Road, North Coburg on Tuesday 23 June 2015, using the TIS National service.

Interviewees were recruited by Crossroads and individual case workers were present during each interview.

### Interview #1 - Asylum Seeker

- How long have you been in Australia?  
Can you tell me how you came to be here?*

In Australia 6 months. Ex-partner arranged visa.
- Do you have children?*

Three children. Two older children (10 yrs, 12 yrs) with ex-partner (Filipino).

Youngest child, daughter (10 months) with recent violent ex-partner (Australian).
- When you needed help did you know how to get it?*

Interviewee knew police could help. She also searched the internet for ideas.

Police suggested an 'Intervention Order'. She did not understand what this meant. She found the police very helpful but said that she did not get a copy of the first intervention order. Her lack of knowledge of the concept and saying she did not get a copy of the 'first' one might indicate that Victoria Police initiated an Intervention Order on her behalf.

She felt safer once there was an intervention order in place. She said she 'needed the intervention order' because she was 'very scared' of her ex-partner. She has had no contact with him since the intervention order was put in place.

The police referred her to Berry Street in the first instance, by giving her the phone no. She said she 'didn't know the rules, the law here' and was very scared about what might happen to her and her infant daughter.

- What stopped you from seeking help before this?*

The family of her Australian ex-partner (mother and sister) frightened her. They told her 'scary things' about what would happen if she pursued state help/police intervention. The family made matters worse.
- How did you find out about this organisation (Salvation Army Crossroads)?*

From 16 March 2015 through a series of contacts beginning with the Victoria Police and then Berry Street, she and her daughter were referred on to The Salvation Army Crossroads Family Violence Service. This was the 4th agency/organisation where she sought help.
- Did you get support from within your own community?*

Having only been in Australia and Victoria for 6 months she had just begun to make a new life and did not envisage this stressful situation.

She had not had the opportunity to build any friendships and her only sister is still in the Philippines. She said that the people in the refuge are helping her to understand her situation. She feels 'safe and okay in the refuge'.

She feels torn between her children in the Philippines and her young daughter here who, because she is so young, needs her more. She related that she herself was abandoned by her mother at 9 yrs old and had to fend for herself. She worked to support herself and gave money to her grandmother whom she lived with.

Because of her own experience, having worked as a young child to support herself, she feels that her children in the Philippines are old enough to manage without her at 10 + 12 years of age, while her young daughter here is not. She wants to stay here (in Australia) to build a better life for herself and her daughter.

The older children in the Philippines live with their paternal grandmother there. She says that her ex-partner has a good job there and earns decent money. Thus she is confident that these children are well provided for. Although this partner was also violent to her she feels confident that her children are well cared for.

She feels torn between her older children in the Philippines and her young daughter here. She also feels that she has no choice. She can't have them all together because she does not have the resources.

7. *Can you talk about attitudes to family violence more generally within your community?*

As interviewee had only been in Australia for a short time and lacked contacts and networks, this question was unsuitable for her.

8. *Do you know what has happened to your partner/husband?*

She has had no communication with her ex-partner and doesn't know what has happened to him.

Family Law matters are in hand as well as immigration matters. There are two separate lawyers managing these separate matters.

She would not seek reconciliation because she fears for her life. In the Philippines she suffered a near death experience because of her partner there. Her Australian ex-partner punched her in the head repeatedly '5 strong punches near my head'. She said she knows that head trauma can result in internal bleeding and worse and wants to live to raise her daughter.

9. *What hopes do you have for the future – for yourself and your children?*

This young mother wants to get work 'to bring up my child properly and have a safe life, a quiet life. Quiet life, normal for us'.

She still has aspirations for a happy family life; 'If a good man came into my life I would like to have a marriage in church'.

'My focus is my child for now. I want to bring her up properly safely'.

I can work – housework, retail, child-care, aged-care.... My first priority is to learn English. In the meantime she said that 'people here are very helpful', she said that in the Philippines there would be no supports or assistance available to her.

## Interview #2 Asylum Seeker

1. *How long have you been in Australia?*

*Can you tell me how you came to be here?*

In Australia for seven years 'I came initially on a study visa to study hairdressing and business management'. She completed Cert III and most of Cert IV although she did not finish.

2. *Do you have children?*

She has two sons, 11 yrs and 16 yrs. She and the boys are together now in the refuge.

3. *When you needed help did you know how to get it?*

It was her then 15 year old son who sought help for the family, he rang the police. He had had interactions with police following an incident at a school camp and had confidence that they would assist his family.

This son came to the notice of police and DHS following a school camp where he was involved with other students in inappropriate behaviour. The parents of the boys concerned were asked to come and pick them up from the camp. The interviewee was not able to and her husband refused. This is how the police became involved and DHS.

At this point Child Protection took the boy for 2 days, because the boy feared that his father would be abusive if he was to be returned home. DHS ordered psychological tests for the boy and visited the family.

The husband and father was abusive to his wife and his children.

4. *What stopped you from seeking help before this?*

Some other family members are also here, including her mother. She did not want her mother to know what was happening. She put on a brave face and kept up appearances to save her own family being concerned or worried about her.

She says that since the catalyst for change, initiated by her son and police and DHS intervention, her family now understands and is very supportive. However they too do not have permanent residency.

5. *How did you find out about this organisation (Salvation Army Crossroads)?*

It was through the police and DHS that she and her children were referred for assistance at the Salvation Army Crossroads. She did not want to put her family in danger. Her ex-husband has connections in their country of origin and threatened her life.

6. *Did you get support from within your own community?*

She told the VMC that he is 'well connected' in their country of origin and 'has influence there'. He threatened to have her killed and she clearly believed this was not an idle threat. She said 'he is not afraid'.

Her husband moved out of the former family home (a rental) just last week, while she and her sons have been in the refuge for many months. She and her two strapping sons share one small bedroom in the refuge.

7. *Can you talk about attitudes to family violence more generally within your community?*

Although the interviewee had been in Australia for a number of years she lacked contacts and networks.

8. *Do you know what has happened to your partner/husband?*

She has had no contact with her estranged husband, receiving information through lawyers.

9. *What hopes do you have for the future – for yourself and your children?*

She wants a peaceful life. 'Freedom and to stay in Australia'.







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