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# Wealth of All Nations



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David Mackenzie  
and Sarah Pinkney

*Identification  
of strategies  
to assist refugee  
young people in  
transition to  
independence*

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Identification  
of strategies  
to assist refugee  
young people in  
transition to  
independence

a report to the  
National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

by  
Louise Coventry, Carmel Guerra,  
David MacKenzie and Sarah Pinkney

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the National Youth Affairs Scheme Steering Committee; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs; or individual Commonwealth or State/Territory Youth Ministers or Departments responsible for Youth Affairs.

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## List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACFE	Adult, Community and Further Education
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ARMS	Adult Migrant English Program Reporting and Monitoring System
ASAS	Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme
CMYI	Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
CRSS	Community Refugee Settlement Services
CSR	Community Support for Refugees program
CSSS	Community Settlement Services Scheme
DEST	Department of Education, Training and Science
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DEWRSB	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and Small Business
DfCS	Department of Family and Community Services
DHAC	Department of Health and Aged Care
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (until November 2001)
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (post November 2001). Also abbreviated to the Department of Immigration
ELC	English Language Centre
EYIN	Ethnic Youth Issues Network
IHSS	Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy
IAAAS	Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme

IASS	Immigration Advisory Services Scheme
JPET	Job Placement Employment and Training program
JSCI	Job Seeker Classification Instrument
LSIA	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia
MCIMA	Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
MSA	Migrant Service Agency
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NISS	National Integrated Settlement Strategy
NYARS	National Youth Affairs Research Scheme
OAA	On-Arrival Accommodation
PPV	Permanent Protection Visa
RRAC	Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council
SAAP	Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program
SAC	Special Assistance Category
SCAAB	Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau
SCIMA	Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
SDB	Settlement Database
SEARAC	South-East Asia Resource Action Center (USA)
SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TIS	Translating and Interpreting Service
TISIS	Translating and Interpreting Service Information System
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VFST	Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture
YACVIC	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
YARD	Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development (RMIT)

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Many people contributed their ideas, experience and enthusiasm during the lifetime of the project. Susan Ward, then with the Ethnic Youth Issues Network (EYIN) in Victoria, was a committed member of the project team while Carmel Guerra was away on leave. The members of the Project Reference Group provided wise advice leading to the first draft of the report. They were:

- Paris Aristotle, Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture;
- Carol Croce, Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition;
- Jo Elvins, (retired) Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs;
- Susan Ferguson, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland;
- Tony Fortey, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs;

- Nigel Hearn, Commonwealth Youth Bureau;
- Paul Hoban, Brunswick English Language Centre;
- Gail Hood, Milpera Intensive English Centre;
- Barbara Leggott, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs;
- Margaret Piper, Refugee Council of Australia;
- Susan Ward, Ethnic Youth Issues Network; and
- Debbie Wong, Youth Action Policy Association.

In addition, many dedicated and experienced workers attended a series of forums to discuss 'good practice' principles and approaches. The policy ideas and arguments in this report were developed on the basis of input from key informants and some of the same people also served on the Project Reference Group. The following individuals gave considerable assistance to this project and advised the research team on many occasions: Paris Aristotle, Terri Bednall, Aileen Burgess, John Byrne, David Cox, Carol Croce, Jo Elvins, Susan Ferguson, Bill Frost, Peter Hosking, Merle Mitchell, Margaret Piper, Susan Ward, and Debbie Wong.

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some important new information.

Finally, we must thank the refugee young people interviewed for this study. These young people were keen for others to understand what they had lived through. They were generally optimistic about the future and happy to be making new lives in Australia. It is their positive outlook and creative potential to which the title of the report *Wealth of All Nations* refers.

March 2002

# Executive summary

## *The study*

The needs of refugee young people have rarely been the specific focus of research or policy development. Instead, young refugees have tended to be represented in policy and academic discussion as a subgroup either of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or of refugees in general. This study was commissioned by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) as a first step in consolidating what is known about young refugees as a specific needs group. It aims to provide an information base on which to build more effective strategies to address the complex needs of these young people and assist their long-term independence within Australia.

The report brings together insights from consultation and interviews with young refugees, refugee families, policy-makers and service providers, and a range of information from previous research and official statistics to address the following key questions:

- What sorts of characteristics define and differentiate the population of young people with refugee-like experiences currently residing in Australia?
- How should the ‘needs’ of refugee young people be conceptualised and what sorts of supports does this diverse group of young people require to enable a successful transition to independence?
- How well are federal policy and programs able to respond to the needs of refugee young people, particularly where family supports are inadequate or not available?

- What can be done to improve this service response and what examples and principles of good practice can be drawn upon as guides?

## *The population of refugee young people in Australia*

The term ‘young refugee’ is used in this report to refer to people aged between 12 and 25 years who share common refugee experiences, regardless of their visa classification or status upon entry to Australia. ‘Refugee experience’ is defined as exposure to political, religious or intercultural violence, persecution or oppression, armed conflict or civil discord that incorporates the following basic elements: a state of fearfulness for self and family members, leaving the country of origin at short notice, inability to return to the country of origin, and uncertainty about the possibility of maintaining links with family and home.

Many young refugees have lived with the constant threat of violence and some have witnessed or even experienced torture. The trauma resulting from such experiences is deeply felt, whether or not it is openly discussed. Young refugees almost inevitably begin their life in Australia dislocated not only from their former home but also from loved ones left behind or lost in the confusion and desperation of escape. Many have spent long periods in transit camps or places of temporary asylum before and, in some cases, after reaching Australia. Such experiences lay common ground between people from otherwise disparate cultural, national and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The report estimates that there are currently between 16,000 to 20,000 young people with refugee experiences living in Australia.

Despite the considerable diversity in their individual circumstances, the broad commonality of experience shared by young people from refugee backgrounds is likely to result in similar sorts of barriers to both short- and longer-term settlement in Australia. The challenges faced by young refugees give rise to a range and complexity of support needs overlapping yet different from those of other refugees and migrants. For all young people migrating to a new country, achieving independence entails successful negotiation of two simultaneous transition processes: a transition from one culture to another and an interrelated transition from childhood or adolescence to adulthood. Refugee young people are forced to cope with the traumas of their recent past at a particularly vulnerable stage in their personal development. Certain groups of young refugees face even greater challenges in their initial settlement and longer-term transition to independence:

- those who arrive in Australia as children or adolescents unaccompanied by family or a significant adult, and who therefore miss guidance and adult support at a critical time in their lives;
- those who have endured extended periods in transit camps where basic nutritional, educational or recreational needs may have been neglected; and
- those who arrive in the country without authorisation, since extreme fearfulness and a sense of loss of freedom and movement may continue well after arrival in Australia.

Once in Australia, needs are mediated by the response of the host society, and the extent of family and community networks young people can draw on for support. Many refugee young people have family and community links to help them through the challenges of growing up in a new and sometimes hostile environment, but this is not always the case. Similarly, while many young refugees join established migrant communities when they arrive in Australia, others belong to emerging groups with limited support networks.

A particularly disturbing finding of this study is the extent of homelessness among refugee young people. The risk of homelessness for young refugees is at least six to 10 times greater than for other young people of school age. This finding is suggestive of a broader risk of social disconnectedness that seriously undermines

chances of long-term independence. It also indicates a failure of policy because significant numbers of refugee young people clearly seem to be falling through the social safety net.

## *A national young refugee support policy*

Some of the most comprehensive and well-developed settlement policies and programs in the world are Australian, but the absence of an explicit identification of young refugees as a high-need or disadvantaged group creates policy blind spots with serious implications for practice.

Settlement policy and programs assume that if families are supported and functional, then young people who are part of those families will have their needs addressed within the family unit. This assumption is questionable, particularly where settlement is viewed as more than just a short-term period. It is a basic tenet of youth policy in Australia that young people have specific needs notwithstanding the level of support they receive from their families. It is further recognised that young people from diverse cultural backgrounds may need additional support and specialist services to ensure that their needs are adequately met.

The importance of injecting a longer-term youth perspective into humanitarian settlement policy is borne out by evidence that after an initial period of settlement, many young refugees do not access the sorts of services that analysis of their socioeconomic disadvantage suggests would be crucial to ensure adequate support. For example, the greater risk of homelessness among young refugees is not paralleled by proportionately greater use of accommodation and related services; indeed the reverse appears to be true. At the same time, it is not reasonable to expect that generalist policy and services addressed to all young people will be effective unless the unique support needs arising from clients' experience as refugees are taken into account.

A potential solution lies at the intersection of youth policy and humanitarian settlement policy. The key recommendation arising from this project is for the development of a national policy for the support of young refugees that would incorporate this cross-portfolio perspective. A national policy would also provide a framework for ensuring that the needs of young refugees are better addressed by more deliberate use of existing human and financial resources for support of this group.

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### **Recommendation 1:**

*That a national young refugee support policy be developed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with other stakeholder state and federal departments.*

---

## *Key components of an effective support policy*

### **Ensuring agency commitment to access and equity**

From the limited evidence available, young refugees appear to be under-represented among users of both mainstream and ethno-specific social services. This is likely to be because of limited awareness among this group about available supports. It may also suggest a lack of cultural appropriateness of the services. Good practice in addressing the needs of refugee youth at an agency level implies a capacity to take into account the intersecting perspectives of youth and ethnicity in the design and delivery of services.

*The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* could potentially be used to bring about a stronger focus, in government and community agencies and services, on young refugees. However, mechanisms are needed to ensure that social service agencies follow through and are held accountable for the implementation of their access and equity policies.

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### **Recommendation 2:**

*That the allocation of government funding to social service agencies be conditional upon appropriate access and equity policies at agency level, and be linked where appropriate to access and equity outcomes established under government guidelines and incorporated in service agreements.*

---

### **Ensuring the coordination and integration of service delivery**

The support needs of young refugees transgress both departmental and sectoral boundaries and make complex demands on the full range of human services.

Consequently, the capacity for coordination and integration of services is a key component in building an effective national support strategy for young refugees.

The National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS) and Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) are explicitly designed to encourage the different tiers of the government and community sectors to work together in the interests of people with refugee experiences. These strategies are based on sound principles but lack adequate focus on the specific needs of young refugees as well as the resources for effective implementation.

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### **Recommendation 3:**

*That the Federal Government develop a comprehensive youth strategy for young refugees as an integral part of the National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS) and Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS).*

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### **Encouraging continuous improvement by consultation with refugee young people**

The common practice of allowing older refugees to speak on behalf of younger refugees, and of nominating community leaders to speak in general terms about the needs experienced across an entire community, tends to elicit a parental perspective on the needs of young refugees. Direct consultation with young refugees is rare and this is a missed opportunity for pertinent feedback on the effectiveness of policy. Consultation with refugee young people should be a foundation principle of a national support policy. One possibility is for a non-government peak organisation to assume responsibility for on-going consultation with young refugees and other young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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### **Recommendation 4:**

*That the Federal Government ensure ongoing consultation with young refugees and service providers working with them about the issues and support services that affect young refugees. Consideration should be given to resources needed to support the mechanisms for this consultation to take place.*

---

## *Ensuring data is available to evaluate the effectiveness of policy and programs*

The capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of policy or programs that claim to meet the needs of refugees, old or young, is severely constrained by lack of consistent recording of refugee or humanitarian status in agency records. It is not always feasible or appropriate for information on a migrant's entry or protection visa classification to be recorded. There are some possible exceptions to this. Given the relationship between visa category and access to income support, it is desirable that Centrelink and other agencies dispensing emergency financial assistance record this information.

The problem of developing indicators of refugee experience falls within the larger project of developing a standardised approach to collecting data on the ethnic, cultural and linguistic background of clients in order to monitor the potential disadvantage (or in some instances, advantage) arising from these factors. In 1999 the Australian Bureau of Statistics responded to the widely recognised need for a nationally consistent framework for the collection and dissemination of data on ethnicity by developing *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*. The implementation of the ABS Standards is a pressing issue on which other policy research and development depends.

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### *Recommendation 5:*

*That the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics develop a process to monitor the national implementation of the ABS Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity in both the government and non-government sectors.*

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## *Recognising risk and resilience*

A key aim of this study has been to identify strategies to enable the early and effective settlement of young refugees. The enormous challenges faced by many young refugees upon arriving in Australia would appear in some cases to raise insurmountable barriers to successful settlement. However, an exclusive focus on the 'neediness' of these young people may result in unwarranted pessimism about their longer-term

prospects. Young refugees, like young people generally, tend to be resilient and adaptive; moreover people from refugee backgrounds are proven survivors, having often overcome considerable difficulties to reach Australia.

Agencies supporting young refugees must find ways to build on the strengths of young refugees and assist them to participate in the community. At the same time, failure to recognize the multiplicity and complexity of the needs of this diverse group of young people will undermine the ultimate effectiveness of government and community support. Therefore, young people with refugee experiences should be seen as a 'high risk' group, meriting priority attention and specific allocation of resources in many areas of social policy, much in the same way as homeless young people have received such attention in recent years.

Appreciating and responding effectively to the needs of young refugees necessarily involves a longer-term support perspective than that which defines the parameters of current settlement programs. The review of government support and services undertaken for this study suggests that the least developed program areas are those that potentially respond to the longer-term needs of young refugees. This is not a problem any department of immigration can solve by itself. The federal departments responsible for education, income and employment services will need to assume greater responsibility for addressing the needs of young refugees within their programs and services. The explicit identification of young people with refugee experiences as a special needs group within the program areas of relevant departments is one way of enabling a longer-term perspective on strategies for assisting successful settlement.

An effective national policy for young refugees should focus not only on an initial period of settlement but beyond to their future lives as new residents and citizens of Australia. The importance of adopting a longer-term perspective on 'settlement' raises the issue of how to define the target population of young refugee *settlers*. Currently many young people with refugee experiences living in Australia are not considered by government to be prospective 'settlers'. This is true in the case of temporary protection visa holders who, by definition, are allowed to remain in Australia for a limited time; it is not intended that people under the terms and conditions of these visas settle and make Australia their home. Most mainstream government services, including income support, are only available to migrants with permanent residency status.

We argue that young people with refugee experiences who are resident in Australia on a temporary basis and/or whose claims for refugee status and protection are still being processed (asylum seekers), should be included in a national young refugee support policy even though their 'final' destination may be a country other than Australia. Both temporary protection visa holders and asylum seekers are resident in Australia for an uncertain period of time. Even young people who remain ineligible for permanent protection visas and hence permanent residency status may remain in Australia for longer than three years since temporary protection visas may be renewed. For people in their teens and early twenties, even relatively short periods without adequate support can seriously undermine long-term life chances and independence (whether in Australia or elsewhere). On humanitarian grounds and on the grounds of enhancing the effectiveness of policy designed to enable early and effective settlement, all young people with refugee experiences living in Australia and seeking Australia's protection should be treated 'as if' they were going to remain in the country indefinitely. This would entail having access to education, income, employment and other mainstream supports from the beginning of their stay.

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#### **Recommendation 6:**

*That broad youth policy in the federal and state jurisdictions explicitly address the special needs of young people with refugee experience along with other special needs groups where appropriate.*

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### **Ensuring equity and efficiency in criteria of eligibility for government services**

This report argues that the target population for a national support strategy should comprise young people with refugee experiences resident in Australia and that eligibility should be decided according to need. At present, eligibility for a range of mainstream and migrant specific supports and services is determined on the basis of visa classification and residency status. We argue that the 'hierarchy of benefits' set in place by current distinctions in the visa classification system, results in serious inequities in the treatment of young refugees. First, people with similar claims for refugee status, or more broadly, for humani-

tarian protection, are treated differently according to the means by which they entered the country. Second, young people who share similar refugee experiences and settlement support needs, entered, or were allowed to stay in Australia on visas that confer very different entitlements to government assistance.

Two subgroups of young people with refugee experiences residing in Australia are identified as being particularly disadvantaged by current visa and eligibility arrangements. These are temporary protection visa holders and young people who were sponsored to Australia by refugee family members under the Family Stream of the Migration Program. The number of young people in both these subgroups can be anticipated to increase. The likely impact of restrictions to eligibility for government assistance is to undermine the chances of some particularly high-risk groups of young migrants for successful settlement. Current arrangements are not only inequitable but, from the point of view of strategic settlement policy, they are also likely to be ineffective. The approach to determining eligibility stands in marked contrast to federal youth policy generally, where emphasis is increasingly placed on ensuring young people at risk of not making a successful transition to independence are specifically targeted for preventative assistance. The overlap in the populations of young refugees and homeless young people heightens this contradiction. The report makes the case for a needs-based approach to eligibility on the grounds of equity and the long-term effectiveness of refugee settlement policy and youth policy.

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#### **Recommendation 7:**

*That the eligibility criteria for government assistance to young people with refugee experiences be reviewed with the objective of investigating how a needs-based approach might best be implemented.*

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### **Fostering community support and understanding**

As young refugees begin their lives in Australia, they tend to become aware of conflicting messages. On the one hand, they encounter an ethic of multiculturalism which tells them they are welcome and valued additions to Australian society; on the other, they encounter racist attitudes and practices that suggest the opposite. Racist attitudes and practices constantly

undermine the official policy stance of multiculturalism. There needs to be continuing community education to encourage a more positive, empathetic and generous response to disadvantaged groups including refugees and asylum seekers. This is important for receiving broad community support for extending equitable and humane treatment to these young people.

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**Recommendation 8:**

*That the Federal Government undertake continuing community education to encourage people in the broader community to respond positively and generously to refugees and asylum seekers, particularly by highlighting young refugees as future young Australians.*

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**Developing cultural awareness among service providers**

An unintentional lack of cultural sensitivity is observable in some service institutions and service providers. Cross-cultural awareness training is often a low priority and low status activity in Australia, and this needs to be overturned. In-service training and the training of mainstream service providers by ethno-specific service providers can help sensitise mainstream professionals to the issues. Beyond the individual commitment of staff, and opportunities for training, issues of cultural and linguistic appropriateness are relevant to all levels of an organisation's practice: the nature of services delivered, the process for delivering these services, the system and culture of management, and the external organisational relationships.

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**Recommendation 9:**

*That a proportion of government funds for organisations working largely with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds be tied to cross-cultural awareness staff training and organisational development.*

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**Further research**

This study has highlighted many gaps in our basic knowledge about young refugees in Australia. Two areas are recommended for further attention. A need is particularly evident for reliable information on the circumstances of refugee young people who first came to Australia without authorisation. Another group of young people about whom little is known and whose needs may consequently be overlooked are the children of refugees.

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**Recommendation 10:**

*That further research be conducted to ascertain similarities and differences between the needs of refugees and their children.*

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**Recommendation 11:**

*That further research be undertaken to investigate the needs and access to support services of refugee young people currently living in the Australian community who arrived without authorisation and/or who hold bridging or temporary protection visas.*

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**Conclusion**

The importance of developing a national young refugee support policy lies in enabling some 16,000 to 20,000 young people find a real home in Australia and make their full contribution to Australian society. This contribution promises to be considerable, but first these young people must be assisted to meet the challenges that confront them on arrival. To be effective in helping young refugees make a successful transition to independence, policy and program development must explicitly take the complex and multifaceted needs of these young people into account. It must also recognise that an adequate response to the needs of refugee young people entails a long-term commitment. The adoption and successful implementation of the good practice approaches identified as part of a national strategy in this report require the commitment and care of practitioners and service providers. Success also depends on the political will and dedicated financial support of the Federal Government.

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>



## *Background to the project*

The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) annually commissions significant research into current social, political and economic issues affecting Australia's young people (those aged between 12 and 25 years). In 1997, NYARS commissioned the Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (then the Ethnic Youth Issues Network) to undertake a study to identify strategies that would enable refugee young people to make a successful transition to independence within their new country.

Young people from refugee backgrounds potentially face many barriers to successful resettlement resulting from their pre-migration and migration experiences. Relatively little research focuses specifically on young refugees to ascertain how this group's settlement needs may differ from those of older refugees and other migrants. In his landmark report published in 1994 about the settlement of refugee, humanitarian and displaced immigrants in Australia, James Jupp argued that the absence of a distinction between the settlement needs of refugees and those of other migrants represented a key policy failure. Jupp identified the 'study of the social adjustment [...] of refugee youth' as one of the priority areas for further research (1994, p.84).

Young people with refugee experiences might reasonably be expected to have different or more

complex needs compared with most other young migrants regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. Young refugees face the difficulty of having to work through past traumas and rebuild relationships, while starting life afresh in a new country whose language and culture is new to them. Usually, but not always, they do this with the support of at least some family members. Unlike their parents or other adult family members, refugee young people simultaneously face the challenge of 'growing up' in their new country. This study is grounded in the realisation that a better understanding of the specific needs of young refugees and the nature of the difficulties they experience in making the transition to independence is a prerequisite to developing more effective policy and programs.

## *Project partners*

This project was jointly undertaken by RMIT's Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

The Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development (YARD) is a university organisation that has close links with the youth sector. The centre has established a national reputation for its work in a number of important areas of youth research and development.

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) is a Victorian community-based support and resource

organisation for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the organisations that work with ethnic minority young people. It is an independent body auspiced by the Australian Multicultural Foundation. The centre's immediate predecessor, the Ethnic Youth Issues Network, was established in 1988 and was auspiced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.

A Project Reference Group was established at the outset of the study to advise on the best way to achieve the project objectives and to assist in the interpretation of findings. A list of reference group members can be found in Appendix 1.

## *Objectives and research design*

The project was designed to answer the following key questions:

- What sorts of characteristics define and differentiate the population of young people with refugee-like experiences currently residing in Australia?
- How should the 'needs' of refugee young people be conceptualised and what sorts of supports do this diverse group of young people require to enable a successful transition to independence?
- How well are federal policy and programs able to respond to the needs of refugee young people, particularly where family supports are inadequate or not available?
- What can be done to improve this service response, and what examples and principles of good practice can be drawn upon as guides?

Mindful of Moss's observation that 'large scale, quantitative studies into the needs of refugees are not appropriate and may not yield much useful data' (1993, p.175), the project adopted a multi-method approach comprising several components.

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### *Component 1:*

#### *Review of academic and policy-related literature*

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The literature review covered: theorisation on the conceptualisation of need; accounts of the pre-migration, migration and settlement experiences of refugees, particularly of young refugees; and empirical

and theoretical studies identifying the risk factors and barriers to settlement associated with the refugee experience.

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### *Component 2:*

#### *A review of government policies and program information*

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This review is current to March 2002. Information was obtained directly from relevant government departments and agencies, and from their web sites.

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### *Component 3:*

#### *Analysis of secondary data sources to profile the target group*

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The research team initially sought data from seven sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA), the Translating and Interpreting Service Information System (TISIS), the Adult Migrant English Program Reporting and Monitoring System (ARMS), the National Settlement Database (SDB), the (former) Department of Social Security, and from Brunswick English Language Centre (which had collected information about migrant students with low literacy levels). Refer to Appendix 2 for information about these sources of data.

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### *Component 4:*

#### *Consultation with a range of policy-makers and service providers to elicit their views on the adequacy of government policy relevant to young refugees*

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The people consulted for the study were those identified as having considerable expertise in working with young refugees over many years. They came from both the public (federal and state) and community sectors, with specific expertise in housing, management, service development, torture and trauma, mental health, youth policy, juvenile justice, education and language services. Our informants were asked to talk about their views on the strengths and weaknesses of government policy affecting young refugees. Topics

included access, eligibility, coordination and information sharing, assessments, on-arrival assessments, asylum seekers, health, employment, income, education and training, justice and law, housing, identity, language services and practice concerns.

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### *Component 5:*

*A survey of 200 students attending selected English Language Centres (3) and Adult Migrant English Programs (5) in Queensland and New South Wales*

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English Language Centres and Adult Migrant English Programs provide an important point of access to refugee young people. All states and territories with the exception of Victoria provided appropriate ethics clearance for the project to survey or interview young refugees in English Language Centres. Victoria's refusal to participate in the project is unfortunate, since this state is home to the second largest proportion of new humanitarian arrivals after New South Wales. To compensate for this, the results of the survey were compared with data from a 1995 pilot survey conducted in Victoria. Students were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 8) in a classroom situation under the supervision of their teacher. The questionnaire, a plain language statement and the consent form were translated into 10 community languages. Additional interpreters were used for other languages. The survey was piloted with a small group of students and amendments made before the large-scale administration of the survey. Respondents were asked about the conditions in former countries that led them to seek refugee status, their living and housing arrangements in Australia, and their future plans. See Appendix 8 for a copy of the survey instrument.

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### *Component 6:*

*A national survey to estimate the extent of homelessness among young refugees*

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This study sought to investigate common anecdotal claims that refugee young people have a high risk of homelessness extending beyond an initial period of settlement in which housing instability would be anticipated for all new arrivals. Homelessness, in its various degrees, is an important indicator of social

disconnectedness. Young people living in temporary or inadequate accommodation for long periods of time, as well as those living on the streets or in squats, are likely to encounter acute difficulties in taking advantage of various employment and education opportunities and preparing themselves adequately for their future lives in Australia. To assess the extent of homelessness among young refugees, Adult Migrant English Programs and English Language Centres across Australia were asked to count the number of students during the week of the survey whose situation matched various categories of housing stress or homelessness. A four-category definition of homelessness was devised specifically for the purposes of this study (see Appendix 3). The results of this survey were compared with new data from the national census of homeless school students (MacKenzie & Chamberlain 1995).

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### *Component 7:*

*Face-to-face interviews with selected students at English Language Centres and Adult Migrant English Programs in New South Wales and Queensland*

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Altogether, 33 interviews were conducted, each between 40 and 80 minutes in duration. Interpreters were used as required and interviews were tape-recorded. Twenty-one interviewees were male and 12 were female. About one-third of the interviewees came from Bosnia (12), but a range of other countries were also represented namely Algeria (1), Afghanistan (2), Pakistan (1), East Timor (1), Croatia (2), Vietnam (3), Iraq (5), Somalia (4), Sudan (1) and Eritrea (1). Interviewees ranged in age from 15 to 25 years. English Language Centres and Adult Migrant English Programs were chosen as data collection sites because they are the last near-universal point of service contact with refugees. Individual sites were selected for accessibility and the cultural mix of the community in which each institution was located. Participating sites were: Liverpool Adult Migrant English Program, Milperra Intensive English Centre, Keebra Park State High School, Southbank TAFE, Yeronga TAFE, Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre, Fairfield Adult Migrant English Program and Auburn Adult Migrant English Program. See Appendix 4 for a copy of the interview schedule.

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### **Component 8:**

#### *Interviews with five refugee families living in Victoria*

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These interviews were conducted by staff from the Job Placement, Education and Training (JPET) program employed by the Ethnic Youth Issues Network (now the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues), and families were chosen because of their existing links and rapport with JPET staff. The aim of the interviews was to explore families' expectations for their children and to get a sense of cultural variability in notions of 'independence'. Five families were interviewed. This was an exercise in sensitisation rather than an attempt to interview a representative cross-section of refugee families. The family interview schedule is included in Appendix 5.

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### **Component 9:**

#### *Good practice forums and consultation with community service agencies*

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Three half-day forums were conducted in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to generate ideas about good practice in working with young refugees and to document examples of services and programs that seemed to work particularly well. Between 18 and 30 individuals with experience working with refugee young people attended each of the forums. Attendees were from both the public and community sectors and were predominantly involved in direct service work, although a significant number of policy workers and youth advocates also attended. Attendance was by invitation only, and invitation lists were compiled by youth peak bodies in each state, in consultation with the project team. Ideas about the concept of good practice were presented at the outset of each forum, after which the discussion was oriented towards specific indicators of good practice in working with young people with refugee-like experiences. Forum participants worked through two rounds of workshops focused on service responses to young refugees. The first round of workshops considered differences between good practice work with young refugees and with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across several service areas: employment, education and training; housing; health; and racism, identity and culture. Young people from

culturally diverse backgrounds were chosen as the point of comparison because, of all potential service users, they most closely resemble young refugees. The second round of workshops recognised that service provision ought to be considered along a temporal continuum. Participants were asked to identify examples and indicators of good practice work with young refugees in a reception context, in a settlement context and in a post-settlement context. (See Appendix 7 for a more detailed description of the forum agendas and method.) Further consultation with workers from a range of community service agencies (selected on the basis of information gathered in study Components 1 to 9) was carried out in order to develop clearer strategies for assisting young people in their transition to independence.

### *Structure of the report*

The report is divided into seven chapters addressing the project objectives, and eight appendices that provide detail on specific aspects of data collection. Chapter 2 explains the definition of 'young refugee' adopted by this study. The notion of 'refugee experience' is contrasted with official classifications of refugee and humanitarian status embodied in international law and Australian migration policy. The chapter identifies the common threads of experience that unite young people from refugee backgrounds and, in the context of an overview of Australia's immigration program, explains the different visa classifications under which these young people enter, or are allowed to stay in, Australia. Chapter 3 estimates the total number of young people with refugee-like experiences currently living in Australia. It presents a range of statistical data on the source countries, age, gender and geographical distribution of young refugees who entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program, and highlights the gaps in our current knowledge about the wider population of young people from refugee backgrounds. Chapter 4 considers how refugee experiences before, during and immediately after migration potentially erect barriers to young people's successful resettlement and longer-term independence. The chapter outlines problems associated with the conceptualisation and measurement of 'need' with respect to this client group and provides a descriptive account of key issues in the areas of employment, education, training, accommodation, health, justice, income and psycho-social support. Chapter 5 reviews the capacity of the current service system to meet the

immediate and longer-term support needs of young people with refugee experiences. It explains Australia's commitment to refugees generally and the de facto policy context in which the needs of young refugees are currently addressed, including an overview of federal government services and programs. Chapter 6 draws attention to key examples of good practice in service delivery, and in policy and program development, and makes a first attempt to identify the principles that underpin good practice. Finally, Chapter 7 summarises key findings and draws out the main policy implications of the study, with recommendations for improving support to young people with refugee experiences.

### *Note on terminology*

In this report, unless otherwise stated, the term 'young refugee' is used to refer to people aged between 12 and 25 years who share common refugee-like experiences, regardless of their strict entry status or visa classification. This is to recognise that not all people with refugee experiences have official refugee status or entered the country under the Humanitarian Program of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (as explained further in Chapter 2). The terms 'young refugees', 'refugee young people', 'young people with refugee experiences' and 'young people from refugee backgrounds' are used interchangeably. The migration categories under which young people with refugee experiences have entered Australia are described using their official title to avoid

possible confusion, for example, 'entrants under the Refugee component of the offshore Humanitarian Program'.

The term 'mainstream' is used frequently in this report. Conventionally it is used to refer to organisations that are seen as central to the Australian way of life and endorsed by the broader community. Such organisations are generally contrasted with 'ethnic or ethno-specific' organisations and services that are by implication seen as more marginal. In this report, the term 'mainstream' is used more neutrally to describe those services or organisations that are set up for all groups in the community in contrast with services specifically designed to meet the needs of a particular group or groups.

The term 'Anglo-Australian' has been used as a shorthand reference to people who come from English-speaking communities and cultures, and does not refer exclusively to those whose families originated in Great Britain.

### *Note on currency of the report*

The interviews and consultation for this study were carried out between 1997 and 1998. Several factors, including changes to the research team, delayed publication of the findings. However, an initial draft of the report was substantially revised prior to eventual publication in 2002. This report incorporates new data and discussion of federal government policy and programs current to March 2002.



# Refugee status and experience 2



In this chapter we explore the question of defining the population of ‘young refugees’ deemed to be in need of targeted settlement assistance. The notion of ‘refugee experience’ is contrasted with official definitions of refugee and humanitarian status embodied in international law and Australian migration policy. The chapter aims to identify the common experiences that define what it means to be a ‘young refugee’ in order to better understand the sorts of barriers likely to confront these young people during resettlement. In the context of an overview of Australia’s immigration program, we explain the different visa classifications under which young people with refugee experiences enter, or are allowed to stay, in Australia.

## *The target population*

In public policy, definitions carry with them important implications for the allocation of resources. The tasks of defining what it means to be a ‘young refugee’ and identifying a target population for government assistance are not one and the same, but they need to be carried out in reference to each other. This would encourage the production of definitions that can usefully be employed for specific policy purposes and enable meaningful and equitable distinctions to be drawn regarding eligibility and ineligibility for services.

The purpose driving this study is to find ways to enable the successful resettlement of young refugees. An initiating premise was the recognition that new

arrivals from refugee backgrounds are likely, as a result of their pre-migration and migration experiences, to face common difficulties in their efforts to adjust to a new life in Australia. Further, it was anticipated that young people with refugee experiences would have needs identifiable, if not entirely distinct, from those of older refugees. Therefore, in order to determine the in-principle target population for strategies aimed at assisting the long-term independence of young refugees, we must identify the sorts of experiences that differentiate refugee young people from other client groups, specifically on the basis of likely impacts on the capacity for successful resettlement.

The first point of reference in defining a ‘refugee’ is generally the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Status of Refugees*. The UN definition is often embedded in the legislation of individual nations regarding humanitarian migration. Definitions developed for the purposes of managing the international refugee protection system and national humanitarian commitments, however, are not necessarily suited to the purpose of identifying a target population for settlement support services. It is refugee-like experience rather than official designation as a refugee or possession of a humanitarian-class visa that defines the relevant population. The defining characteristics will of course overlap, but will not coincide exactly.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that the migration category under which a young person with refugee-like experience is admitted and/or allowed

to stay in Australia has considerable impact on his or her eligibility for government services and assistance. More broadly, different 'classes' of migration carry with them different degrees of public support and understanding that may in turn affect the likelihood of successful settlement in Australia.

### *The limitations of official definitions*

Official definitions and visa classifications remain important guides to definition. The UN 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to Refugees* define refugees as people who:

*are outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence; and are unable or unwilling to return or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, and among other things, are not war criminals or people who have committed serious non-political crimes.*

The Convention is widely recognised as being overly restrictive for the purposes of identifying people deserving of humanitarian consideration and in need of resettlement. Designed just after the Second World War, the definition does not fully capture the circumstances that have forced people since then to leave their home countries in their thousands and seek asylum elsewhere. In addition, many of the specific types of persecution women are subject to are not recognised as amounting to persecution under the Convention.

Australia is a signatory to the Convention, which it ratified in 1954, and the Protocol, ratified in 1973. Australia is consequently bound by these treaties. The Convention definition of refugee was incorporated under Australian law with the enactment of the *Commonwealth Migration Act 1958*.<sup>1</sup> In 1995 the Act was amended so that for a person to be classified as a refugee there must be a link between the allowed reason claimed for anticipation of persecution (whether on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social or political group) and the particular persecution faced by an individual should they return to their former country. Subsequent to this, there have been several revisions to the Australian interpretation of the UN definition. Nevertheless, this definition remains central to Australian policy for humanitarian resettlement. As discussed below, the UN definition of refugee is employed in three different

components of Australia's offshore and onshore Humanitarian Program.

Historically, the Australian government has recognised that the UN definition of refugee is not inclusive of all those people who may require protection and resettlement. Accordingly, Australia allows some people not classified as refugees to enter Australia as permanent residents on humanitarian grounds. A number of humanitarian entrance categories (described later in this chapter) have been established over the years to facilitate this process. Humanitarian entrants are targeted for special settlement assistance by government. However, not all people with experiences commonly associated with being a refugee will enter Australia under the Humanitarian Program (whether as officially designated 'refugees' or as humanitarian entrants). It is increasingly likely that people from refugee backgrounds, including young people, will enter as family migrants under Australia's Migration Program (see below). Here again, likely need does not coincide with distinctions made in policy.

The Convention definition and related national criteria for resettlement selection are also limited with respect to identifying new arrivals most in need of settlement support. While the fear of persecution on return to the country of origin is the key criterion for decisions about selection for resettlement,<sup>2</sup> the ramifications of *past* persecution and trauma are critical considerations in estimating the likely difficulties that a person will face adjusting to life once in Australia. Moreover, experiences commonly associated with fleeing one's home and being unable to return, regardless of personalised experiences of persecution, are likely to have considerable impact on settlement needs, particularly in the case of young people.

### *Defining experiences*

How should a 'young refugee' be defined to meet the purposes of targeting resettlement assistance? In common usage, the term 'refugee' refers to people who have escaped a situation of considerable trauma and are unable to return to their place of residence. The following definition sets out basic and additional factors that identify the sorts of experience that we argue should be considered when determining eligibility for government assistance for young people resident in Australia. 'Refugee experience' can be defined as including exposure to political, religious or intercultural violence, persecution or oppression,

armed conflict or civil discord which incorporates the following basic elements:

- a state of fearfulness for self and family members;
- leaving the country of origin at short notice;
- inability to return to the country of origin; and
- uncertainty about the possibility of maintaining links with family and home.

In addition to these 'base level' criteria, many young refugees have suffered extreme abuse such as torture or rape; they may have witnessed the death or rape of family members and loved ones; their communities may have been subject to unexplained disappearances and other violations of human rights. Such experiences have a profound impact on the well-being of individuals, families and whole communities.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the sorts of experiences that define being a 'young refugee', there is also an age criterion. Conventionally, 'young people' are defined as those aged 12 to 25 years. However, young people with refugee experiences who arrived in Australia in their early 20s may require assistance into their late 20s and beyond. The age limits should therefore not be seen as fixed, but they do provide guides for targeting assistance.

In the next section of this chapter and in Chapter 4, we expand on this definition to identify some of the key features of refugee experience likely to impact on resettlement support needs, and specify the particular difficulties faced by young people.

## *What it means to be a young refugee*

In this section, we explore common experiences shared by young refugees on the basis of interviews with 33 young people from refugee backgrounds who have recently arrived in Australia<sup>4</sup> and a review of available literature. Our definition of refugee experience does not imply young refugees are a homogenous group. Within a broad commonality of experience shared by people who have fled their home country, there is considerable diversity in the precise nature of the experiences and the likely consequences for settlement support needs. Key variables include age on arrival, gender, ethnicity and cultural background, English language proficiency and education, the degree of familial and community support on arrival, and the network of services available in the area of settlement.

## *Persecution, oppression and the violation of human rights*

When young refugees arrive in Australia, they are likely to have had some harrowing and extremely stressful experiences. Many young refugees have survived life in a war zone and some may themselves have participated in the fighting. Most will have lived with the constant threat of violence and some will have witnessed or even experienced torture.

*I was born in the midst of two wars. When I was two years old, there was a war with Iran, and that finished in 1988, and then there was the Gulf War. So all my life, I have known only war. It is nothing exciting (Iraqi refugee, aged 20).*

Persecution on the grounds of ethnic identity, religion or race is a common part of the refugee experience. Sometimes persecution is aimed specifically at young people, for example in the form of under-age conscription into government military forces (which may be actively engaged in combat with the ethnic minority with which the young person identifies).

*I cannot go back to Iraq, because I have finished Grade 12, and I am now supposed to go to the army. The punishment for escaping army duty in Iraq is to have your ear cut off (Iraqi refugee, aged 20).*

*We are strong Muslims. But I know that no one has a monopoly on God. Our faith – it is for us. It does not affect other people. But we were persecuted for being Muslim. It was a very bad situation (Afghani refugee, aged 19).*

Pittaway (1991) found that 73% of the 204 refugee women she interviewed had experienced a high to medium degree of torture and trauma. Moss (1993, p.200) notes that the torture experience for women most often takes the form of sexual abuse, adding that the lack of public awareness and discussion of this issue may result in an under-estimation of the extent of the problem.

## *Escape and dislocation*

The events surrounding escape can also be traumatic. The lack of choice in leaving and the inability to return put young people under considerable psychological pressure as they attempt to cope with an abrupt dislocation from their previous life. Young people may

also become separated from family members during the confusion and desperation of escape.

*The fighting erupted around us and I thought that my mother and brothers and sisters had jumped on the lorry at the front of the convoy. So I jumped on the back of another lorry. When the lorries stopped at the refugee camp in Kenya, it was only then that I realised that my mother was not there ... that she was still in the city. I was 8 years old then* (Somali refugee, female, aged 15).

## In transit

Young refugees commonly experience physical deprivation in refugee camps or in transit from their country of origin to Australia. Nutritional, educational or recreational needs are easily overlooked in camp situations and, in some cases, fighting and persecution continue. Women may be particularly at risk in camps.

*On the way to the refugee camp in the lorry, I did not have any food, water or money. There was no rain. Some other people tried to help me, but their food was bad and the water was not clear. I was really scared* (Somali refugee, female, aged 15).

*There was trouble in the camp. There was no food, not enough of everything* (Sudanese humanitarian entrant, aged 22).

Lengthy periods in transit give plenty of time to dwell on past pain. Young people often remain in a highly anxious state, fearing for the well-being of other family members left behind and wondering what the future holds.

*In the camp in Thailand, life was very hard. We were very worried, because our future was so uncertain. We did not know if or when we would leave the camp, and if so, where we could go* (Vietnamese family reunion entrant, female, aged 18).

Schooling may also be disrupted.

*I spent seven years in the refugee camp, from when I was eight years old to when I was 15. I did not study in the camp, so I have not been to school since I was eight years old* (Somali refugee, female, aged 15).

Considerable amounts of time and personal momentum can be wasted in refugee camps, in transit or in detention centres waiting for an application for protection to be approved.

## Temporary asylum

The search for a safe and permanent place to live often entails many journeys, and many dashed hopes. The personal histories of several of the young people interviewed for this study identify the circuitous paths that eventually brought them to Australia. Jasenko's story exposes the frustration of having to relinquish safety in a seemingly endless wait for migration applications to be processed.

This frustration cannot be overstated. Several interviewees explained how they had reached a place of safety, only to be unable to find accommodation or to run out of money and consequently be unable to wait for a response to their application for a visa. Under these circumstances, refugee applicants may be forced to return to a war zone. Subsequently it becomes difficult for authorities to trace them, or for them to move when an opportunity to migrate arises.

*When we went back to Bosnia, the Australian embassy could not make contact with us. That was from 1994 to 1996. They were the worst two years in the world, those last two years* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

The search for asylum is usually lengthy and always an uncertain process. The escape paths and destination plans people make for themselves are often blocked by events over which they have little control.

## Ramifications of trauma

Experiences of persecution, violence, the loss of loved ones, and periods of sustained fearfulness and anxiety undermine the trust and sense of belonging that young people should be able to take for granted. Relationships with significant adults are often disrupted or permanently broken, and new relationships, where these form, may be short-lived.

*I have lost contact with my dad now. I don't know where he is. I have tried to find him* (Bosnian family reunion entrant, male, aged 17).

*I last saw my mother nine years ago. I have not written to her because I did not have her address. I asked the Red Cross to help me find her address* (Eritrean refugee, female, aged 18).

The trauma resulting from these experiences is deeply felt, whether or not it is openly discussed. The ramifications of trauma may be felt for many years. For some young people, a full recovery to a normal life

### Jasenko's story

*Jasenko had wanted to come to Australia for a very long time. Jasenko's mother left Jasenko's father shortly after he was born. She went to Australia to join her parents who had migrated there from Bosnia in the 1960s. She wanted to take Jasenko with her but because he was a boy child in a communist country, she could not get permission. Jasenko's father was unable to care for him and so he grew up with his paternal grandparents. But Jasenko's grandparents loved him.*

*When the war erupted in the neighbouring province, Jasenko left his grandparents with their blessing and fled to England. Once in England he applied to join his mother in Australia. He waited in England for six long months for news of his visa application, before he learnt that he had not been accepted. Jasenko was only 17 years old and his father had not signed the visa application form, so he was deemed too young or perhaps too big a risk for Australia to accept. Jasenko had to wait another six months. Living in England was hard because Jasenko did not know enough English and was ineligible to work or study. Reluctantly, Jasenko returned to Bosnia to wait out the final six months. He was only there 10 days when war broke out in his home town. The city was blockaded and he lost his freedom of movement. It took another three years before Jasenko could again apply to come to Australia. This time he was more successful. On arrival, Jasenko was reunited with his mother. Settlement was relatively smooth because his mother was delighted to have her son with her.*

### Farouda's story

*Farouda comes from Iraq. She and her family are from the Assyrian Catholic community. In the village, people speak Assyrian (an older language than Arabic), but they also speak Arabic, and Arabic is the language of instruction in schools. Farouda was fortunate to flee the war zone in Iraq with her immediate family, her father and mother as well as her sister and two brothers. They travelled to Jordan, where a relative was able to shelter them for a month, then through Yugoslavia and on to Greece. In Yugoslavia, a friend of the family offered to make arrangements for them, but he took almost their entire family life savings of US\$20,000 and none of the money produced any benefits for the family. Their hopes of securing a preferred settlement were dashed.*

might appear unattainable. Trust in relationships may be affected and belief in friends, family and the general goodwill of people in the community may be seriously undermined.

*I was surprised at how friendly Australian people were when I first arrived. They smiled all the time. I think people do not always mean it when they smile. In Sudan, you do not go around smiling all the time. I am a bit suspicious. People are insincere* (Sudanese refugee, male, aged 22).

Feelings of mistrust may be directed at government, bureaucracy and officialdom, thereby compromising a young refugee's capacity to accept official support, to respond appropriately to questioning and, generally, to negotiate the obstacles that face them on arrival in a new country.

The phenomenon of 'survivor guilt', or shame and self-blame at being alive when others, perhaps deemed more 'worthy', did not make it to safety, is an additional burden often borne by those whose family relationships have been severely disrupted and whose significant family members have been killed or left behind.

## *Experiences on arrival*

When young refugees first arrive in Australia they are usually unfamiliar with Western lifestyles and culture. Refugee-producing countries are predominantly located in the under-developed world. The culture shock experienced on arrival in a country such as Australia is not conducive to an early, effective settlement because there is so much to learn. A priority is to become familiar with the social support system, but many of the assumptions on which the Australian system is founded are alien to young refugees.

*Everything was new to me, the language, everything. I found it so difficult* (Eritrean refugee, female, 18 years).

*I'll never forget how it was to come to Australia. It was just amazing, everything was so new* (Afghani refugee, male, aged 19).

Settlement difficulties are compounded by a lack of English language proficiency. Many young refugees speak very little English when they first arrive in Australia and often become frustrated with their inability to communicate. This problem is all the more difficult to solve if the young person is only partially

literate in his or her own language (a common occurrence due to disruptions in schooling).

*I knew a little bit of English from school, but it was American English and when I tried to speak in English, people did not understand me, because I had a funny accent. That was very hard* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

Generally, young refugees tend to experience mixed feelings about arriving in a new country – a simultaneous sense of relief and shock.

*When I arrived in Australia, I was feeling both happy and sad. I cried. The war was happening over there, but I missed my friends* (Bosnian family reunion entrant, male, aged 17).

*The first thing I remember about Australia is that I was really sad to have left my friends. But, on the other hand, I am really lucky, because I can go to school normally and I can finish university* (Bosnian refugee, female, aged 18).

Young refugees who arrive in Australia illegally, either alone or with family, are generally subject to periods in detention.<sup>5</sup> For these young people, feelings of extreme fearfulness and a sense of a loss of freedom and movement are likely to continue, even beyond detention and into the settlement phase.

*I bought a false passport in Bangkok. It already had a visa for Australia in it. When I got to the airport in Australia, I tore my passport up. I was taken to the detention centre and I stayed there for five months. It's like prison. I was afraid that if I got sent back, I would disappear. I passed five months thinking only this one thought* (Algerian refugee, male, aged 24).

Reality takes some time to set in. Commonly, a 'honeymoon' period, in which there is a great sense of relief and safety, gradually yields to an increasing awareness of the relative disadvantage or extra difficulty experienced by refugees. At this point, some young people begin to feel disillusioned about the prospects of settling in and making a new life. It is also common for refugees to avoid acknowledging the difficulties they face, perhaps anxious not to seem ungrateful.

*There is nothing bad about Australia. Even when I was stranded at the airport and nobody came to meet us, that is not bad now. That was long ago. I passed that* (Somali refugee, female, aged 15).

Many young refugees express a strong commitment to Australia. In a pilot survey of young refugees attending English Language Centres in 1995, most emphasised their commitment to Australia. They saw no other future for themselves, and planned to stay in Australia for the rest of their lives.

*I would like to visit every place in Australia and see Australia from every corner so I know what it really looks like. That is my wish. I understand that Australia is the best country for me* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

## Overview of Australia's immigration program<sup>6</sup>

Many young people currently living in Australia share the refugee experiences outlined in the previous section, but not all entered the country as officially recognised refugees or under the government's humanitarian resettlement program. The remainder of this chapter explains the different programs and visa classifications under which young people with refugee-like experiences may enter or be allowed to remain in Australia. These distinctions have serious implications for entitlement to government assistance. Further detail on the entitlements conferred by different programs and visa categories is provided in Table 8 and the accompanying discussion in Chapter 5.

Australia's immigration policy is non-discriminatory in the sense that applicants from any country will be considered for permanent residence, 'regardless of their ethnic origin, gender, colour or religion' (DIMIA 2001a). All migrants to Australia must satisfy health and character checks before their applications can be approved, in addition to meeting various migration criteria, which vary according to migration category. When an application is approved, a class of visa is allocated reflecting the program and program component under which the application was made.

The immigration program has two main components: the Migration (non-humanitarian) Program for skilled and family migrants, and the Humanitarian Program for refugees and others with humanitarian needs.<sup>7</sup> The majority of new entrants to Australia each year arrive under the Migration Program. In the financial year<sup>8</sup> 2000–01, for example, approximately 80,000 visas were allocated under this program. This compares to a planning level of around 12,000

visas under the Humanitarian Program (DIMIA Fact Sheet, 20 July 2001).

## Young refugees and the Humanitarian Program

Australian governments, on a bipartisan basis, have remained committed to providing assistance to refugees and other victims of significant human rights abuses. Over the past 50 years, more than half a million refugees and displaced people have been resettled in Australia (DIMIA Fact Sheet 60, Nov. 2001). Each year, the federal government decides on the size and composition of the Humanitarian Program. These decisions take into account world-wide resettlement needs, as established by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees<sup>9</sup> (UNHCR), and follow consultation with a number of relevant peak bodies as well as community organisations and interest groups. Some 12,000 places were allocated to the Humanitarian Program in 2000-01 and the same number in 2001–02 (DIMIA Fact Sheet 60, Nov. 2001).

The Humanitarian Program comprises an offshore resettlement program for applicants overseas and an onshore protection program for people claiming refugee status from within Australia. Since commencing the research for this study, some important changes have been made to the types of visa available to young refugees under the onshore resettlement program.

### Offshore humanitarian resettlement program

The offshore resettlement program applies to people living outside Australia who are deemed to be subject to persecution and for whom resettlement in another country is seen as the only option. All entrants under the offshore resettlement program have been given permission to enter Australia prior to arrival. The offshore program currently allocates visas under two main categories: Refugee and Special Humanitarian.

#### Refugee category

Entrants under the Refugee category are also known as 'convention refugees' because they must meet the criteria for refugee status determined by the UN convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees. Government generally sets aside 4,000 places for applicants under the Refugee category. In 2000–01,

a total of 3,997 people arrived in Australia for resettlement under this category, of whom 1,163 (or 29%) were aged between 12 and 25 (see Table 2).

There are three subsets of the Refugee category:

- *Women at Risk*: the program recognises that refugee women in particularly vulnerable situations are exposed to risk of serious abuse, sexual assault, victimisation or harassment where traditional support and protection have unavoidably broken down. This category was established in 1989 in recognition of the priority given by UNHCR to the protection of refugee women. Approximately 80% of the world's refugees are women and children (Pittaway 1991).
- *In-country Special Humanitarian*: aimed at persons still in their home country who are identified as in need of resettlement by a major human rights organisation because they are being persecuted;
- *Emergency Rescue*: people in or outside their home country who experience persecution in their home country and who are in urgent and compelling need to travel and for whom resettlement in Australia is the appropriate solution.

The Australian government pays for the airfares of successful Refugee category applicants and new arrivals are provided with the widest range of settlement support services under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS).

### *Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)*

Special Humanitarian entrants are 'people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 60, Nov. 2001). People applying for permanent residency under the Special Humanitarian component usually need to demonstrate some connection with Australia through family links, or through having previously worked or studied here. A formal proposal from an Australian permanent resident or citizen is required.

It is through the Special Humanitarian Program that many refugee and humanitarian settlers have 'proposed' close family members to migrate to Australia. Under the Program, the proposer's role may include assisting the new arrival with airfares, medical costs and accommodation. Proposers are expected to help entrants gain access to services to support their settlement in Australia. SHP visa holders are eligible for most settlement services under (IHSS) and, like Refugee

entrants, are exempted from the two-year waiting period for income support.

The number of places government makes available for the SHP is linked to the number of places it anticipates will be needed for refugees under the onshore component of the Humanitarian Program. The number of SHP entrants has consequently declined over the last few years following the large increase in unauthorised arrivals that claim refugee status from within Australia. The decline was particularly notable in 1999–2000, with the number of SHP grants allocated dropping 30% from the year before.<sup>10</sup> Whereas more grants used to be made under the SHP than under the Refugee category, this has now been reversed. DIMIA anticipates about 3,000 places will be available under the SHP in the 2001–02 program year (pending onshore allocation), slightly less than the year before (DIMIA Fact Sheet 60, Nov. 2001).

This decline has been of particular concern to refugee and humanitarian settlers in Australia since it greatly limits their options for family reunion. Like other migrants with permanent resident status, offshore humanitarian visa holders can sponsor close family members through the Family Stream of the Migration Program but this method does not make the same allowance for the needs of either sponsoring or sponsored parties (see below). The SHP acknowledges the importance to refugee settlers of close family members left behind during their flight from persecution or oppression, and as such is a critical part of government's resettlement program.

In 2000–01, 28% of SHP entrants were aged between 12 and 25 (a total of 886 young people) (see Table 2).

### *Special Assistance Category (SAC)*

Prior to November 2001, the Humanitarian Program included a Special Assistance Category (SAC). The SAC was introduced in 1991–92 for groups with close family or community links with Australia who were in particularly vulnerable situations but did not meet the criteria of other categories. SAC was, therefore, the most flexible stream of the Humanitarian Program. Government decided each year which groups to target, and each group then became a SAC subprogram. As with the Special Humanitarian Program, a formal proposal from an Australian permanent resident or citizen was required. Travel assistance was not provided by government, but SAC entrants had access to services under the IHSS.

SAC visa subclasses were discontinued with effect

from November 2001, though some of the refugee young people currently resident in Australia would have entered Australia under the terms and conditions of this category, including 216 young SAC entrants in 2000–01.

Special Assistance Category Visa holders remain on these visas although the category itself has now closed. They have the same entitlements as permanent residents, identical to other humanitarian program entitlements.

### *Onshore humanitarian program*

The onshore program applies to people who make an application for refugee status once in Australia. Prior to 1989, there were fewer than 500 such applications in any single year. This changed dramatically following events in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. Onshore refugee applications peaked at more than 16,000 in 1990–91, with three-quarters of applications coming from citizens of the People's Republic of China, many of whom were studying in Australia at the time. Every year since has seen several thousand people make applications for refugee status from within Australia.<sup>11</sup>

Onshore applicants for refugee status include both authorised and unauthorised arrivals. Authorised arrivals are asylum seekers who first come to Australia under a valid temporary visa and then apply for refugee status, for example following the eruption of a war or civil disturbance in their country of origin. This group of onshore applicants is resident in the Australian community when they make their application.

An 'unauthorised arrival' is someone found to have entered Australia either by air or by sea without valid migration documents. When discovered by Australian authorities, unauthorised arrivals are compulsorily detained in Australian Immigration Reception and Processing Centres. In recent years there has been a decrease in the numbers of people arriving in Australia's airports without valid travel documents,<sup>12</sup> but a large increase in the number of unauthorised arrivals by boat. In 1998–99 some 921 people arrived by boat without authorisation, this number rose to 4,175 in 1999–2000 and declined slightly to 4,137 in 2000–01.<sup>13</sup> The majority of unauthorised boat arrivals in 2000–01 came from Afghanistan (55%) and one-quarter from Iraq. A notable feature of unauthorised boat arrivals is that the individuals on board characteristically declare themselves upon arrival to the Australia authorities in order to seek protection as refugees under the onshore

program.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, these individuals are subject to mandatory detention.

In 2000–01, a total of 1,366 young people arrived in Australia without authorisation, this being 31% of all unauthorised arrivals. The vast majority (97%) arrived by boat. One-fifth of unauthorised young arrivals were minors (aged 12 to 17) with most (57%) aged 21 to 25 years.<sup>15</sup>

### *Refugee or repatriation*

In order to qualify for protection visas and remain in Australia, onshore applicants must meet the strict definition of 'refugee' set out in the United Nations Refugees Convention; unlike offshore applicants, asylum seekers are not eligible for protection under the Special Humanitarian Program. Asylum seekers who do not meet UN criteria are, where possible, returned to their country of origin at the earliest opportunity.

Asylum seekers who come to Australia by sea without authorisation have experienced a marked drop in success rates over the last decade. In 1989, 78% of unauthorised boat arrivals were granted permanent residence in Australia. Over the period 1989 to 1997, only 19% of such applicants were granted approval to remain in Australia (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1998).

Since the introduction of the temporary protection visa, larger numbers of unauthorised arrivals have been granted protection, but not permanent residency. In 2000–01, about 80% of all detained asylum seekers were recognised as refugees.<sup>16</sup> The figure is slightly higher (83%) for young asylum seekers.<sup>17</sup>

### *Temporary and permanent protection visas*

Until October 1999, all asylum seekers found to be refugees under the terms of the UN Convention, including those who arrived without authorisation, were given immediate access to a permanent protection visa (DIMIA Fact Sheet 64, Nov. 2001). This visa conferred permanent residency status and eligibility for the full range of support arrangements also offered to refugees settled from overseas. It also enabled visa holders to sponsor family members to Australia.

Since October 1999, asylum seekers found to be refugees, but who entered the Australian mainland illegally or on fraudulent documents, are only eligible to apply for a temporary protection visa (TPV) which gives them residence for an initial period of three years after which time they must reapply for protection. TPV holders have restricted access to government assistance and settlement services. As temporary residents they

are not eligible to sponsor their close family members to Australia, and are unable to enter and exit Australia freely (without risking cancellation of their visa).

The introduction of TPVs was particularly designed to discourage the operation of people smuggling networks and to reduce the number of unauthorised boat arrivals to Australia. The restricted entitlements conferred by the TPV were intended by government to act as a deterrent. The Secretary General of Amnesty International, Irene Khan, interprets the legislative change as follows: 'Because detention in itself has failed to reduce the number of asylum seekers, the Government has sought to deprive those detained of some rights and benefits, even after they have been recognised as refugees' (Khan 2002, p.3).

As noted, the number of places made available for the Special Humanitarian Program (offshore resettlement) is constrained by the number of places required for onshore applicants. Consequently if the allocation of TPVs increases, the number of offshore SHP visas decreases. While in theory there is no reason that these two components of the Humanitarian Program should be directly linked in this way, the fact that they are tends to undermine the standing of the onshore resettlement program. In DIMIA's view, the problem that arises is one of allowing unauthorised arrivals to 'tak[e] the places in the Humanitarian Program from refugees and others who are often in greater need of resettlement' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 64, Nov. 2001). This is colloquially described as 'queue jumping', an obviously value-laden expression which, among other things, assumes there is an orderly queue to be jumped.<sup>18</sup> Arguably the queue in question is a product not of the global system of refugee protection, but of Australian government policy and policy rhetoric. The linking of onshore and offshore components is likely to exacerbate a vicious circle whereby reduced opportunity for legitimate humanitarian migration encourages risk-taking among people who are desperate to escape their circumstances, which encourages unauthorised arrival, which in turn (in Australia) leads to the reduction of places for humanitarian migration.

The creation of the TPV and related changes to the visa system sets in place what DIMIA refers to as 'a hierarchy of benefits' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 65, Jan. 2002). Asylum seekers found to be refugees and who entered the country legally on valid documents, are still granted permanent protection visas (PPV) which gives them permanent residence and access to the full range of resettlement programs and government assistance. Importantly for our purposes, the principles underlying

this hierarchy relate primarily neither to the definition of refugee experience nor to the need for protection or humanitarian consideration, but to the way in which an asylum seeker first arrived in the country. As Amnesty International Australia points out:

*Both onshore and offshore refugees have been assessed according to the same criteria and determined to possess a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason. Yet despite the indivisible nature of the definition of a refugee, the Australian government has seen fit to impose such a division – one that discriminates between refugees purely on the basis of means of entry. This is in spite of the fact that the Convention recognises irregular entry, and in Article 31 explicitly prohibits the imposition of penalties on refugees on account of their illegal entry into the receiving nation (Amnesty International Australia 2001).*

Whether or not the TPV proves effective as a deterrent, the price is likely to have been a heavy one for the refugees concerned. In 2000–01 some 4,455 TPVs were granted to refugees arriving in Australia without authorisation. A large proportion (43%) of the applications for TPV grants were from young people aged 12 to 25 years. These young people and their families escaped persecution or oppression and reached Australia's shores, generally after hazardous voyages in unseaworthy vessels. On arrival, they underwent sometimes lengthy periods in detention centres while their claims for refugee status were being processed. When their claims for refugee status were proved legitimate, they were released into the Australian community but without the full range of refugee settlement support services available to offshore refugees, and with assurance of only three years of residency.

### *Defining young refugee 'settlers'*

By definition TPVs give holders 'temporary' status as residents; it is not intended that people under the terms and conditions of these visas settle and make Australia their home. It may be argued on this basis that young people on temporary protection visas should not be considered as part of a target population for strategies to assist the settlement and long-term independence of young refugees. However, even if TPV holders only stay in Australia for the initial three-year period allowed by their visa, this is a significant length of time, particularly for young people who are generally expected to gain the skills and experience during this time to support themselves as adults later

on. Since TPV holders are allowed to renew their visas,<sup>19</sup> the total length of time spent in Australia could cover the large part of a person's adolescence. We argue therefore that these young people should be included in the category of young refugees for the purposes of targeting government settlement assistance, even though their 'final' destination may be a country other than Australia. (This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 5.)

## *Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme*

In the past, young people under the age of 18 without parents or close relatives usually entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program. These young people were mostly from Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos, and they had typically lived for a period in refugee camps in Thailand, Hong Kong or other nearby countries. Australia no longer targets unaccompanied minors as humanitarian entrants, but maintains an Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme.<sup>20</sup> Small numbers of young people still enter Australia without parents or close relatives, either under the offshore Humanitarian Program or as unauthorised arrivals (usually arriving by boat in the company of other asylum seekers).

As of May 2001, there were a total of 218 young people in the Scheme. Almost half this number (48%) were resident in Australia under temporary protection visas. As for other age groups, the numbers of unauthorised arrivals aged under 18 years have increased since the late 1990s. Unauthorised arrivals in this age group are, like all other unauthorised arrivals, subject to mandatory detention. In line with Australia's international obligations towards refugees, unaccompanied humanitarian minors who are TPV holders have access to the same basic package of services available to adult TPV holders (see Table 8).

Under the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme, young people are described either as 'wards' (previously referred to as 'unattached'), 'non wards' (formerly called 'detached'), and 'isolated non wards' (formerly called 'isolated detached'). A 'ward' is defined as a non-citizen minor who falls within the provisions of the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*, that is, a young person under the age of 18 who is not in the care of either parent, or a close relative over 21 years of age. These young people become wards of the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. The Minister delegates most of his<sup>21</sup>

powers and functions under the Act to various officers of the state or territory child welfare departments who assume responsibility when wards are released from immigration detention or when they arrive in Australia under the offshore humanitarian program. DIMIA pays a maintenance allowance either to foster parents or directly to the young person if they are living independently. Support is provided to caregivers to 'maximise the successful settlement of the minor' (*DIMA Annual Report 1999–2000*). In 1999–2000 some 170 minors were eligible for this assistance, compared with 183 in 1998–99. Very few young people are considered to be living independently; the maintenance allowance was paid directly to a total of nine unaccompanied minors in 1999–2000. The maintenance allowance is paid (in line with the Minister's duties, obligations and liabilities under the Act) until the ward turns 16 years of age at which point he or she becomes eligible for Centrelink Special Benefit.

A 'non-ward' is a minor who does not fall within the provisions of the Act, that is, a young person (under 18 years) who in the care of a relative (over the age of 21) other than the parent. It is assumed that sponsoring relatives will accept guardianship responsibility for the young person, although they are not the legal guardians of the young person. The third category of 'isolated non-ward' is of more recent origin and refers to a non-ward whose care arrangements with a relative over the age of 21 have broken down irretrievably after arrival in Australia.

The Commonwealth/state cost share program was established in 1985 with five state child welfare departments in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia, for the welfare supervision and support of unaccompanied humanitarian minors. The program is aimed at ensuring effective settlement support is provided to all these young people while they reside in Australia. The Federal Government is currently negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the states regarding the future arrangements for the care and welfare supervision of unaccompanied humanitarian minors. DIMIA advises that 'The future MOU will consist of a series of care packages, and the amount of funding provided under by the Commonwealth will be a significantly higher level of funding for the care of unaccompanied humanitarian minors compared to the funding provided under the current cost share agreement'.

## *Young refugees and the Migration Program*

The Migration Program has two main categories or 'streams' under which migrants can enter Australia as permanent residents: the Skilled Stream and the Family Stream. A slightly larger proportion of visas granted under the program each year is allocated to skilled stream migrants (DIMIA Fact Sheet 20, July 2001). In line with the economic rationale for this component, skilled stream migrants have to satisfy a points test based on employment related factors, and they must be nominated by an employer or have other links to Australia. Alternatively, they must have successful business skills or significant capital to bring to Australia to establish a business.

The family migration component reflects government's recognition of the family as the institution that provides vital support in the lives of most people. Under this component, migrants are selected on the basis of their family relationship with a sponsor or nominator in Australia. They do not have to meet the skills or language ability criteria applied to Skilled Stream migrants. Visas allocated under the Family Stream are categorised under four types of family relationship: partner, child, parent or other family member.<sup>22</sup> Certain classes of family stream visa may be 'capped' meaning once a specified number has been allocated under that category in a given program year, no more visas can be granted under that category until the following program year. Applications involving dependent children are currently accorded highest priority in the processing of applications under the Family Stream (DIMIA Fact Sheet 37, Dec. 2001).

Family migrants must be sponsored or nominated by a close family member, partner or fiancé(e) living in Australia. Where applications are made outside Australia, the main applicant and any dependents included in the application must be sponsored (rather than nominated) and usually the sponsor would be an Australian permanent resident aged 18 years or older (see DIMIA Fact Sheet 29, Dec. 2001). Family Stream applicants are subject to an Assurance of Support. This is a legal commitment by the assurer to repay the Commonwealth of Australia any benefits paid to those covered by the assurance in the first two years after their migration from overseas or grant of permanent residence in Australia (ibid).

## *Family Stream migrants and young refugees*

Refugee and humanitarian settlers with permanent residency status are eligible to sponsor close family members to Australia. Parents/guardians, dependent children and partners may be sponsored to Australia under what is commonly referred to as 'family reunion' migration.

One consequence of the increasing pressure on the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) is that people who are close family members of refugees settled in Australia are encouraged to apply for entry under the Family Stream of the Migration Program rather than risk missing out under the SHP. This method of family reunion has always been open to refugee and humanitarian settlers but, as noted, is less satisfactory than reunion under the SHP because it does not take into account the specific needs of refugee sponsoring and sponsored parties. When they arrive in Australia, migrants sponsored by refugees in Australia are treated the same as other Family Stream migrants in that they are expected to rely on their Australian sponsor for financial and material support during the first two years of their settlement. This is problematic for a number of reasons relating to the capacity of refugee sponsors to meet their sponsorship obligations (see Chapter 5).

What this suggests is that an increasing number of young people from refugee backgrounds are arriving in Australia as Family Stream migrants. This study sought to find out how likely it was that young people sponsored to Australia under the Family Stream had refugee experiences themselves, since where sponsorship arrangements break down, these young people would be left without the full range of supports generally available to refugee and humanitarian settlers.

A survey was conducted to investigate the past experiences and current circumstances of some 200 young people studying at English Language Centres and Adult Migrant English Programs in New South Wales and Queensland. The sample included people who had entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program and those who entered under the Family Stream of the Migration Program.<sup>23</sup> Students were asked to complete the questionnaire in a classroom situation under the guidance of their teacher.<sup>24</sup> Respondents were presented with a series of statements about life and events in their former country and were asked to agree or disagree with each. Four of these statements are presented in Table 1. The results of this survey were combined with those from a similar survey conducted

**Table 1: Refugee experience by category of entrant**

	<i>Refugee and humanitarian entrants</i>	<i>Family Stream entrants</i>
'There was a lot of violence in my country.'	84%	71%
'In my country, people were put in prison for no good reason.'	81%	49%
'My family was persecuted in my country.'	64%	30%
'My family was scared for their lives in my country.'	37%	22%

Note: The percentages in each cell indicate affirmative answers.

in 1994 with some 200 students in Victoria.

The large majority (71%) of family reunion entrants originated from countries undergoing considerable violence at the time of their departure, just under one-third reported that their family was subject to persecution, and 22% stated that they had been afraid for their lives. The results of the survey show that although family reunion entrants are less likely to report the direct experiences of persecution typical of entrants under the Humanitarian Program, a significant proportion had refugee-like experiences of a nature that could be anticipated to impact on settlement needs. This is illustrated in the experiences recounted by a young Bosnian who came to Australia as a family reunion migrant:

*We caught the last bus out of Croatia. For one and a half years after that, no more buses got through. We had to go through areas of war on the bus. It was so horrible because people were fighting all around us. We were convinced that the next stop would be the one where we would have to get off, or that they would kill us. The bus had to go through so many barricades. The army came on board to check our passports. And if they felt like it, the soldiers could have turned the bus around and sent us back. I didn't believe I was going to make it. The guy next to me on the bus was killed. All the people on the bus saw. We were all crying. Everyone was screaming and yelling. The soldiers shot him and there was blood. The soldiers threatened to blow our tyres, too. I was very frightened and I feel so lucky that we escaped* (Bosnian family reunion entrant, male, aged 17).

These findings confirm the expectation that some young people with refugee-like experiences arrive in

Australia under the Migration Program, rather than the Humanitarian Program and are consequently subject to different conditions and entitlements reflecting the types of visa allocated (see Chapter 5).

### *Special Eligibility Stream*

From 1 July 2001, a small number of places were allocated to migrants under a third stream in the Migration Program, the Special Eligibility Stream.<sup>25</sup> One subclass under this stream is for applicants living in Australia unlawfully but claiming 'close ties' to the country. This class of visa is specifically intended for young people who spent their formative years in Australia and who either entered or remained in Australia unlawfully as a consequence of their families' activities and 'through no fault of their own'. This provision has implications for young people with refugee-like experiences that arrived in Australia some years ago with their families and is also suggestive with respect to the treatment of unauthorised arrivals at the current time. These implications are discussed in Chapter 5.

### *Overview of categories of arrival in Australia*

Young people with refugee experiences may enter and settle in Australia, alone or with their families, under several different categories of the immigration program. Entrance categories within the Humanitarian Program are listed in Table 2. As offshore applicants, young people may enter under the Refugee category (having met UN convention criteria) or under the Special Humanitarian category. Until recently, young refugees could also enter Australia under a range of Special Assistance Categories.

In the most recent program year for which data are available (2000–01), slightly more than half of the offshore arrivals of young people entered under the Refugee component with most of the remainder arriving under the Special Humanitarian Program. Together, numbers entering under the offshore component accounted for just less than 60% of the overall humanitarian intake of young people. In 2000–01, entrants under SHP and SAC represented 29% of humanitarian entrants. Unless the demand for onshore places reduces, or unless government changes its policy of linking planning levels for the onshore and offshore components, the number of places

available under the SHP is likely to diminish. Temporary protection visa holders accounted for 38% of total humanitarian intake in 2000–01 and, given the likely reduction in the size of the SHP and the discontinuation of the SACs, this proportion can be anticipated to increase.

The Department of Immigration does not routinely report the number of young people with refugee experiences arriving under the Family Stream of the Migration Program each year.<sup>26</sup> However, as noted earlier in this chapter, this number is likely to be increasing as a result of the diminishing opportunity for family reunion under the SHP. In summary, Family Stream migrants and TPV holders can be anticipated to be increasingly common in the young refugee population living in Australia. As a result, the population of young refugees will be comprised of greater numbers of young people with restricted access to settlement and mainstream support services.

## Summary

In this study ‘young refugees’ are defined in terms of their age (between 12 and 25 years) and a broad commonality of experience which, despite the considerable diversity in their individual circumstances, means they are likely to face similar barriers to

successful settlement once in Australia. The definition we adopt is more encompassing than that governing the UN Refugees Convention or the various categories of the Department of Immigration’s Humanitarian Program because it includes:

- entrants under the Family Stream of the Migration Program;
- temporary residents; and, more broadly,
- young people with refugee-like experiences who would not qualify on humanitarian grounds under existing migration categories or given existing quotas, but who are likely to face difficulties in their settlement as a result of these experiences.

However, the distinctions embodied in official categories impact on the entitlements and settlement experiences of new arrivals. Critical distinctions relate to whether or not the young person entered under the Humanitarian Program or the Migration Program, the offshore or the onshore component of the Humanitarian Program, and whether their arrival was authorised or unauthorised. The respective entitlements conferred by these different categories are discussed in Chapter 5. Possible impact on community response to new arrivals is addressed in Chapter 4. The next chapter provides a brief statistical profile of the young refugee population.

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1 In their fact sheet on Australia’s international obligations towards refugees, Amnesty International Australia emphasises that this legislation is ‘not a specific enactment implementing the obligations of the COR [*Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*], but rather confers extensive powers on the minister for immigration and his department’ (July 2001, p.1).

2 It is this criterion that brings to bear on signatories their most important obligation under the convention – not to return or ‘refouler’ a refugee to circumstances under which he or she faces the threat of persecution.

3 War criminals and other serious (non-political) criminals are not considered in this project, despite the fact that they may have refugee experiences.

4 See Component 7 of the research design section of Chapter 1 for a summary of the demographic characteristics of the young refugees interviewed.

5 Detention is mandatory for unauthorised arrivals in Australia.

6 Much of the information provided in this section was obtained from fact sheets produced by the Public Affairs Section of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA). These fact sheets are regularly updated to reflect recent changes to government

policy and programs and can be downloaded from the department’s web site at: <http://www.immi.gov.au> Information was also obtained directly from the department, particularly courtesy of the Client Access Unit. Information from these sources has been paraphrased, and in some cases directly quoted for use in this report, in order to ensure the technical accuracy of descriptions of sometimes complex program areas. Amnesty International Australia also explains current policy relating to refugees in a series of fact sheet on its web site at: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/>

7 The Humanitarian Program was detached from the Migration Program in January 1993 to provide a ‘better balance between Australia’s international humanitarian objectives and the domestic, social and economic goals primarily guiding the annual Migration Program’ (DIMA 1997, p.13).

8 DIMIA migration programs are run across the financial year from July to June.

9 The UNHCR is the international organisation responsible for working with countries to provide international protection to refugees under the auspices of the United Nations. The system of international protection is activated where a person’s country of nationality is not able or not willing to provide protection. It operates on the basis of ‘burden sharing’ between governments who have agreed, by being

**Table 2: Young people 12–25 years, entering or staying under the offshore and onshore components of the Humanitarian Program, by visa category, FY 2000–01**

<i>Humanitarian Program</i>		<i>Number</i>	<i>% of component intake</i>	<i>% of total intake</i>
Offshore Component	Refugee	1163	51.4	30.2
	Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)	886	39.1	23.0
	Special Assistance Category (SAC)	216	9.5	5.6
	<b>Offshore subtotal</b>	<b>2265</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>58.8</b>
Onshore Component	Permanent Protection Visas (PPV) (authorised arrivals)	126	7.9	3.3
	Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) (unauthorised arrivals)	1462	92.1	37.9
	<b>Onshore subtotal</b>	<b>1588</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>41.2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3853</b>		<b>100.0</b>

Source: Settlement Database (extract at 14 March 2002) for data on Refugee, SHP, SAC, and PPV; DIMIA ICSE (extract at 8 March 2002) for data on TPV holders.

Note: The figure for TPVs represents visa grant allocations made in the year 2000–01 to young people who were aged 12–25 years at the time of the application. This number does not necessarily coincide with the number of unauthorised arrivals in the same year that made successful applications for TPVs. DIMIA was unable to provide the exact number of TPVs allocated but it is possible to estimate this from the ICSE data provided by the department. In 2000–01 some 1,806 young people applied for a TPV or a PPV and 1,506 were successful. All but 44 of the applicants were unauthorised arrivals. Assuming that all lawfully arriving applicants were granted a PPV, this leaves 1,462 grants to unauthorised arrivals.

- signatories to the Convention, to help refugees and people who face serious abuses of their human rights.
- 10 In 1998–99 some 4,348 SHP grants were allocated compared to 3,051 in 1999–2000 (see DIMIA Fact Sheet 60, Nov. 2001).
  - 11 See DIMIA Fact Sheet 61, Nov. 2001.
  - 12 Some 114 people arrived without authorisation by air in 2000–01, 36 of whom were aged between 12 and 25 years (DIMIA ICSE, extract 8 March 2002).
  - 13 See DIMIA Fact Sheet 73, Nov. 2001 for figures relating to 1998–99 to 1999–2000 and DIMIA ICSE, extract 8 March 2002 for 2000–01 figure.
  - 14 See Amnesty International Australia July 2001, *Factsheet 13 – How do refugees arrive in Australia?* Viewed 30 August 2002: <<http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/ref-fact13.html>> .
  - 15 DIMIA ICSE, extract 8 March 2002.
  - 16 See Amnesty International Australia July 2001, *Factsheet 13 – How do refugees arrive in Australia?* Viewed 30 August 2002: <<http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/ref-fact13.html>> .
  - 17 DIMIA ICSE, extract 8 March 2002.
  - 18 For an explanation of why this assumption is unfounded, see the range of information and fact sheets developed by Amnesty International Australia on their web site at: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/>
  - 19 TPV holders are able to apply for a subsequent protection visa that may be granted after 30 months if they demonstrate a need for Australia’s ongoing protection.
  - 20 Much of the information in this section was provided directly by DIMIA (19 March 2002) following a request for clarification of the department’s policy regarding unaccompanied humanitarian minors.
  - 21 Philip Ruddock has been Minister for Immigration since March 1996.
  - 22 ‘Other family members’ include aged dependent relatives, a remaining relative or a family member willing to give care to an Australian relative for at least two years.
  - 23 Not all young people could remember and in some cases never knew what their official visa entry category was, and this reduced the overall sample size for analysis.
  - 24 See Component 5 of the research design section in Chapter 1 for details of this survey and Appendix 8 for a copy of the questionnaire.
  - 25 See DIMIA 2001b.
  - 26 See Chapter 3 for an estimate of the cumulative number of young refugees who entered as Family Stream migrants.



# Statistical profile of young refugees



One aim of this chapter is to describe the characteristics of the young refugee population resident in Australia. This is not necessarily a straightforward task, not only because of the limitations of available statistics, but because of definitional complexities. In this chapter we investigate the problem of estimating the size of the population of young people with refugee-like experiences. Statistics on Humanitarian Program entrants provide the most accessible source on information on young refugees, but do not include all young people with refugee experiences living in Australia. We look at the numbers of young people admitted to Australia (either alone or with family) under the Humanitarian Program over the last decade and give basic demographic information on their countries of birth, ages, gender and geographical distribution across Australia. Data presented in this chapter were derived primarily from the National Settlement Database (Appendix 2 sets out other key sources of data on young refugees). This chapter also outlines the new Australian Bureau of Statistics Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity. We finish by identifying some of the more persistent gaps in statistical knowledge regarding the circumstances of young refugees, particularly those relevant to the planning of services.

## *Demographics of young humanitarian entrants*

Statistics produced by DIMIA on new arrivals under the Humanitarian Program provide the most accessible information on the characteristics of young refugee settlers in Australia. These statistics are generated from the national Settlement Database (SDB). It is important to recognise, however, that Humanitarian Program statistics alone, underestimate the number of young people with refugee experiences. First, these statistics do not include young people who arrived under the Family Stream of the Migration Program to join refugee and humanitarian settlers in Australia. It is likely that a proportion of young Family Stream migrants share refugee experiences similar to entrants under the Humanitarian Program (see Table 1, Chapter 2). The second limitation of Humanitarian Program statistics is that they tend not to include people on temporary protection visas (TPVs). The Settlement Database excludes young refugees on TPVs because these young people are not permanent residents and are therefore not considered to be 'settlers' in Australia.<sup>1</sup> We argue in Chapter 2, however, that this group of young people should be included in the target population for a youth-oriented settlement policy. We return to the problem of estimating numbers of people with refugee experiences later in the chapter.

## Annual humanitarian intake

Table 3 shows the number of young people who entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program each year for the past decade. During this period, young people made up between one-fifth and one-quarter of the total yearly humanitarian intake. This represents a lower proportion than previously, possibly reflecting a long-term reduction in the number of unaccompanied minors. Both the total number and age profile of young humanitarian entrants have fluctuated considerably between 1991 and 2000. Humanitarian intake peaked in 1995 with the arrival of 3,264 young people. This coincided with a peak of 14,890 arrivals under the Humanitarian Program as a whole.

## Age and gender distribution

Young refugees under the age of 18 have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group. The proportion of humanitarian minors fluctuated over the last decade. In 1992, minors made up only 35% of the young refugee intake whereas in 1999, they were 58% of the total. Despite yearly variation it is possible to discern a shift towards a greater preponderance of entrants in the younger age group.

At the beginning of the decade, young men and boys comprised almost 60% of humanitarian intake in the 12 to 25 year age group – a slightly greater proportion of males than for humanitarian entrants as a whole. From 1995, the gender ratio was about 1:1, with young women and girls making up slightly more than half (51%) in 1997. This shift in the gender balance is also apparent among older humanitarian entrants.

## Country of birth

The humanitarian intake comprises young people of many different national and ethnic backgrounds. The patterns of intake evident in Table 4 reflect Australia's response to various refugee crises over the years. The figures under Europe and the Baltic largely reflect young people displaced during the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia. Vietnamese young people have been prevalent among those arriving from Asia. Over the past decade, there has been a steady stream of entrants from Afghanistan; the bombing of Afghanistan in 2001 as part of the 'war on terrorism'

**Table 3: Young people aged 12–24 years entering Australia under the Humanitarian Program, by age group, 1991–2000**

	12–15 years	16–17 years	18–24 years	Total
1991	499	248	1149	1896
1992	581	306	1613	2500
1993	659	319	1490	2468
1994	810	386	1769	2965
1995	1040	445	1779	3264
1996	838	380	1359	2577
1997	671	306	881	1858
1998	1210	486	1259	2955
1999	831	373	878	2082
2000	756	372	939	2067

Source: DIMIA Settlement Database (IA1029 MRAOCDBK)

followed more than a decade of civil conflict in that country.

Looking at the cumulative impact over the last five years, the largest number of young humanitarian entrants was from the former Yugoslavia (about 40% of the total), with significant proportions coming from the Horn of Africa (especially Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea), from Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) and a total of 6% from Afghanistan (see RRAC 2001).

## Area of settlement

Of the 12,653 young people who arrived under the Humanitarian Program between 1995 and 2000, approximately 40% settled in New South Wales, 33% in Victoria and a further 10% in Western Australia.

In Victoria, refugees in general have tended to settle in significant numbers in only 22 of the 78 Local Government Areas, with more than half (56%) settling in just seven areas, these being Greater Dandenong, Brimbank, Darebin, Moreland, Hume, Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong. This pattern is, in the large part, shaped by the settlement program but people also congregate in communities of support, as did previous waves of postwar immigrants.

## Estimating population size

For strategic planning and the provision of services, it is important to estimate the total number of young

**Table 4: Young people aged 12–24 years, entering Australia under the Humanitarian Program, by country/region of birth, 1991–2000**

	<i>Europe &amp; Baltic</i>	<i>Middle East</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>South &amp; Central America</i>	<i>Total</i>
1991	29	384	67	941	248	1896
1992	511	846	173	818	152	2500
1993	956	249	279	915	65	2468
1994	1074	496	276	1062	42	2965
1995	1379	834	251	741	59	3264
1996	1304	390	289	551	35	2577
1997	803	406	282	349	18	1858
1998	1408	675	444	419	9	2955
1999	844	616	342	274	6	2082
2000	933	494	394	235	11	2067

Source: DIMIA Settlement Database (IA1029 MRAOCDBK)

Small discrepancies between the total of the regional figures and the total intake of young humanitarian entrants are due to a small number of cases where information was missing at the time the settlement database was compiled.

young children. It may be argued that while these young people share similar refugee experiences with those who arrived as adolescents or young adults, the fact that these experiences occurred much earlier in their lives is likely to change their current resettlement needs. Conversely, those people with refugee-like experiences who came to Australia as adolescents but who are now in their late twenties and hence excluded from the estimate may still be facing similar resettlement challenges to those only slightly younger.

This figure of 15,000–20,000 can be compared to an estimate reported by the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC) in its *Refugee Youth Strategy Paper* (RRAC 2001). The Council has, by implication, adopted the second approach to

refugees at a specified point in time and, therefore, a cumulative rather than annual figure is required. Leaving aside for the moment the question of the inability of statistics on humanitarian entrants to capture the full population of young people with refugee experiences, an initial estimate can be obtained by adding together the numbers of young humanitarian entrants over a period of years. Table 3 shows that between 1991 and 2000 some 25,000 young people came to Australia under the Humanitarian Program as permanent residents. This approach is limited because it does not take into account the aging of new arrivals. A young person who is 12 years old in 1991 will still be in the 12–24 year cohort in 2000; however, a 23-year-old in 1997 will be 26 in 2000 and therefore no longer within the cohort.

There are two different ways of taking age into account. The issue is whether the target population is defined according to age upon arrival in Australia, or age at the time that services or funding are being planned. Where the latter definition is adopted, an estimate based on cohort analysis suggests that there are between 15,000 and 20,000 people currently aged 12 to 24 years living in Australia who at some point earlier, entered the country under the Humanitarian Program. Included in this estimate are people who came to Australia as very

defining the population of young refugees. It reports that between July 1995 and July 2000 some 12,653 young people aged 13 to 25 years at the time of their arrival, came to Australia under the Humanitarian Program. Entrants who were aged 21–25 at the time of entry in 1995 would no longer be part of the 13 to 25 year age cohort by 2000, but are included in this estimate.

A third option would be to take into account *both* age at entry and age at the time of the enumeration. This would arrive at an estimate of the number of humanitarian entrants aged 12 to 25 on arrival in Australia who were still in this age group at the time of the enumeration. To ensure a full count, this approach would require investigation not over a five-year period (as in the RRAC estimate) but over a 13-year period in order to track those who first arrived at age 12 through to their 25th year.

At this point, we need to take into account the underestimation of the size of the population of young people with refugee experiences resulting from dependence on statistics relating to the Humanitarian Program. As noted, these statistics do not include young refugees currently living in Australia under temporary protection visas (TPVs) or young people from refugee backgrounds who entered under the Family Stream of

the Migration Program. While it is possible to get figures on TPV grants (by age at the time of application and at the time of grant), because the TPV is a recent addition to humanitarian policy (created in 1999), data are only available for two years. Consequently, the cumulative numbers would not make much difference to the overall population estimate. If the use of TPVs continues to the same extent, however, visa grant allocations under this category will represent an increasingly significant portion of the young refugee population. It is important to monitor the overall change in the proportion of entrants under different visa categories because of the impact this has on entitlements to government assistance. It was pointed out in Chapter 2 that the proportion of young people with refugee experiences entering as Family Stream migrants is likely to be increasing. These young people are included in aggregate statistics relating to the Migration Program. However, it is possible to derive a reasonable estimate of their number by taking into account ethnicity, source country and year of arrival. Some 3,500 young people with refugee-like experiences were estimated by DIMIA to have arrived in the family migration stream between 1995 and 2000 (RRAC 2001). This estimate was based on numbers of Family Stream entrants from the 12 countries with the highest number of humanitarian departures to Australia.

When this figure is added to the cumulative total of Humanitarian Program entrants, we arrive at total estimate of just over 16,000 (12,653+3,500) young people with refugee experiences who entered Australia between 1995 and 2000 when they were aged 13 to 25 years. If this estimate is expanded to include earlier arrivals still within the 13- to 25-year age cohort, the figure is closer to 20,000.

There is scope for further research on both definitional issues and the methodology for deriving population estimates. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that the population of young people with refugee experiences is in the order of 16,000 to 20,000. This is a significant number, and approximates the size of the population of homeless young people at any point in time.<sup>2</sup>

## *Data requirements and indicators of refugee experience*

The difficulty encountered in trying to estimate the size of the young refugee population raises the

question of how best to identify a person's refugee background or experience for statistical purposes both for use in research and in service provision contexts (to monitor client access and to anticipate need). The problem of developing indicators of refugee experience falls within the larger project of developing a standardised approach to collecting data on the ethnic, cultural and linguistic background of clients in order to monitor the potential disadvantage (or in some instances, advantage) arising from these factors. In 1992, researchers in the field of ethno-psychiatry argued that perhaps the most urgent requirement of any systematic program of research development is:

*the need to improve upon the deplorable state of current methods of data collection, in particular, the measurement of ethnicity data. In the absence of reliable and valid data based on well-designed instruments of measurement, especially as regards cross cultural equivalence, there is little prospect of generating any worthwhile research in this general area, especially research that is useful for policy purposes (Jayasuriya, Sang & Fielding 1992, p.48).*

Since that time, standards have been developed for the collection of statistics on cultural and linguistic background and diversity. This is a task recently tackled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in response to widespread demand.

## *ABS Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*

Standards for statistics on cultural and linguistic diversity were developed to enable the consistent collection and dissemination of information relating to the cultural background of a person (or group of people) and the cultural diversity of a population (whether, for example, Australia as a whole, or subgroups within). One of the main purposes was to 'provide a way to identify, measure and monitor service needs associated with advantage or disadvantage related to cultural and language background' (ABS 1999, p.2). The development of statistical standards followed a request to the ABS from federal government in recognition of the importance of generating quality data on cultural and linguistic background for the improvement of strategic planning and the evaluation of service programs. The project was initially directed towards finding a replacement for the category 'non-English speaking background' (NESB) which was seen to be an inadequate indicator of possible socioeco-

conomic disadvantage arising from cultural and ethnic diversity and unable to express the positive aspects of cultural diversity.

*One of the aims of the use of the Standard Set of Cultural and Language Indicators is to enable agencies to make decisions about a person's needs on the basis of direct and accurate information about their background, language and English skills without making unfounded assumptions about individuals on the basis of the general characteristics of the community group to which they belong* (ABS 1999, p.14).

The ABS notes that adequate measurement of cultural and linguistic background and related advantage and disadvantage requires 'a combination of variables which produce [...] a range of data about a person's background' (ibid). A number of indicator variables were tested for use on surveys and administrative forms in various settings, including DIMIA processing offices. A minimum core set of indicators and a more extended 'standard set' were developed. (Standards for the definition and measurement of each of the indicators selected for inclusion had been standardised by the ABS at an earlier date.)

The core set consists of four indicators:

- country of birth of person
- main language other than English spoken at home
- proficiency in spoken English
- Indigenous status (for data collections not focused on migrants to Australia).

The full standard set includes the following additional indicators:

- ancestry
- country of birth of father
- country of birth of mother
- first language spoken
- languages spoken at home
- main language spoken at home
- religious affiliation
- year of arrival in Australia.

The standards were endorsed by the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCIMA) in April 1999. MCIMA recommended that the minimum core set of indicators be implemented in 'all national and state and territory statistical and administrative collections which required information on cultural and language diversity' (ABS 1999, p.6). In June 2001, the committee published a guide to assist

government departments and agencies to implement the standards. The guide includes a checklist for implementation and urges departments and agencies to develop a system for monitoring the implementation process.<sup>3</sup>

## *Indicators of refugee experience*

Statistics on cultural and linguistic background do not exhaust the data requirements regarding people from refugee backgrounds. The *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* (see Chapter 5) identifies refugee settlers as a group at 'possible double disadvantage' in their access to government services, since refugee experience is likely to compound other difficulties resulting, for example, from limited proficiency in English or cultural difference. While visa category does not coincide exactly with the presence or absence of refugee experience, it is the closest measure of this variable available in official statistics. However, the recent experience of the ABS in developing indicators to measure cultural and linguistic diversity found that, despite its potential usefulness as an indicator of potential disadvantage, it would be 'difficult' to collect data on a migrant's entry visa category in many service provider contexts (ABS 1999, p.4). Part of this difficulty relates to the sensitivities around asking clients for information of this nature in certain types of administrative setting. This means that in many instances proxy measures will have to be used.

Ethnicity, in particular, is a key indicator of refugee background when used together with information on year of arrival and source country, in order to link new arrivals with refugee producing circumstances. However, defining and measuring ethnic background has proved a particularly persistent problem. It has been common in administrative data collection settings to use source country or, alternatively, country of birth as a surrogate measure of ethnicity (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1996). Figures on the birthplace of new arrivals to Australia do not coincide exactly with ethnic identity because arrivals from countries such as Afghanistan originate from several ethnic groups. In addition, the designated country of origin for arrivals to Australia may differ from their country of birth. In general, the variable of birthplace 'has limitations in identifying ethnic and cultural groups which form minorities in their country or countries of origin and groups which have significant populations in countries outside their country of origin' (ABS 1999, p.10).

An ethnicity variable has been developed by DIMIA Humanitarian Branch to capture the ethnic groups covered by the Humanitarian Program. For example, arrivals from Afghanistan can be identified as Hussar, Pashtun, Vardak or Hazara. This variable is recorded in the Settlement Database.

It is also important to develop indicators of refugee experience or refugee background appropriate to the circumstances of young people. Progress has been made in this direction by the Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET) program. This program (described more fully in Chapter 5) specifically targets young people with refugee experience for assistance in finding and participating in suitable employment and training opportunities. 'Refugee experience' is defined as including one or more of the following characteristics:

- pre-arrival experiences of torture or trauma;
- poor English language ability;
- cultural differences;
- fear and distrust in accessing government services;
- forced migration;
- fewer resources;
- disrupted education;
- feelings of isolation; and/or
- disrupted or destroyed relationships.

These characteristics are understood to pose specific barriers to educational, training and employment opportunities. JPET service providers make an individual assessment of need on the basis of these characteristics for young people who have entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program or as immediate family members of a humanitarian entrant.

### *Key variables*

Once again it should be emphasised that there is considerable diversity of need and experience within the population of refugee young people. This diversity ought to be reflected in the collection and reporting of statistics on young refugees. The support needs of young refugees, as for all migrants, are affected by their length of residency in Australia and their English language proficiency (both these variables are included in the ABS standards on cultural and linguistic diversity). Refugee young people coming to Australia may join newly emerging ethnic communities, minority communities, or communities which have a longer history in Australia. These characteristics are likely to impact

greatly on the extent of social infrastructure and support services young refugees have access to in Australia. Information about the socioeconomic status of young refugees has never been systematically collected. The potential for individual variation is such that stereotyping on the basis of ethnicity, or country of birth, is likely to be inaccurate and misleading. Collection and reporting of data relating to socioeconomic status would assist the planning of effective, targeted services to young refugees arriving in Australia.

### *Summary*

This chapter has established that between 2,000 and 3,000 young settlers arrive in Australia under the Humanitarian Program every year. However, Humanitarian Program statistics underestimate the number of young people with refugee experiences because they do not include entrants under the Family Stream of the Migration Program and because they tend not to include the number of temporary protection visa holders. Cumulative rather than annual figures are required to make an assessment of the size of the target client population. We estimate that there are between 16,000 and 20,000 young people with refugee experiences currently residing in Australia. The range in this estimate reflects different definitions of the relevant target population. More work is needed to develop methodologies for deriving population estimates. Young refugees are a heterogeneous group representative of diverse cultural and national origins. Available data is not adequate to enable detailed characterisation of the population of young refugees, particularly with respect to their use of services. This will change as the ABS standards on cultural and linguistic diversity are implemented, although the implementation process itself may be lengthy. A further issue is the need to develop indicators of refugee background and refugee experience relevant to young people in order to monitor the relative disadvantage or, in some instances, advantage of this group of young people relative to others.

- 1 The figures include onshore grants of permanent protection visas.
- 2 Indeed, young people from refugee backgrounds (either classified as such officially or entrants whose family members came as refugees) are at high risk of becoming homeless compared to other groups (see Chapter 4).
- 3 This publication is entitled *The Guide: Implementing the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity* and can be downloaded from the DIMIA website at: <http://www.immi.gov.au/>

# Needs in context<sup>4</sup>



*A refugee's experience is comprised of traumas encountered in their home country as well as traumas associated with the exile, migration and resettlement process. These do not act in isolation but interact together in varied and complex ways. Such occurrences are balanced and mediated through the refugee's own strengths and weaknesses and psychological and cultural attributes, as well as the attitudes of the host environment in Australia (NSW Department of Health 1997).*

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the challenges and barriers commonly faced by refugee young people as they attempt to adjust to life in Australia. This is a difficult task as the above quotation suggests. Young refugees have a range of pre-migration experiences that in part determine their settlement needs. They also have variable strengths and support systems that influence the sorts of assistance they are likely to need from government and non-government agencies. Their needs will be further shaped by the attitudes they encounter in the host culture. The chapter begins with an account of the societal response young refugees are likely to meet when they begin resettlement. The ultimate goal of policy and service interventions is to assist young refugees make a successful transition to independence in their new country, but the notion of independence itself requires further scrutiny. We go on to inquire how the concept of 'need' might be applied to help develop a better understanding of the service response

required by young refugees to assist in this transition. The chapter outlines the common needs of young refugees for adequate income, housing, health, justice and psycho-social support (including the ability to communicate with others); for access to education; and for employment and training opportunities.

Comparisons with other young people, including young migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and with older refugees, are made, wherever practical, to highlight some of the important distinctions and differences in the needs of refugee young people. At the same time, we draw attention to circumstances where young people within the refugee population are likely to have particularly acute needs.

The information presented in this chapter has been obtained from surveys and interviews with young refugees, interviews with refugee families, practice and policy advice from key informants, analysis of data from the national census of homeless school students, and from a review of relevant literature.

## Context of settlement

*Among the many factors determining whether migration will be a negative or positive experience, the orientation the host society displays towards newcomers is among the most important (Report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees 1988, p.13).*

In Australia, the settlement experience of young refugees takes place within a context of mixed messages. On the one hand, new settlers to Australia encounter an ethic of multiculturalism which tells them they are welcome and valued additions to society; on the other hand, they encounter racist attitudes and practices that suggest the opposite.

## Multiculturalism

*The best thing about Australia is multiculturalism*  
(Bosnian refugee, aged 22).

Australia has an official policy of multiculturalism which recognises that 'Australia is and will remain a culturally diverse country' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 6, Nov 2001). The aim of multicultural policy is to ensure that diversity works as a positive force in Australian society and to find ways of 'managing the consequences of diversity in the interests of the individual and society as a whole' (ibid). Both major parties support multiculturalism in principle.

In December 1999, the Federal Government launched its multicultural policy statement, *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia*. Following recommendations of an earlier report by the National Multicultural Advisory Council, the *New Agenda* emphasises the following core principles:

- **civic duty**, which obliges all Australians to support those basic structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee us our freedom and equality, and enable diversity in our society to flourish;
- **cultural respect**, which, subject to the law, gives all Australians the right to express their own culture and beliefs and obliges them to accept the right of others to do the same;
- **social equity**, which entitles all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity so that they are able to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth; and
- **productive diversity**, which maximises for all Australians the significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population.

The Council for Multicultural Australia was established at this time to help coordinate the

implementation of the new multicultural policy, to raise awareness levels in the broader community regarding the relevance of this for all Australians and to highlight the economic and social benefits of Australia's cultural diversity.

There is also bipartisan support for the principle of racial tolerance. In October 1996, the then newly elected Coalition Government reaffirmed 'the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin' and denounced racial intolerance in any form as 'incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to be' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 6, Nov 2001). The statement was supported by the Leader of the Opposition and was given the unanimous approval of the House of Representatives.

## Racism

Castles et al. (1988, p.13) warn that the discourse of multiculturalism is regressive in some ways, because it may be used to trivialise serious social inequalities between ethnic groups in Australia resulting from systemic racism. Chambers and Pettman (1986) identify four interconnected types of racism: racial prejudice or negative attitudes; racial discrimination or negative behaviour; racist ideology or social myths that reinforce power relations; and institutional racism. Institutional racism is identified as the most subtle and insidious form of racism. This form of racism is seen to infiltrate the education system, media, social services, political and administrative bodies, and private corporations. Racism is often unconscious and taken for granted by individuals partly because systems and institutions that perpetuate the disadvantage of minority groups were often established before racist values were explicitly challenged in public debate.

Discussion of cultural difference can be uncomfortable for many people, especially those who worry about appearing racist, or provoking racism, or just of being 'too political'. Acknowledgment of cultural difference should not be confused with racism. However, when certain cultural practices seem unacceptable to Anglo-Australians, the task of responding to them becomes even more delicate. For example, discussion of issues like female genital mutilation must be done with great sensitivity and maturity and in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust between groups of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Young refugees, like many other young migrants from certain ethnic or cultural groups, are generally

aware of racism. It is a real concern for them, yet because racism is entrenched, it often goes unnoticed by those responsible for providing community services. Zelinka (1993) discovered that the majority of young people from culturally diverse backgrounds in the outer west of Sydney considered racism as one of the most pressing problems they faced: while the majority ranked it as the most important problem from a list of eight, youth workers and other service providers ranked it only seventh. In her review of literature on young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds living in south-east Queensland, Ferguson (1994) found that racism was highlighted as an issue in nearly all of the reports she examined. While it is known that newly arrived young refugees are less likely to express their concerns about racism than more established young people, this study corroborates Ferguson's finding:

*Some Australian people don't like Asians. When I travel home from school on the bus, I see Australian people teasing Asian people and asking them why they are here when they belong in Asia. I don't understand English well enough to know if people are teasing me too. I think people are teasing me. When I lived in the other area, many people laughed at my scarf and long dress (Somali refugee, female, aged 15).*

*Racism is what I hate the most in Australia. Like when people don't like you because you are from overseas, and they want to put you down and think you are dumb (Bosnian, male, aged 17).*

Seeto (1991) claims that 'racism [...] against non-English speaking background young people [is] the biggest barrier to their successful social integration and personal growth' (cited in Ferguson 1994, p.7).

### *Societal attitudes towards migrants and refugees*

In Australia, racist attitudes tend to resurface in contexts where new waves of immigration are seen to pose a particular threat to the existing community. Although not confirmed in the research literature, it is commonly felt that a high intake of migrants at times of high or growing unemployment serves to exacerbate the unemployment problem. In recent years, currents of anxiety about immigration have been expressed through support for Pauline Hanson's One Nation party.

Following September 11, and the commencement of the 'war on terrorism,' anxiety has shifted to matters

of national security and the putative threat posed by asylum seekers. During political debate and media coverage in the lead-up to the November 2001 federal election, old and new fears converged in widespread animus aimed, if not towards asylum seekers directly, then indirectly through concerns about the syndicates responsible for people smuggling. Asylum seekers have consequently been maligned not only as 'queue jumpers' but also as 'possible terrorists' (*Age* 15 September 2001; *Age* 29 August 2001). At the same time, there has been growing concern within Australia regarding the treatment of asylum seekers, particularly children and young people. In November 2001 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission announced an inquiry into the treatment of children in Immigration Reception and Processing Centres (*Age* 28 November 2001).

Refugee young people arriving in Australia at the beginning of the 21st century will encounter a society clearly divided on the issue of the country's humanitarian commitment.

### *Transitions to independence*

Independence is a concept with different meanings in different cultural settings and ethnic contexts. Anglo-Australian understandings of independence tend to be associated with young people moving out of the family home, getting employment, making decisions and, in general, doing things for themselves. In some ways independence is an unfortunate term because it implies individualist over collectivist values. The term 'interdependence' is preferable since it encompasses a sense of family and community connectedness more in tune with the notions of growing up and undertaking responsibility articulated by many young people from refugee backgrounds.

*You belong only to one family. You are not supposed to separate. It's not respectable. In my country, as long as a person is alive, they should stay with their parents. If I got married, probably my wife would come and live at my home. If I did move, I would not move so far away that I could not visit my father every day. I must always be available if he wants something. I am the eldest son. Who else will protect my father? (Afghani refugee, aged 19)*

Different challenges are likely to face young people who have no close family or significant adults with them in Australia. Many refugee young people will have lived through circumstances that forced them to

'grow up' quickly and, in some cases, to take care of themselves in particularly dangerous circumstances. For these young people, 'independence' may be seen as something that has been thrust prematurely upon them. Once in Australia, the rules of the game change again, everything is new and feelings of helplessness may become overwhelming. Yet many refugee young people fully recognise the nature of the demands being made upon them:

*The things we need to do in order to feel or be Australian are, number one, language, number two, financial independence, number three, skills and training. When we manage to do something here, and do things on our own, then we will have a right to say that we are Australian. I would like to be able to say that I am Australian* (Bosnian refugee, aged 22).

For young migrants in general, the struggle for independence can be understood as an interaction between two challenging periods of transition: from childhood to adulthood and from culture of origin to host culture. These two transitions are considered below.

### *A transition to adulthood and the formation of identity*

Adolescence is generally understood as the period of transition to adulthood. Young people are involved in a series of transitions from educational institutions into the work force, from financial dependence on family to economic independence, and from puberty to physical adulthood and, in many cases, to parenthood. Arguably this transition is less clear-cut in Australia than it used to be. For example, young people into their mid- twenties are expected under current income support arrangements to receive financial and other support from their immediate families. Nevertheless, during adolescence, young people experience dramatic bodily, intellectual and emotional growth and change. An adolescent must search for an acceptable compromise between self-image and the social roles and behaviour expected by the wider society. This task can be thought of in terms of the formation of identity. It is a difficult task for young migrants because of the dual social world they inhabit and the competing cultural goals and expectations with which they are likely to be faced. Young refugees are likely to be in a particularly vulnerable position during their psychological development into adulthood because of the confusion

caused by exile and by the customary periods spent in places of temporary asylum:

*I belong everywhere and nowhere. After I spent one year in Germany, I was sure I belonged there. In Germany, I worked, I had a flat and I spoke the language. People who worked with me helped me feel that I belonged. But now I am in Australia and Germany is not my home any more. Maybe I need some time to feel I belong in Australia* (Croatian migrant aged 25).

For young migrants and refugees the transition to independence is fundamentally about the formation of identity (Guerra & White 1995; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy 1990). There are several possibilities here. Some young people actively maintain the culture and language of their parents and identify predominantly with the culture of their country of origin. At the other extreme, some young migrants try hard to become part of the mainstream culture and discard the potential contribution of their cultural heritage. Dissociation from cultural and ethnic identity may be hastened by frustration and anger at the inability of the home country to provide protection, an inability to return to that country and a lack of choice in leaving.

*Sometimes when I say that I am not Iraqi to people in our community, they get annoyed with me. They say that I am ignoring my country and my heritage. But I insist I am not Iraqi, I am free and I do not like the country that hurt us. A country is only your home if it is safe and you can feel you belong. It is not OK to be forced to do something that you do not want to do* (Iraqi refugee aged 20).

As a third possibility, refugee young people may become alienated from both their own culture and the dominant culture. They may accept the negative self-image projected on them by some in the host society, yet fail to understand and participate in the new multicultural communities available to them in Australia. The search for social support and validation draws some refugee young people into subcultures that are marginal to both mainstream culture and the culture of their country of origin. For example, pool rooms and gaming venues are sites that attract young unemployed or alienated young men in search of companionship and recreation, but these settings may also result in exposure to less benign and criminal subcultures.

A fourth option is for refugee young people to reconcile their identity by selecting and adapting aspects of both cultures, leading to the development of

a bicultural identity. This last option is likely to be most successful for young people in the longer term.

*I want to be both Serbian and Australian* (Bosnian refugee aged 15).

*I think it is equally important to be Algerian and Australian. Half half. Like I must learn English and retain my native language* (Algerian refugee, male, aged 24).

Ethnic identity is constructed, and reconstructed, through everyday life experiences. Camino (1994, p.31) notes that 'no single or static form of ethnicity develops among refugee youth'. The permutations and combinations of identity formation are complex because an individual's sense of belonging may relate to multiple groups and change over time as the contexts of belonging change. The circumstances of young refugees are likely to have changed considerably over the period of their migration and settlement. Some migrants from refugee-producing countries have great difficulty in even defining their nationality in terms of the place where they were born. This is clearly true for migrants from the former Yugoslavia, for example. Young people in these circumstances tend to have greater difficulty in developing bicultural skills because their original cultural identity has been subverted or undergone a major transformation in a short period. This is illustrated by the circumstances of a 23-year old Bosnian man:

*I don't know my nationality. I don't know my religion. I am mixed. I am nothing* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).

This young man had an (absent) Bosnian-Muslim father and a Serbian-Orthodox mother, who had since remarried a Croatian-Catholic man and adopted Croatian ways. The young man was raised by his paternal grandparents. He pretended to be Croatian, using false documents in order to secure some freedom of movement in Bosnia, and had effectively concealed his identity for six years. 'No one knows who I am. I am a name, nothing more.'

A young Eritrean woman had a similarly uncertain connection to her culture.

*My mum and dad, although they are both Eritrean, have different languages and different cultures. There are nine languages in Eritrea. I don't understand my dad's language. I find it difficult to be with him* (Eritrean refugee, aged 18, arrived in Australia with father,

despite having spent little time with him in Eritrea.).

The issue of identity is further complicated if personal information on travel documents is incorrect, a circumstance that is not unusual for young refugees. It is quite common for young people not to have any personal identification with them upon arrival in a country of first asylum. Some young people are advised by family or friends to understate their age in the belief that this might improve their chances of selection for resettlement or enable them to qualify for longer periods of education. Young refugees in such circumstances embark on a confusing, time-consuming and frustrating process that can effectively relegate them to a psychological limbo.

Young people experiment with an emerging sense of identity through social interaction and constant feedback from others. When the host society's reaction involves racism or the under-valuing of minority groups, this feedback will be negative or at best contradictory. Significant adults in the young person's life can help counterbalance such attacks by positive reinforcement. Parents and other family members who arrived with, or joined, the young person will inevitably be important sources of feedback. As Cahill and Ewen (1987) note, however, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often have more in common with Anglo-Australian youth than with their parents' generation with respect to views on such issues as dating, sexual freedom, leaving home, and educational and career choices. The ambivalent reception of the host society, combined with possible intergenerational conflict within the family, can result in extremely confusing cross-pressures.

Conventional wisdom suggests that refugee young people generally acculturate to the host society faster than their parents. This assumption appears to be largely founded on the rate of English language acquisition, but this remains an unsubstantiated indicator of acculturation. Other variables are likely to intervene. For example, in some migrant communities, boys are given more opportunity and freedom to acculturate than girls, yet boys can often bear a greater burden of high parental expectations of success.

In summary, it is clear that the transition to adulthood and the achievement of an integrated identity is a complex process for refugee young people.

## A transition to a new culture

*Migration is one of the most severe attacks on a person's identity* (Refugee Resettlement Working Group 1994).

The transition from one culture to another is generally seen as complete after a successful settlement period. Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) argue that the literature on settlement leaves a number of important issues unresolved, including how 'settlement' should be defined. Is settlement a period of time or the accomplishment of certain goals? If settlement implies certain goals have been achieved, then what are the goals and how do they differ for young migrants? There is no consensus about the answers to these questions. The National Population Council's (1991) definition of settlement provides a useful starting point:

*[Settlement is] the process by which an immigrant establishes economic viability and social networks following immigration in order to contribute to, and make full use of, opportunities generally available to the receiving society* (National Population Council 1991).

Settlement programs administered by government tend to target those who have arrived within the previous two years. The implicit assumption is that settlement objectives can largely be accomplished within this period, although it is also recognised that the process of settlement only occurs effectively when the individual sets their own pace.

*People coming to Australia as refugees need time to adjust. We all need time. Every nation has its own culture and we need time to see it and learn it. About one year! It took me one year to adjust to Germany and feel like I belonged* (Croatian migrant, aged 25, former permanent resident of Germany).

## Intersecting transitions

In summary, young migrants have to deal with two interrelated transition processes: an age-appropriate transition, and a transition to a new culture, in which the major life task is identity formation. Hypothetically, the transition to age-appropriate independence can occur before, during or after a culturally appropriate transition. However, arrival in a new country as a teenager is particularly difficult because the two transitions must be managed simultaneously, unless one or the other is delayed.

Young migrants are exposed to varying cultural understandings of what constitutes 'independence' that will have consequences for their age-appropriate transition. They must contend with how the transition to adulthood is dealt with in their culture of origin as well as the way it is typically understood in the broader Australian community. Juggling these different expectations around dependence and independence can prove a lifelong challenge.

An example will illustrate this point. Traditionally, Indochinese young people are not seen to reach adulthood until they take over the family business or get married. Those working with 'Westernised' Indochinese young people in Australia may spend months coaxing a refugee young person to adopt appropriate adult roles and accept adult responsibilities. Then the young person may seem to make an 'overnight transformation' upon the announcement of their intention to marry. The acceptance of adult responsibilities, even for people in their mid-twenties, can be withheld until one of these tasks is achieved.

For adolescents from refugee backgrounds, the challenges of growing up in a new culture are confronted in the shadow of the traumatic experiences of the recent past. Young refugees must struggle to acquire English, perform well at school or find employment, along with everything else in their lives.

## Understanding 'needs'

Need is a difficult theoretical concept. Ideas about need are complicated by theorists' diverse use of the term (Sandole 1990; Bay 1977; Dawson 1994; Doyle & Gough 1991). The term is used to refer to: the fundamental biological need for air, food or water; basic human needs, such as the need for meaning, identity and social interaction; and culturally or historically specific manifestations of need such as the need for gainful employment, access to refrigeration or the like. The definition of 'basic human needs' changes over time and place (Fraser 1987, 1989; Heller 1993). Any discussion of needs is inescapably accompanied by value judgements and is as much about ideology as empirical science or commonsense.

Bradshaw (1972) proposes four concepts of need that can potentially be operationalised to assist in an appraisal of the circumstances of refugee young people:

- 'comparative need' which measures need relative to similar groups;
- 'felt need' or what people want and believe they need;

- 'expressed need' or actual behaviour as people attempt to meet their needs; and
- 'normative need' or what expert or professionals define as need.

Applying these measures to refugee young people is not straightforward for a number of reasons. Refugees resettled in Australia live in a culture that is dramatically different from the one in which they were socialised. This presents difficulties in determining the norms against which their lived experience, needs and standards of living can legitimately be compared. Should the living standards of refugees be on a par with the culture in which they were raised, the culture in which they now live, or the people from similar source cultures to themselves living in the new culture? Such questions are rarely raised explicitly in public debate surrounding Australia's humanitarian policy. These debates are revealing nevertheless since they often betray certain stereotypes about the degree of impoverishment seen by some as a defining characteristic of refugee people. For example, it is sometimes suggested that asylum seekers who pay people smugglers to bring them to Australia by definition cannot be genuine refugees.<sup>1</sup> Aside from allegations and counter-allegations about how much money changes hands, there is a sense in which refugees are not deemed deserving of assistance unless they are completely destitute. Such views have implications for the standard of living that might be seen as acceptable for refugees once in Australia. In short, the application of comparative criteria of need can become politically sensitive where public support for Australia's humanitarian policy is not actively maintained.

Felt and expressed criteria of need are also problematic with respect to refugees. As noted, a residual effect of the experiences of persecution is ongoing distrust of government and authority figures. Combined with language difficulties or cultural norms, this may mean that refugees do not even publicly acknowledge feeling need. Recently arrived refugees are likely to experience a great sense of relief to finally reach a safe environment. The point of comparison for many refugees is likely to be their most recent living situation, often a refugee camp, with impoverished and over-crowded conditions. Australian standards of living are so much better overall that particular issues of individual need are masked at least for a while. The issue is particularly complicated for asylum seekers whose claims for refugee status are unresolved. Asylum seekers are perhaps even less likely than recognised refugees to

acknowledge unmet need, for fear that this may jeopardise their application for refugee status.

*I was not angry to be put in detention, because it is the policy of Australia. I just accept it* (Algerian asylum seeker, male, spent four months in Australian detention centre).

Contrary to this, 2002 saw a series of highly publicised protests by asylum seekers held within Woomera Immigration Reception and Processing Centre in South Australia. These protests were made in the context of international scrutiny of Australia's policy of mandatory detention, and the needs expressed by the protestors were for basic rights to freedom and for their claims for protection under the UN Convention to be processed with due speed and fairness. The protests took a visually dramatic form when asylum seekers, including some young people and children, bound their lips with suture in a symbolic gesture of refusing food until their rights to freedom were taken seriously. The expressions of distaste made by some senior politicians and public commentators in response to these actions, illustrate all too clearly how the behaviour through which need is communicated may give rise to incomprehension – not merely as a result of cultural difference, or indeed, of politically motivated failure to understand, but at least in part because it remains difficult for people who have not shared similar experiences to fully understand the sense of desperation that motivates such actions.

Documentation of felt needs assumes a willingness to acknowledge and communicate, which in turn depends on adequate linguistic skills and the confidence to express oneself. This is further complicated by the fact that for people from some cultural backgrounds, 'there is no natural connection [...] between need and the fulfilment of that need by a social agency' (Biocchi & Radcliffe 1983, p.69). Notwithstanding the prevalence of neoliberal political philosophies, Western society generally values active intervention in coping with social problems, reflecting a cultural system in which many of the caring roles originally fulfilled by family networks have been taken over by the state. In some Eastern philosophies, suffering is viewed as part of the natural order and non-intervention is accorded value in its own right (Biocchi & Radcliffe 1983). Furthermore, expressed need takes shape within a context of services that already exist. Where services do not exist or are culturally irrelevant, an understatement of need inevitably results.

The most common method for identifying need on a case by case level involves professionals making judgements about the extent of an individual's need after listening to his or her story and then bringing to bear various professional skills and practice experience in the assessment. Judgements of need may of course vary dramatically from professional to professional and also from profession to profession. This is probably inescapable, but is less problematic where practitioners are encouraged to be self-conscious about the assumptions they are making with respect to 'need'. In his exploration of the assumptions about 'social need' embedded in policy debates in the United Kingdom, Smith (1980) discovered that 'need tends to have been viewed as an objective and measurable property', characteristics he associates with a medical model (1980, p.6). Need has traditionally been perceived as a personal attribute of clients rather than something that depends on context. It tends to be understood as independent of client-practitioner interaction, in particular a organisational milieu and of the definitional practices of professionals. Smith concludes that 'obsolete' views of need featuring 'rigid and artificial distinctions' persist because organisational structures prohibit the operational adoption of alternative ideas.

## *Risk and resilience*

*I borrowed a book about Australian history from the local library, because I wanted to know more about Australia, because I will be here for a long time (Afghani refugee, aged 19).*

The approaches to identifying and measuring need outlined above have different strengths and limitations depending on the specific use to which they are put. All three approaches present difficulties when applied to young refugees. Moreover, there is a sense in which a constant focus on 'need' may over-emphasise the vulnerability of refugee young people as a group. Cahill and Ewen (1987) highlight the 'problem orientation' of much of the literature on migrant youth and urge researchers and policy-makers to avoid perpetuating what they call the 'poor migrant syndrome'. Indeed, much of the research and commentary about young refugees fails to acknowledge the sheer determination of this group of young people. Young refugees are proven survivors and the incidence of serious long-term maladjustment is fairly low (Krupinski & Burrows 1986). The majority (90%) of young refugee settlers commit to full-time study and tend to have a realistic

approach to work. Initial high rates of psychiatric morbidity decline within two years (Krupinski & Burrows 1986).

A standpoint of cautious optimism seems most appropriate. As North (1980, p.144) suggests: 'Refugees are refugees not because of their dependence, but because of their independence.' One of the reasons that people become refugees is because they (or their parents) were participating members of their former society, usually employed and often prominent in their communities. In this context, the greatest need of young refugees is for compassion and understanding by people in their new country, followed by practical support until they can contribute to their own and their community's well-being. The difficulties faced by young refugees are considerable, but, as Australia's long history of assisting refugees shows, they often go on to become some of the country's strongest citizens.

At the same time, the concept of need, and methods for identifying need, remain central to social policy, particularly in a context where targeting scarce resources to those 'most in need' is seen as a key principle of distribution within the social security system. As demonstrated in the remainder of this chapter, the needs of refugee young people are complex and multifaceted, and together suggest strongly that young refugees be seen as a 'high risk' group meriting priority attention and specific allocation of resources in many areas of social policy.

The findings of this project suggest that, from the point of view of planning government assistance, there is a meaningful comparison to be drawn in Australia between refugee young people and young homeless people. As noted in Chapter 3, the two populations are of a similar size. But the similarity goes beyond this. A significant subgroup within the young refugee population shares some of the same characteristics of marginalisation and social dislocation as homeless youth. Research conducted as part of this project shows young people from refugee backgrounds have a particularly high risk of homelessness (see the section on housing needs later in this chapter). From a comparative perspective on need, the young refugee population should be acknowledged as particularly disadvantaged and consequently warranting a concerted response at the policy and program levels, much in the same way as homeless young people have received such attention in recent years.

Similar concerns about the targeting of refugee young people for government assistance have arisen in the policy debate on responding to marginal and 'at

risk' young people more generally. There is a tension between recognising and responding to risk, while at the same time avoiding the possible negative impacts of labeling, including the perpetuation of disabling and long-term dependencies. The discord in the debate is substantially resolved once it is recognised that the notion of risk is an analytic category useful for making sense of the dimensions of a problem while the concept of resilience emphasises the positive resources that individuals use to take charge in changing their lives. The approach advocated in this report is for the adoption of a comparative definition of need, which acknowledges the relative disadvantage of young refugees, but which is tempered by appreciation of the capacities and resilience that young refugees bring to their situation.

## Comparison of needs

Table 5 provides a useful comparison of the likely experiences and consequent needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants with migrants from the United Kingdom and migrants from non-Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. The variables are organised to illustrate changes in needs and experiences over time, from the pre-migration period, through the early stages of settlement on arrival, to post-settlement. An analysis of Table 5 shows refugees to be more likely than other migrants to have a range of difficulties when they first arrive in Australia. However, with regard to long-term adjustment and, by implication, capacity to contribute to Australian society, the outlook for refugees is very positive. People from refugee backgrounds are more likely than other migrants, particularly those from the UK, to strongly identify with Australia. They are also more likely to take up Australian citizenship and report high levels of satisfaction with Australia as a home after 10 years of residence. In terms of financial stability, refugees are likely to have mixed experiences but their children are more likely than those from other migrant backgrounds to be 'high achievers'. Thus, although the costs of meeting the diverse needs of refugees in the short-term may be high, Richmond's analysis suggests economic benefits to the community will be realised in the longer term.

While it is important to know that it makes long-term economic sense to meet the needs of refugee young people, the rationale for

Australia's Humanitarian Program is centred on recognition of moral obligations to support refugees in an international context.

*No matter how much refugees may contribute economically and in other ways to this country, this is not the underlying purpose of the refugee and humanitarian program* (Refugee Resettlement Working Group 1994).

The remainder of this chapter describes the common needs of the population of young refugees in the areas of employment, education, training, housing, health, justice, income and psycho-social support.

**Table 5: Refugees and other migrants – a comparison of experiences**

	<i>Refugees</i>	<i>Other (non-Anglo) migrants</i>	<i>UK-born migrants</i>
<i>Pre-migration</i>			
Premigration trauma/displacement	++	-	--
Voluntary migration/chosen by Australia	--	++	++
Possibility of return to country	--	++	++
<i>On arrival</i>			
Culture shock on arrival	++	+	-
Initial language problems	++	++	-
Initial prejudice and hostility	++	++	--
Severe mental health problems	+	-	--
Non-recognition of occupational qualifications	++	+	+-
Initial employment difficulties	++	+	+
Discrimination in housing and employment	+-	+-	--
<i>Post settlement</i>			
Strong ethnic community organisation	+-	+	--
Residential concentration	++	+	-
Pluralistic integration	++	+	-
Eventual high income	+-	-	++
Full recovery or improvement in occupational status	+-	+	+
High achievers among second generation	++	+	+
Strong identification with Australia	++	+-	--
High and early take up of citizenship	++	+-	--
High satisfaction with Australia (after 10 years)	++	+	-

Note: This table was adapted from Richmond (1980).

Legend: ++ very high probability, + high probability, +- mixed experience, - little probability, -- hardly ever or none

*To begin life again in a new country, migrants need practical assistance, psychological support and personal stamina* (Report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees 1988, p.15).

## Employment needs

*The problem is jobs* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

Young refugees, like most other young people in Australia, generally want personally satisfying work and, eventually, a career. As with other young people, young refugees are interested in the broad spectrum of employment opportunities, reflecting the diversity of their experiences and aspirations. Young refugees tend to be ambitious, and their parents are ambitious for them, and encourage them to excel in their school work.

*I am interested in any kind of job. I am serious and genuine. And in the long-term, I would like to work in a profession* (Sudanese refugee, male, aged 22).

However, there is a high risk that the work aspirations of many young refugees will be thwarted by adverse labour market conditions. Young people have higher unemployment rates than adults, although the unemployment rate for teenagers is now lower than it was in the mid-nineties. In May 1999, some 142,000 teenagers were unemployed, representing 11% of the age group (15- to 19-year-olds) and 19% of teenagers in the labour force (Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001, p.120). In August 2000, some 13% of teenagers were in neither full-time education nor full-time employment (Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001, p.6).

Most migrant groups have higher unemployment rates than Australian-born people (DEWRSB 1998). Refugee groups have some of the highest unemployment rates of all groups in the community (Iredale & D'Arcy 1992). People from some refugee-producing countries have unemployment rates as high as 54% (DEWRSB 1998). Not only are refugees more likely to be unemployed than other jobseekers, but they are also likely to be unemployed for longer periods and are less likely to be employed in occupations appropriate to their level of skill and qualifications (Iredale & D'Arcy 1992).

Exact unemployment rates for humanitarian entrants cannot be determined, because visa categories are not recorded in the Labour Force Survey conducted

by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. However, given the labour market disadvantage of young people as a population group and of refugees as a sub-group, young refugees are clearly likely to experience considerable labour market disadvantage.

Labour market success can be measured in a variety of ways including rates of employment, earnings and occupational attainment. Young people suffer disproportionately from hidden unemployment (Whitfield 1987) and exhibit high rates of turnover and occupational and industrial segregation, especially in the retail and hospitality industries (Coventry & Bertone 1998). In general, young people command minimal bargaining power at the point of entry into the labour market, or at the earliest stages of a career, and, therefore, youth wages are low. Another factor is that, over several decades, part-time employment has expanded at the expense of full-time jobs. In the 1990s, full-time wages for teenagers fell to \$290 as average weekly earnings rose to \$660 (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1998). The introduction of a youth wage has formalised this position of weakness. In some industries, rates of payment are determined on the basis of age.

*I would like to have a part-time job, but it is hard. Because I am 19 years of age and there are other people here (in the school) who are 15 or 16, it is cheaper for the employer to employ them instead of me* (Bosnian refugee, male).

The labour market disadvantage suffered by young people in general is compounded for many young refugees by several factors including:

- low levels of English language proficiency;
- lack of job-seeking skills (especially if they are unfamiliar with the concept of an open labour market);
- lack of access to support networks;
- inadequate career information;
- biased employer attitudes, especially the undervaluing of biliteracy and bilingual skills;
- non-recognition or non-transferability of qualifications;
- an absence of local work experience or lack of documentation about relevant work experiences; and, finally,
- the general economic insecurity experienced by young refugees.

The estimated high unemployment rate of young refugees suggests their disadvantaged position in the labour market is maintained despite higher than

average levels of educational achievement for some groups. First-generation migrants and, to a greater extent, second-generation migrants achieve, on average, higher educational levels than other young people (as measured by high school completion rates and post-secondary qualifications). While it has been suggested that immigrants eventually catch up and even surpass other young Australians in terms of their labour market performance (Flatau & Hemmings 1991), the problem of low participation and high unemployment during settlement and the early post-settlement period presents considerable difficulties.

*The worst thing about being in Australia is that I do not have a job. Being jobless is the worst* (Sudanese refugee, male, aged 22).

Like other young people, young refugees are often willing to accept low-skill and low-paid work that does not require a high level of English language proficiency. Many perceive English to be the difference between having and not having a job.

*The worst thing for me is that I can't find a job, but that does not apply to Australian people who speak English very well* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).

The lack of local work experience or the lack of documentation of previous work experience (especially references) makes it difficult for young refugees to compete in the labour market.

*No-one knows how to get a job interview. If you are asked if you have work experience, you say no. Then, the employer says, 'I'm sorry. I can't help you'. Employers want someone with work experience. I was working about one year in Bosnia in a pizza shop. I tell the employers that, but I don't have any proof that I was working there and so they don't believe me. They say, 'Anybody could say that they were working like that. You must have proof'* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

Young people who have formal qualifications from another country, but cannot get them recognised in Australia, encounter similar problems.

*My qualifications are not recognised here. I must either go to school and retrain or work for six months without pay* (Croatian nurse, aged 25).

Young refugees seem constantly mindful of their marginal and tenuous position in the labour market. Some are frustrated by their dependence on the good will of others.

*I want to go to TAFE and learn painting, but I have not got an employer to give me an apprenticeship. I have to find an employer. That's the problem. Whatever you want to do, you must have somebody to help* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).

*The boss gets a bit cranky sometimes and screams. She wants to see how I react to that, so I am not going to start talking back to her. I would get fired in a flash. And there would be someone ready and waiting to take my job* (Bosnian, male, aged 17).

Despite the barriers in their pathways to employment, most young refugees seem to retain high hopes and expectations of a bright future. This is encouraging because work in Australia has important symbolic values, helping us to feel worthy, and enabling us to participate in society.

*The best thing about Australia is the opportunity to have a job* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 15).

## Education, training and English language needs

*School is the most important thing (in life). It seems you have to finish school before you can do anything* (Bosnian family reunion entrant, male, aged 17).

While the key objective measure of adaptation for adult migrants has been the ability to hold a job, for young people it is adaptation within the school environment (DeVoe 1994). In general, young refugees in Australia are committed to their education and grateful for the opportunities Australia has to offer.

*The best thing about Australia is the opportunity for education* (Sudanese refugee, aged 22).

However, taking advantage of the opportunities for an education can be a problem, because young refugees need English language skills in order to progress effectively through the educational system. Theorists and young people alike identify language as the key for refugee access to programs and services and for effective settlement more generally. Canadian experience suggests that young refugees who do not have proficiency in English are less likely to be able to access appropriate supports and, where they do seek support services, are more likely to terminate contact with the service prematurely or experience an unsatisfactory outcome (Report of the Canadian Task Force on

Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees 1988).

*Language is the most central, pivotal element to being Australian. Language alone can keep you from doing something* (Bosnian refugee aged 22).

*Whenever immigrant disadvantage and social mobility are discussed, language must be seen as the key factor and the ultimate gate-keeping mechanism, and not merely another important variable* (Cahill & Ewen 1987, p.46).

*Without language, one can never truly enter a culture* (Report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrant and Refugees 1988, p.23).

Just less than one-third of students (30%) attending English language schools have literacy problems. According to a 1995 study of students in Victorian English Language Centres, 9% were not literate in any language and more than one fifth (22%) were only semiliterate in any language (see Appendix 2 for details of this study). A further 3% of students had no experience of school and a quarter (25%) suffered a disruption of three or more years to their schooling. Young people from refugee backgrounds were consistently identified among those with the most severe disruptions to their schooling.

*I think I must go to school. I don't have a choice, even if it is hard* (Vietnamese family reunion entrant, female, aged 18).

Young refugees are provided with an opportunity to learn English before entering mainstream education, although in Queensland, tuition in English as a Second Language is offered concurrently with mainstream education. The transition from specialist language tuition into mainstream education can be very difficult for many young refugees. In particular, language skills may not be sufficiently developed, or school placements ill-considered (Hepperlin 1991). Young refugees are often confused and less supported in the transition than they need to be.

*I thought I was not allowed to go to high school, only TAFE. That's what I was told in Melbourne. But in Queensland, the people at TAFE started to ask me why I did not go to high school, so my brother asked the teachers if I could come here and they said yes* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

Once in mainstream education, significant differences between Australian schools and schools in the country of origin become apparent. In Australia, a competency-based curriculum is now the norm, following a series of major reports on the provision of education and training (Mayer 1992; Finn 1991; Carmichael 1991). However, Kalantzis (1992) has argued that the competency-based approach may not suit young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. She believes that competency-based education involves a new form of streaming, in which young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds are likely to be disadvantaged by the formal assessments and test-driven assessment of competency. In practice, it seems that young people from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to choose science and mathematics subjects, perhaps because they perceive that these subjects do not require high levels of English proficiency (Myhill, Derriman & Mulligan 1994).

*I think school is good because you can choose your subjects. In my country, I had to do compulsory subjects, about 15 subjects were compulsory. Too many subjects. Here, it's better because you can choose your subjects and you only learn the subjects that you need* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

The impact of school disciplinary practices on young refugees has been identified as another barrier limiting the adaptation of young refugees to the school environment. The issue of racism in schools is a criticism that has been leveled in the past (PePua 1996) and it is conceivable that misunderstanding of young refugees' behaviour in school, resulting from low levels of cultural awareness, can cause inappropriate disciplinary action.

Cahill and Ewen (1987) suggest that young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are generally dissatisfied with career education in the Australian context. This is supported by evidence from this project.

*We are not told how long it will take to finish each level of the certificate. And some courses you have to pay, some you don't, but I just don't get it somehow. I just want to try and make plans about when I might be able to start and do certain things* (Bosnian refugee, aged 22).

*I would be interested in finding out more about educational possibilities related to nursing. I have no idea where I can ask that. Shall I go to the hospital and ask?* (Croatian migrant, aged 25)

School is an important preoccupation for both young refugees and their families. Failure at school can exacerbate a young refugee's sense of failing the family. Conversely, success at school and dedication to school work at the expense of peer activities can lead to ostracism. Refugee young people from some cultural backgrounds are under considerable pressure to perform well at school. Lao parents, for example, have been reported as encouraging their children to perceive their education as their vocation in life, and commonly students are excused from a range of other family or household duties in order to complete homework (Ngaosyvathn 1993). Similarly, Loh (1985) reported the difficulties that young Vietnamese people face in meeting family expectations. In this context, young people are often dissatisfied with the educational system because they believe it lacks the direction and discipline needed to help them meet family expectations. Attempts to live up to family or personal expectations of high educational achievement may be a source of frustration and contribute to poor concentration, under-achievement, school non-attendance or withdrawal and depression. At the same time, family encouragement is a key factor in motivating and enabling success.

## Health needs

*The specific health needs of refugees may be overlooked ... during the resettlement process when other problems such as language learning, housing, financial security and education may take precedence ...* (Refugee Resettlement Working Group 1994, p.119)

The psychological well-being and physical health of young refugees is an area of particular concern. Key health issues include torture and trauma experiences, the subsequent risk of depression or even suicide, the use of alcohol and other drugs, sexual health and dental health.

The serious physical and psychological ramifications of having experienced torture and trauma can impede and, in some cases, even prevent a young person's successful transition to independence. Some young people from refugee backgrounds may experience depression and show suicidal tendencies. The broader range of psychological difficulties experienced by young refugees includes general anxiety, the re-living of trauma, sleeping difficulties and withdrawal (Aristotle 1997). Depression and anxiety associated with trauma is exacerbated by the ongoing sense of loss

and grief that many young refugees experience, having left behind their homeland, their friends and other family members.

Generally, young refugees who have experienced torture have a very high risk of mental disorder (Luntz 1998; NSW Department of Health 1997; Minas et al. 1996). However, the prevalence of disorders generally declines over time with effective settlement (Krupinski & Burrows 1986), and the majority of young refugees have neither serious nor long-lasting difficulties (Hepperlin 1991). Some survivors of torture and trauma are formally diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (a diagnostic category of Western psychiatry). Access to specialised and culturally appropriate support to recover from these experiences, especially in the early stages of settlement, is a priority need of refugee young people.

Young refugees are likely to suffer from poor physical health, especially if they have spent time in refugee camps or similarly impoverished situations where they have been exposed to climate extremes, poor sanitation and inadequate nutrition. Poor physical health makes the challenges of settlement more difficult to cope with, and may lead to chronic health problems in the future.

There is widespread community concern about young people's involvement with drugs, and this has often focused on certain subgroups of young people such as Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao youth. Despite popular perceptions, the incidence of illegal drug use among young people from non-Anglo-Australian migrant communities appears on the whole to be lower than among Anglo-Australian youth (Cahill & Ewen 1987). However, there is evidence of higher incidence in some ethnic communities. Belonging to an ethnic subculture may be a protective factor, but if illicit drug use spreads, the incidence may rise alarmingly within the subgroup and be harder to address. Many of the young people interviewed for this study were clearly opposed to the use of alcohol and other drugs.

*In Australia, I think that people like to drink. On Friday nights, I go to the city and I see many drunk young people. Maybe they like to do that, but I don't like it* (Bosnian refugee, aged 18).

*The worst thing about Australia is when I see people my own age taking drugs, smoking and stuff* (Bosnian refugee, aged 15).

Sexual health for young refugees is an overlooked need. The disruption and uncertainties in the lives of

young refugees can cause confusion about sexual behaviour (Waszak & Tucker 1995). Young refugee women need information and support to address their sexual health needs, as often they have experienced or witnessed sexual violence. Early pregnancy, prenatal care, sexual violence, sexually transmitted diseases and female genital mutilation are pressing and controversial concerns, which cannot be addressed effectively without consideration of the young person's family context. Families from different cultural backgrounds can have quite different standards for meeting the sexual health needs of their children. Sometimes, families have only poor knowledge about complex or controversial sexual matters or are unwilling to provide information to their children. For example, in a 1995 survey, about 60% of Laotian parents in Australia said that young people should not be told about intercourse, pregnancy and family planning (Ngaosyathn 1993). Balancing the needs of families and young people involves tensions and dilemmas that require considerable professional skill and cultural sensitivity.

## *Justice and law*

*Unfortunately, I have met many police officers in Australia (Young Bosnian man, aged 17).*

Key legal and justice issues affecting young refugees include: the increasing representation of some ethnic groups in the prison population and in the juvenile justice system; poor relationships with the police and discriminatory treatment; misleading media portrayals of gang involvement; and, finally, a low level of understanding of Australian law.

Contrary to common perceptions, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have generally been under-represented in the prison population and the juvenile justice system. Easta's important 1989 study of young Vietnamese people in Australia showed that this group had a significantly lower crime rate than their non-Vietnamese counterparts. Vietnamese youth had half the rate of proven offences for minors; half the rate of general offences for 18- to 24-year-olds; one-quarter of the drink driving offences, and one-tenth the level of drug offences. Overturning another common preconception, Easta found that young people under the age of 18 entering Australia as humanitarian migrants unaccompanied by parents or close family, had a lower rate of offending than other Vietnamese young people.

More recent studies suggest that this situation is changing. Overall, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are still under-represented in the juvenile justice system, but certain ethnic groups are now over-represented, including some groups comprised largely of refugees. The number of young Indochinese offenders in juvenile detention centres in New South Wales almost doubled between 1991 and 1992 (Keys Young 1997). By 1993 about 12% of all young people remanded and 9% of those sentenced to a juvenile justice centre in New South Wales were Indochinese yet in the same year Indochinese young people comprised only 1.8% of the state's population. Thus, in some states at least, young people from Vietnamese backgrounds are now over-represented in the juvenile justice system. They also tend to have longer detention periods than Australian-born offenders, which may be associated with the nature of offences they are likely to commit (Cain 1993). Indochinese young offenders have the highest level of drug offences of any group in custody.

Despite this information, the overall picture of refugee crime is far from clear. Data on the ethnicity of young offenders is limited and in any case the relationship between marginalisation and over-representation in criminal statistics is complex. Over-representation may be indicative of either actual offending patterns or particular policing practices or perhaps a combination of these factors (Cunneen 1995).

Relationships between refugee young people and police are less than satisfactory for a number of reasons. In their country of origin, young people's experience of police and the military tended to be as persecutors and torturers, not as protectors. Deliberate effort is therefore required to establish mutual trust and understanding between refugee young people and Australian police. This extra effort does not appear as yet to have been made. The Ethnic Communities Council of NSW, the Youth Justice Coalition, the federal Race Discrimination Commission and the NSW Ombudsman have all drawn attention to potential discriminatory policing practices in recent years. The Youth Justice Coalition found that young people from Asian backgrounds are twice as likely to be searched, four times more likely to be arrested, and three times more likely to be injured during their contact with police than people describing themselves as from an Australian background (Youth Justice Coalition 1994, in Hunt 1997).

*It is usual in every country for the police to stop and check people. I think I have been stopped about 20 times. They stop me to check if I am doing something wrong. I have met many police officers in Australia (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19, nine months in Australia).*

*The police don't like to see young people on the street ... straight away they get out of their cars and come up to you and start asking you questions to check and see if you have any drugs or weapons (Bosnian, male, aged 17).*

The Australian Law Reform Commission and the NSW Ombudsman's Office have expressed concerns about the extent to which media stereotypes of young people from ethnic minority groups influence the type of treatment they receive in the criminal justice system. A common perception perpetuated by the media is that refugees are involved in gangs, use drugs and generally threaten peace and order (PePua 1996). Considerable media attention has focused on young Vietnamese men, notably in the inner west of Sydney but also in a number of suburbs across Melbourne. Everyday youth behaviour is often falsely represented as gang activity and the media is often too quick to label conflict as 'inter-ethnic violence'.

Developing an awareness of the law is an ongoing process, and there are limited opportunities for new arrivals to find out about laws that are especially relevant to them. Learning the ropes requires an advanced level of cultural literacy, knowledge of English and access to information.

*I wish I could know more about the laws in Australia. I get tickets from the police a few times for doing things that I could do in my country, but I can't do them here. Nobody asks me if I knew these things. Like drinking in a public place. Like having a bottle of beer in a car. Like not wearing a seat belt. We don't have seatbelts in Europe. There are lots of things that I can't do here, but I can't remember all of them (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).*

A relatively small number of young refugees get into trouble with the law. A broader concern relates to young people's knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as citizens or residents, and their capacity to participate in political processes. Cahill and Ewen (1987) discovered that young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were fairly ignorant about political processes in Australia. However, the take-up rates for citizenship are higher

among young refugees than among other types of migrants to Australia. Our research is consistent with these findings. Many of the young people interviewed expressed enthusiasm and impatience to become eligible for citizenship. Others admired what they perceived as a focus on human rights in legislation and in policy and practice throughout Australia.

*What I like is that women have rights in Australia. You can get police intervention here and I like that. I think Australian law is better than Croatian law, although I only know a little bit about the law here (Croatian migrant, aged 25).*

Although seemingly aware of their rights, some felt less able to exercise them.

*In Africa, men beat their wives. Dad used to beat my step-mum. And here, he beat her and she called the police. When Dad hits me, I don't call the police. I threatened to call them, but I think it's best just to leave (Eritrean refugee, female aged 18).*

Finally, the comments of an Algerian refugee are telling. He advises his family to break Australian and international laws in order to secure their right to be free from persecution in Algeria.

*I advise my brothers in Algeria to go to Bangkok to buy a passport and come here illegally. It is the only alternative. I tell them to do what I have done and speak the truth (Algerian young man, aged 24).*

## *Housing needs and homelessness*

Documentation of what happens to young refugees and their families after they leave the accommodation arranged by the Department of Immigration (see Chapter 5) is patchy. Previous reports suggest that young refugees may experience a high incidence of homelessness, yet remain relatively invisible to accommodation providers (PePua 1996; Frederico, Picton and Cooper 1996). Wallace (1990) suggests that 'homelessness' takes the form of gross over-crowding in suburban or inner-city houses.

*I moved out because dad hit me. I have left home before. I lived with my friend for a while, But my dad said, 'Come back. This, this and this'. And he was by himself. So I went back. But the same things kept happening (Eritrean refugee, female, aged 18).*

Unpublished findings from the national census of homeless school students conducted by MacKenzie and Chamberlain in 1994 suggest that young people from refugee backgrounds are over-represented among homeless school students. The census found that 3.4% of a total of 11,000 homeless school students were from refugee backgrounds. Only 15 schools reported more than five homeless young refugees. However, about 70%, or 260 young homeless refugees in total, were attending 77 relatively high-need schools. Overall, the census achieved a 99% response rate, but it is probable that homelessness among refugees was under-reported, partly because schools are not necessarily aware of the refugee status (or otherwise) of their students.

A second study undertaken as part of this project attempted to estimate the extent of homelessness among young refugees by a survey of English Language Centres (ELCs) and Adult Migrant English Programs (AMEPs) throughout Australia. An operational definition of homelessness was developed that took into account the temporary nature of housing of young refugees and their families during settlement.<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire asked teachers to make a judgement about the living and accommodation arrangements of refugee students and to provide demographic information on all students aged between 12 and 25 years. Seventy-two English Language Centres based in secondary schools, along with 90 Adult Migrant English Programs received the survey questionnaire. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of secondary schools but only half (50%) of the AMEPs responded.

Of the 1,269 refugee students attending English classes, 201 (16%) were found to be either already homeless or marginally housed. Those who were actively homeless at the time of the survey numbered 78 (6%). Just under half (33) of these young people were staying temporarily with friends or relatives as they were unable to live with their family, and of the remainder, most (34) had over-stayed in temporary accommodation with a smaller number (11) in long-term supported accommodation or private boarding houses. In addition, 123 young people were marginally housed, that is, living in unsafe, unhygienic or overcrowded housing without the conditions of a 'home'. Many English Language Centres appeared to have difficulty identifying the accommodation arrangements of their students and consequently these figures under-estimate the extent of homelessness.

*My grandmother kicked me out after two months because another family from Serbia came here. She gave me three days notice. I went to stay with a friend in his flat (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).*

A third source of data on homelessness is information on clients of the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. It is difficult to identify refugees among SAAP clients, because no record is kept of visa classification. Young people from typical refugee-producing countries in SAAP services numbered about 80 to 100. The supports requested most commonly by this group were for assistance to obtain a government benefit or independent housing, advocacy, assistance with legal issues or court support, and information on health or medical services. This finding is consistent with the understanding that refugees have multiple and complex needs. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were under-represented among service users requesting drug and alcohol support or rehabilitation.

Although no single source of data is definitive, taken together the incidence of homelessness among young refugees can be estimated to be significantly higher than for young people in general. The estimated number of homeless young refugees is at least 500 Australia-wide and more probably closer to 800.

An estimate of the level of risk can be made by comparing the extent of homelessness in the population of young refugees with that for the student population as a whole. The national census of homeless school students enumerated some 7,700 homeless students in a school population of about two million. If our estimates are correct, and there are between 500 and 800 homeless young refugees in a population of 16,000 to 20,000, the risk of homelessness is at least *six to 10 times higher* for young refugees.

The higher risk of homelessness among young refugees does not translate into proportionately greater use of services, indeed the reverse appears to be true. Although people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds constitute 13% of the total population, they constitute only 9% of SAAP clients, or 6% of young people using SAAP youth services (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1997). Some authors have suggested that young refugees lack information about relevant housing services and, when they do learn to access these services, they find that the availability, location and form of emergency housing do not match their cultural preferences. This may

**Table 6: Evidence of young refugee homelessness**

Source	Data	Estimate
1998 Survey of English Language Centres (ELCs) 12- to 18-year-olds	200 homeless young refugees in 37 ELCs (85% response rate)	200 in ELCs
1996–97 SAAP data 15- to 24-year-olds Unemployed and at school	6% of young people using SAAP youth services 9% of all SAAP service users	80 in SAAP services at any point in time
1994 National census of homeless school students	260 in 77 high-need schools	Estimated 800 in all schools

partially explain the under-use of these services by refugees (Francis 1996).

Homelessness represents one extreme in a range of housing-related problems commonly encountered by young refugees and their families. These problems include lack of access to public housing, overcrowded accommodation and frequent moves, inappropriateness of mainstream accommodation options and racial discrimination from real estate agents.

*I can't study at my mum's house. My little brother and sister make too much noise (Vietnamese family reunion entrant, living independently, female, aged 18).*

Access to public housing is particularly limited. Antonios (1994) expressed concerns about the lack of priority for public housing given to refugee and humanitarian settlers under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, especially in the face of clear evidence of their high needs. Refugees are usually ineligible for priority housing, because their experiences of trauma have not occurred in Australia. Possibly due to the long waiting periods or because of lack of information about alternative methods for accessing services, less than 10% of refugees access public housing in the first 18 months of settlement. The majority of refugees – the largest proportion of any visa category – rent on the private market (Campbell 1997).

*We pay rent for our house. We found out about this house in the newspaper. We have submitted papers to the Housing Commission, but we have to wait, I don't know, maybe five years before we can get a house from the Housing Commission (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).*

Renting on the private market has its own set of problems. Refugee families have larger households than the Australian average, but have fewer bedrooms per person than other migrants. They also move house more often than other migrants, especially during the first six months of settlement (Campbell 1997). This may be because the size and layout of Australian houses is not suitable for very large families, who may also have strong religious or cultural beliefs about how space should be configured. Moving is not easy, even for those in the community who are well-resourced. For the initial move from arrival accommodation, household goods must be acquired and establishment costs met. The money required for bond and rent in advance is substantial. Although some assistance is available for humanitarian entrants, many refugees appear to be unaware of this support. Further, refugee families often do not have their own transport, so arranging times to inspect potential properties can be very difficult, and getting there a time-consuming matter. The lack of rental references in Australia may also result in refugees being accorded a low priority by real estate agents, who may assume that refugee families are high-risk tenants. Francis argues that this assumption is generally false and that there is a very low rate of default on rental payments (1996, p.53).

## Income needs

The young people interviewed appeared very grateful for the income support they received in Australia, whether for themselves or for their families. Most were reliant on this support for their day-to-day living. They tended to compare their financial

situation in Australia to the situation they faced in their home countries.

*In my country, if you don't work, you have nothing, you might die. You might have to destroy a shop just to eat. Here, you have 'dole'. They care about you* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).

Despite widespread relief and gratitude, many young refugees were anxious about managing their poverty in Australia. Newly arrived immigrants do adjust their expectations according to the norms of their new country.

*I have money from Centrelink, but it is nothing. Half of my money goes on the flat and energy. I have been here 10 months and I don't even have a bed. I sleep on the floor. It's wrong* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).

Sharing with others in order to save expenses is common.

*I stay with my friend because I think I can save some money. I'd love to be myself, but without money, I can't do it* (Eritrean refugee, female, aged 18).

Some young people were quite innovative in organising efficient use of resources to assist their friends and family.

*I have no money because I go to school and learn English. My flat mate is working. He knows nothing*

*about English but he has money. So we are a combination. I go with him to talk to a girl or something and he buys me a drink* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 23).

Cultural norms about sharing resources and access to social support networks can reinforce strategies for coping with poverty.

*My friend is paying for everything. He knows I will pay him back when I get the money. In Africa, these things don't matter. Everything is shared. We don't say, this is mine, this is yours* (Eritrean refugee, female, 18 years).

However, the poverty-related frustrations that many of the young people felt were exacerbated by difficulties in making sense of the Australian income support system. Problems with Centrelink and general confusion about entitlements were common.

*I don't have Austudy yet. I think it will all be fixed soon, but I don't know how much money I will get* (Eritrean refugee, female, 18 years).

*I don't understand anything about Centrelink. It's so complicated and it seems to change every day* (Bosnian refugee, aged 22).

*Centrelink causes me problems, because I want to study* (Croatian migrant, aged 25).

### Elsa's story

*Elsa's partner, who had convention refugee status, found work straight away. It was a 'bad job' because the hours were long and it was exhausting work. Ultimately, this job prevented him from learning English. The money from Centrelink 'was not enough for him', and he wanted to ring his partner who had resettled in a different country, and sponsor her to Australia. He saved the money he required to sponsor his partner, but lost his job. Now they are both starting again, neither has money because it was all spent on financing their reunion. As a sponsored arrival, she is not eligible for the full range of social support services available to refugee entrants who have similar needs and a similar story; and he, with no English, no job and little knowledge of existing services, feels understandably stressed. For this young couple the price of being together is exceedingly high.*

Income support arrangements in Australia (administered by Centrelink) provide an opportunity for young refugees to adjust to a new life. Such supports are a temporary measure, valid until such time as the young person can establish financial independence. The risks of premature financial independence, however, are illustrated in the story of one young woman who recently migrated to Australia.

Young people from refugee backgrounds who entered Australia under the Family Stream of the Migration Program are reliant on their sponsors for financial support. They are not eligible for income support in the first two years of residency, although in exceptional circumstances may be given Special Benefit. Young refugees living in Australia under a temporary protection visa remain ineligible for income support benefits, and rely on voluntary and community organisations for financial support. These issues are addressed more fully in Chapter 5.

## *Psycho-social needs*

There are several important sources of psycho-social support for young refugees to help them manage conflicting cultural allegiances, develop literacy in both (or several) cultures and overcome feelings of marginalisation, loneliness, hopelessness or low self-esteem. Support comes from family and friends, ethno-cultural community groups and, usually in the last instance, from social service agencies. The absence or failure of any of these supports can seriously lessen the young person's capacity to become independent and their opportunities for developing cultural literacy.

## *Young refugees and their families*

*Even an absent family has a profound effect on a refugee young person* (Refugee Resettlement Working Group 1994, p.74).

Young people need to make family connections. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Young people who have been separated from their families are in a situation of double jeopardy: they are bereft of potentially important sources of support and worried about the welfare of family members left behind.

*I don't have anyone here. That's the thing I don't like about Australia. That's my problem. I am lonely* (Croatian, female, aged 25).

*The worst thing about being in Australia is being alone and living alone* (Algerian refugee, male, aged 24).

Even when young refugees do have family in Australia, they and their families will remain anxious about relatives and friends left behind. Letters and telephone calls to remaining relatives are central to enable continuity of identity and relationships. However, the costs of international telephone calls can be prohibitive, and suitable phone facilities are not always found in supported accommodation. Further, not all refugee young people have the skills and confidence to use telephone handsets or public telephones, and limited literacy in the first language can make letter writing difficult.

Young people without family or with only a few family members in Australia may feel the weight of expectation to become educated, establish themselves in a good job, supplement family income (often by sending money overseas) and sponsor remaining relatives for resettlement in the new country.

*It is my responsibility to get a good education so I can try to help my father in the future. At the moment, I can't help him* (Sudanese humanitarian entrant, aged 22).

Sponsoring relatives to Australia is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, many refugee people define family differently to Anglo-Australians. They may, for example, have formed deeply meaningful relationships with parent surrogates upon separation from their parents or they may wish to sponsor distant, yet important family members not eligible under migration policy.

In the event that a young refugee does become reunited with a parent in Australia, life does not necessarily improve straight away. The arrival of a parent may lead to power conflicts between the newly arrived parents and the relatively established young person. Reunion with a parent can in effect mean a second separation, this time from parent surrogates and alternative homes. This can create significant psychological distress.

For young refugees joining established family members in Australia, the situation is not necessarily any easier. Some carers may see their obligation to the extended family cease once a child or young person is brought to Australia. Families may have a limited capacity to support the young people they sponsor. Alternatively there may be a breakdown in family relationships resulting in the young person being asked to

leave. This is not necessarily a sign of dysfunctional family behaviour but may sometimes simply reflect different cultural practices. For example, a shame-based rather than guilt-based culture is more likely to use excommunication as a strategy for ensuring cultural maintenance and as a response to breaches of community trust. This strategy can strengthen the capacity of members of an ethnic community to support each other, but Anglo-Australians tend to find the use of shame strategies harsh in comparison to the more familiar strategy of encouraging personal guilt.

In addition to such intercultural value tensions, intergenerational conflicts can also affect young refugees whether or not they arrived in Australia with their families. Parents and caregivers sometimes interpret English language acquisition as abandonment of traditional culture and values. Refugee young people often struggle to find a balance of allegiance to the traditions and heritage of their culture of origin and those of the new host culture. The risk is that if they do not conform to cultural traditions, then they may become culturally alienated at a time in life when family and community supports are particularly valuable.

*My mum only has us, and we only have her* (Bosnian, male, aged 17).

Some refugee young people can resent their cultural obligation to follow a family or traditional custom that is unacceptable in Western society. Sometimes apparently simple issues such as wearing a certain style of clothing, participating in swimming events at school, attending camps or otherwise participating in 'normal school life' can prove difficult. Young people may in principle have the right to make informed decisions about what they would like to do; however, the risk of excommunication from the family and ethnic community is part of the information that must be taken into account before a decision is reached. These kinds of issues can be very stressful and their resolution requires well-developed inter-cultural life skills.

Parental insecurities about the 'Westernisation' of their children are similarly understandable. Parents fear losing their children as well as their history and traditions. Aspects of the home culture can be exaggerated (and become more rigid) in the desperation to preserve and entrench formerly taken-for-granted cultural practices. Parental distress has been shown to be a significant factor affecting the psychological well-being of refugee young people (Mghir et al. 1995).

Parents may rely on their children to act as interpreters or cultural mediators, thus reversing roles and more traditional power structures within families. Parents can find this experience frustrating and humiliating, and it can be confusing for young people too.

*The only thing I hate about Australia is that I have to be responsible for social security liaison, housing commission liaison, bills for telephone, everything. I fill out all the forms on behalf of my family, because I speak the best English* (Bosnian refugee, male, aged 19).

Status dislocation for parents and caregivers may pose further problems for refugee young people. Adults, who remain unemployed or are unable to find work commensurate with their level of skill and education can become angry or depressed. They can inadvertently place excessive demands on the young people in the family to make up for loss of status.

*My father expects me to finish high school and go on to further study* (Bosnian refugee, aged 18).

*I had a very comfortable and easy life in Iraq. Here, everything is changed and we have to start again from the beginning, from zero* (Iraqi refugee, aged 20).

Intensive support is required for young people who are not coping with their families. Further, many refugee families and their communities need assistance to know how to help their apparently deviant young people and to recognise that their own preferred strategies for dealing with problems may not be understood sympathetically by other ethnic groups. Such support must be offered with considerable sensitivity. There is little concept of preventive parenting in some ethnic subcultures. Accordingly, when this results in family breakup or the young person fleeing from home, the crisis situation is usually traumatic in nature and very difficult to resolve (Cahill & Ewen 1987, p.30)

Despite all the problems of immigrant adjustment, migrant families are generally characterised by stability and solidarity, and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds tend to have considerable empathy for their parents' situation and aspirations (Cahill & Ewen 1987, p.26). Young people who settle in Australia without immediate family or significant adults are likely to be particularly disadvantaged as they attempt to grapple with the challenges presented by growing up in an alien culture.

## Ethno-cultural community groups

Many Australians might take for granted a sense of community and the need for group affiliation. Most people benefit immeasurably from the support of family and friends with whom they feel comfortable.

*The worst thing is when you don't have any friends. No-one to share with, no-one to talk to. When you have to keep everything to yourself and you don't know what to do (Eritrean refugee, female, 18 years).*

Refugee young people from small, newly arrived ethnic communities may have limited access to such support, even though they may have family members with them. Small ethnic communities find it hard to compete for services with those who are better established and have more resources (Jupp, McRobbie & York 1991). Refugees often prefer to use services provided by workers who speak their language and share their culture. However, even if workers of the same cultural background can be found, they tend to be generalist workers and consequently difficulties arise when specialist services are required. The mainstream and ethno-specific service sectors must cooperate closely, in recognition of their complementarity.

Connection to religious communities can be particularly important for young people who are without ethno-specific support. Refugees may feel more comfortable getting help from churches than from mainstream social support services, because of a cultural precedent. For example, Coventry (1998, p.48) notes that members of the former Yugoslav community in Melbourne believed that 'churches helped the most when they first arrived in Australia'.

The support of and sense of belonging to ethnic or cultural groups is likely to be a key factor in a young person's adjustment and transition to independence, both within and outside the family context. Yet not all new arrivals enjoy this support even where they share an ethnic background with relatively large migrant communities in Australia. Of particular concern is the likelihood that government policy is working to divide rather than unite particular ethnic communities in response to new refugee arrivals. Amnesty International Australia, along with other human rights advocates, has argued that the current linkage of decision-making on allocation of visa grants under the offshore and onshore components of the Humanitarian Program should be broken, in part, because of the hostility it provokes against asylum seekers (onshore applicants). As a result of this policy, and the rhetoric through

which it is commonly presented, asylum seekers are positioned as unworthy 'queue jumpers' taking places that would otherwise be filled by 'genuine refugees' who apply through the 'proper' channels overseas. As pointed out by the Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace, this policy has tended to play on tensions within settler groups from refugee-producing countries whose own relatives may be applying for permanent residency under the family reunion provision of the offshore Special Humanitarian program.<sup>3</sup>

## Social service agencies

*Services are organised in a way that makes sense for a stable society but not for newcomers, whose needs tend to be interdependent and overlapping (Report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees 1988, p.51).*

Historically, refugee people have tended to underutilise existing social services or else drop out of these services prematurely (Hepperlin 1991, p.130). Seeto (1991) reported that fewer than 20% of mainstream services surveyed in south-east Queensland had provided services to more than five young people from non-English speaking backgrounds. (More than three-quarters of services surveyed had inadequate or no data on the ethnicity of service users.) Further, Hughes and Gatbonton (1994) reported that 30% of services surveyed had no contact with any young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the previous three months.

Refugee young people are generally unaware of the supports that are available to them. This low level of awareness tends to be more pronounced where familial or ethnic community connections and networks are underdeveloped. Underutilisation may also be indicative of the cultural inappropriateness of services or service delivery. A further difficulty is that not all people from refugee backgrounds who need services are eligible to apply. In general terms, eligibility for mainstream social services is dependent on having permanent residence status. Groups of young refugees likely to be particularly disadvantaged by existing eligibility criteria include asylum seekers, temporary protection visa holders, and entrants under the Family Stream of the Migration Program whose sponsorship relationships have broken down. The nature of this disadvantage is explained more fully in Chapter 5.

## Summary

This chapter has brought together existing research and insights derived from interviews and consultation to present an overview of the needs of young refugees. It describes the difficulties for young refugees inherent in managing the processes of settlement and identity achievement simultaneously, particularly in a societal context in which the positive messages of multiculturalism are constantly undermined by racist attitudes and practices. The needs of young refugees are diverse, complex and significant, and they tend to compound each other. Young refugees are likely to suffer considerable socioeconomic disadvantage in the short term, and there is a particularly high risk of homelessness among refugee young people, this being some six to 10

times greater than for school students generally. At the same time, the resilience of young refugees and their commitment to Australia and making the best of their new lives must be emphasised. Apart from the personal and cultural resilience which young people bring to bear, family and ethno-cultural communities can be extremely important sources of support. Family is identified as central to young refugees as they adjust to their new lives, generally as a source of strength but also of potential conflict. Culturally sensitive support is critical in instances where family relations begin to break down. Young people who do not have family will be particularly reliant on government supports. The next chapter reviews the capacity of existing federal government programs and services to meet the needs of young refugees.

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- 1 Amnesty International Australia argues: 'The fact that "boat people" pay people smugglers, is a reflection of their circumstances, not their financial status. Indeed, money has absolutely no bearing on the presence or otherwise of a well-founded fear of persecution. One does not have to be poor (or uneducated, or down-trodden) to be a refugee.' See Amnesty International Australia, *Factsheet 12 – People Smuggling – the untold story*, viewed July 2001, <<http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/ref-fact12.html>>
  - 2 Refer to Appendix 3 for this definition, and to Appendix 8 for a copy of the survey questionnaire.
  - 3 See Amnesty International Australia 2001, *Factsheet 01, Question and Answer*, viewed July 2001, <<http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/ref-fact01.html>> Several other fact sheets assessing Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees can be found on the Amnesty web site at: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/>

# Support for young refugees 5



This chapter examines the capacity of federal government agencies to address the needs of young refugees, particularly where family supports are inadequate or not available. The Access and Equity Strategy, the National Integrated Settlement Strategy and particularly the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy represent the current policy context for ensuring the needs of young refugees are addressed. The challenges faced by young refugees during resettlement give rise to complex support needs that cross several government portfolios. This chapter provides a brief overview of programs and services within key federal departments that can potentially assist young refugees. The chapter closes with a critical review of current federal policies, programs and services drawing on the ideas put forward by 17 'key informants' (see Appendix 6). First, we discuss the nature and extent of Australia's commitment to refugees.

## *The commitment to refugees in Australia*

*On a per capita basis, Australia has accepted more refugees than any other major immigration destination (Iredale & D'Arcy 1992, p.xii).*

*Australia's ratio of refugees to total population is low (Moss 1993, p.177).*

Over the last few years, Australia's commitment to refugees has become an issue of public controversy, tending to polarise the community into those who feel Australia is too generous and those who feel it is not generous enough. But, as the two quotations above suggest, the facts sometimes appear contradictory.

Australia has a long history of accepting and supporting refugees, beginning with the wave of post Second World War immigration. Iredale and D'Arcy (1992) argue that Australia's record of providing support to refugees is outstanding. Their assessment relies largely on what they see as the relatively high quality of Australia's resettlement programs. Countries like Germany and Britain do not have well-developed refugee resettlement programs, despite housing substantial numbers of refugees. The lack of formal acknowledgment and planning for the presence of refugees in these countries makes it difficult to compare their response to that of Australia.

Over the 17-year period from 1975 to 1992, Australia formally accepted for resettlement one refugee for every 86 persons in Australia. This is the third-highest rate in the world after Sweden and Canada (although there are only 10 Western countries that regularly accept refugees for permanent settlement (Victory 1995)). Moss's conflicting appraisal of Australia's commitment arises from a comparison of Australia's intake of refugees with that of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Malawi, Jordan, Armenia, Sudan and Pakistan. In some of these territo-

ries and countries, refugees comprise up to one-tenth of the population, a considerably larger proportion than Australia's rate of one refugee per 86 persons (total population). However, these countries and territories are often adjacent to regions of civil war or famine, and people pour across national boundaries seeking safety and food. Australia is not usually a country of first asylum.

A second, more recent source of confusion surrounding Australia's degree of commitment to refugees relates to the different international standing of the offshore and onshore components of the Humanitarian Program (see Chapter 2) and the respective treatment of refugees who entered the country with and without valid documentation. The offshore program is seen as a 'positive and welcome initiative, one that Australia can be proud of' (Amnesty International Australia 2001). At the same time, Australia has recently been under scrutiny from international human rights organisations for failing to observe the UN Convention with respect to the treatment of refugees who come to Australia as asylum seekers. The UN Convention forbids refugees to be penalised as a result of their unlawful entry to a receiving nation.<sup>1</sup> For more than 50 years it has been acknowledged that people fleeing from persecution are often not in a position to obtain relevant documentation before departure. Amnesty International General Secretary Irene Khan visited Australia in March 2002 to draw attention to the human rights violations arising from mandatory detention of asylum seekers and from the terms and conditions conferred by the temporary protection visas allocated to proven refugees who arrived without authorisation. In response to common assertions by government regarding Australia's commitment to refugees she notes:

*Australian politicians speak of the human rights record of this country as 'second to none'. This is a country, known for its hospitality to refugees, with a good track record of receiving around 12,000 refugees a year. But I am afraid the image of Australia today is less of a carefree, sunburnt sporting nation, and more of the Tampa and its human cargo, of riots and protests at Woomera, of Australian-funded detention centres on the Pacific Islands ... [The Australian Government] needs to re-examine its policies on refugees and asylum seekers, both because of its obligation to uphold human rights of these people, and also because these policies may actually undermine, rather than promote, Australia's professed goals at home and abroad* (Irene Khan,

Secretary General, Amnesty International, Canberra, 5 March 2002).

Government policy regarding 'unauthorised' asylum seekers also has implications for the extent of commitment to people who have suffered 'gross violation of human rights in their country' and who apply for resettlement in Australia under the offshore humanitarian program. This is due to the linking of planning levels for the offshore and onshore components of the Humanitarian Program. The number of places made available for the offshore Special Humanitarian Program depends on the number of protection visas that has been granted to refugee applicants onshore. As noted in Chapter 2, the size of Australia's Special Humanitarian Program dropped by 30% in 1999–2000 following dramatic increases in the number of asylum seekers arriving by boat. The linking of offshore and onshore planning levels does not mean a reduction of Australia's overall humanitarian intake, indeed this policy is designed to ensure that intake remains at, or rather, within a certain level.<sup>2</sup> However, this raises the question of whether at times of increasing global demand for resettlement on humanitarian grounds, the size of Australia's intake of humanitarian settlers should increase rather than remain fixed at levels set under different conditions.

In the aftermath of the events of September 11, and in the context of dramatic increases in the numbers of unauthorised boat arrivals to Australia (particularly since 1999), migration policy has again become highly politicised. Bipartisan assertions regarding Australia's rights to protect its own borders have tended to displace political debate on the question of Australia's responsibilities in the global refugee crisis. There are justifiable concerns regarding the threat of terrorism and an ongoing need for Australia to make careful checks before allowing people into the community. However, there is a danger that policy regarding asylum seekers and unauthorised arrivals will be excessively dominated by the desire to create a deterrence for people smuggling to the detriment of humanitarian considerations and international obligations.

Nevertheless, both major political parties in Australia remain broadly committed to continuing an annual refugee and humanitarian intake. Coalition and ALP policy documents propose to maintain, support, review or upgrade the Humanitarian Program. Despite some political differences which appear to have widened following the election of the Howard Government for a third term in November 2001, it is

likely that refugee and humanitarian arrivals will continue at least at current levels and there is broad recognition that government should accept responsibility for supporting refugees.

## *The policy context for supporting young refugees*

Neither the Coalition nor the ALP identifies the special needs of young refugees in their policy documents. Current policy focuses on refugees as a general category or, in practice, on refugee families. Australia has not developed policy expressly responding to young refugees as a specific or 'special needs' group. Instead, there is an official policy of multiculturalism and two significant additional policy areas that establish a de facto framework in which the needs of young refugees might be met. The first of these additional policy areas includes access and equity commitments, and the second comprises the National Integrated Settlement Strategy and the closely related Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.

### *Access and Equity Strategy*

The 1985 Access and Equity Strategy is an inter-departmental framework that holds each federal department responsible for duly considering the needs of disadvantaged people in all their activities and programs. The 1992 Access and Equity Evaluation found that young people were inadequately targeted by access and equity plans and had been 'failed very considerably by the Commonwealth bureaucracy' (Cahill 1993). Since then, government departments have been required to account to Parliament annually against access and equity objectives. The Access and Equity Strategy is probably the most important tool for ensuring that the needs of young refugees are addressed in policy and planning initiatives undertaken by government departments. One informant stated unequivocally that 'no government funding should ever go to any agency that does not have an access and equity policy or cannot demonstrate that such a policy can be implemented'.

Since 1996, considerable effort has gone into improving and reforming the Access and Equity Strategy. The strategy has been documented in the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* (1998). The Charter sets out seven principles 'designed to ensure that all government service providers have the capacity to deliver client services which are

culturally appropriate, accessible, consumer-oriented and effective' and outlines practical strategies whereby these principles can be implemented.<sup>3</sup> The principles and implementation guidelines apply not only to mainstream services provided by government, but also to government-funded services provided by community and private sector agencies. The Charter has been endorsed by federal, state and territory governments and by the Australian Local Government Association.

Six federal departments are central to the achievement of access and equity goals in that 'they are involved on a large scale in delivering essential services to access and equity target groups' (DIMA 1996a, p.2). Following the post-election portfolio restructure in November 2001, the key access and equity departments are as follows: Attorney General's Department (AG); Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST); Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS); Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC); Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). As the body contracted to deliver services, programs and payments to clients on behalf of several government departments, the operation of Centrelink is also critical to the achievement of access and equity goals.

Within the scope of the Charter, refugee settlers in Australia are seen to be, by implication, at 'possible double disadvantage' in their access to government services, where barriers resulting from cultural and linguistic background are compounded by other attributes, in this case, refugee experience. DIMIA has primary responsibility for ensuring that the needs of refugees are met. However, since 1998, the Department has not been responsible for providing 'whole of life' support to migrants. DIMIA provides specific services for newly arrived migrants but increasingly emphasises its advocacy and coordination role in order to 'undertake more productive and effective work with other departments because they are also bound by cabinet's decision that all Commonwealth agencies must respond appropriately to settlement needs' (DIMA 1998).

### *National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS)*

DIMIA coordinates the National Integrated Settlement Strategy<sup>4</sup> (NISS), which is the second major tool for ensuring that the needs of newly arrived migrants

(including young refugees) are addressed. The NISS is a needs-based planning framework that seeks to improve the provision of services to migrants through communication, cooperation and coordination between agencies at all levels of government. The NISS framework aims to achieve or encourage the following:

- clarification of who is responsible for providing services;
- better coordination of service delivery;
- better targeting of resources to avoid gaps and duplication; and
- better outcomes for migrants and refugees in the form of targeted and accessible services.

The NISS draws together a national framework of several inter-governmental and inter-departmental planning committees as follows:

- the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCIMA) comprising federal, state and territory ministers. MCIMA provides general guidance on settlement planning issues;
- the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (SCIMA) comprising officials of DIMIA, state and territory government agencies responsible for multicultural affairs and the Australian Local Government Association;
- interdepartmental working groups comprised of senior Commonwealth officials, which aim to resolve issues that span more than one department, either at the state/territory level or the national level; and
- the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC) which advises the Commonwealth Minister on the settlement of refugees, humanitarian entrants and migrants, focusing on the appropriateness and adequacy of services, especially for refugees.

At the state level, the key components of the NISS are state and territory Settlement Planning Committees that consist of representatives of government agencies at all levels and of non-government agencies providing settlement services. Planning committees develop integrated settlement plans for their state or territory, which establish the priority settlement needs of migrants and refugees and develop strategies for meeting those needs. At the local level, the key components of the NISS are community organisations that work closely with migrants and refugees and

provide valuable input by participating in settlement planning structures and delivering services.

In recent years, people concerned with the implementation of NISS have worked to put concerns about young refugees onto the policy agenda. The Victorian Settlement Planning Committee identified the need for sustained specialist programs to address the linguistic, educational, and training needs of young people. This was followed up by a Settlement Advisory Council Working Party (comprising representatives of the former Department of Immigration and Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs) and resulted in the announcement of the Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET) program, designed to give priority assistance to homeless youth and young refugees.

Since the initial research undertaken for this study, there have been further positive moves under NISS to highlight and respond to the needs of refugee young people. The Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC) identifies 'addressing the specific settlement needs of refugee youth' as one of its priority areas for advice to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA Fact Sheet 101, 2001). In 2001 RRAC recommended that broader cross-portfolio strategies be developed to address the specific needs of refugee young people and, in collaboration with DIMIA, developed a Refugee Youth Strategy.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Settlement Planning Committees have agreed that their National Settlement Project for 2002 will be to promote the settlement needs of newly arrived young people, especially refugee youth.

### *Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)*

An Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy<sup>6</sup> (IHSS) has been developed by DIMIA, as a complement to NISS. It is designed to improve the delivery of settlement services to refugee and humanitarian entrants across Australia on the recognition that 'rebuilding the lives of these people involves far more than securing permanent residence in Australia. They must be provided with extra support to enable them to become acquainted with the Australian environment and the services available so that they can fully participate in the Australian community' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 66, Oct. 2001). The strategy aims to build partnerships with community organisations, and recognises the mutual interests of government, community organisations and the Australian public in facilitating early and

### Web portal for refugee young people

*DIMIA is currently creating a web portal for refugee young people, targeted towards the 12–25 year age group. The portal will link to a broad range of government and community programs, with links to 'youth friendly' contacts for health, housing, education, employment and other mainstream services and specialist migrant and refugee services. It will include information and tools relevant to support workers and service providers for this group, and an e-publications information/research centre. The portal will be sponsored by the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council and will promote the Council's discussion paper Refugee Young People, which outlines the complex issues faced by young people from refugee backgrounds and highlights 'good practice' principles for improving service delivery to this group. The web portal will be part of the 2002 National Settlement Project, 'Promoting Awareness of Needs of Newly Arrived Young People, Particularly Refugees'.*

*Client Access Unit, DIMIA*

effective settlement for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Under the strategy:

- Humanitarian entrants are provided with **pre-embarkation information** on issues that are important for their travel to Australia and what to expect on arrival;
- **Initial Information and Orientation** provides settlement information and case manages entrants so that they are aware of their new environment and are linked to essential services such as income support, Medicare, education and training, employment and other IHSS services;
- **Accommodation Support** provides entrants with accommodation on arrival in Australia and assistance is provided to enable entrants to establish themselves in stable, affordable, appropriate, longer-term accommodation as soon as possible;
- **Household Formation** assists in establishing a household with a basic package of household items; and
- **Early Health Assessment and Intervention** provides entrants with information on health services and a physical and psychological screening with referral to appropriate health services, as well as torture and trauma coun-

selling that will assist entrants to manage their recovery from serious traumatic and psychological difficulties. It also encourages health care providers to be sensitive to the needs of humanitarian entrants.

The strategy also supports those who assist entrants, including proposers and IHSS service providers:

- **Proposers' Support** helps people fulfil their role as proposers of humanitarian entrants by providing access to entrant pre-arrival information resources and a post-arrival 'help' service through which further information and guidance are available; and
- **Service Support** assists IHSS contractors with training required to meet their obligations as service providers.

A related program, **Community Support for Refugees<sup>7</sup> (CSR)**, registers volunteers who provide social support and friendship to new humanitarian entrants. CSR volunteers are seen to 'play a key role in reducing the sense of isolation and disconnection that many refugees experience on arrival in Australia'. They do this by making new arrivals feel welcome, putting them in touch with other people in the community and making contacts with churches, sporting organisa-

tions and relevant ethnic associations. Volunteers under the program receive training and support from DIMIA, and are required to adhere to the IHSS Service Principles and Code of Conduct. They receive some reimbursement for expenses.

Over the four years from 1 July 1997, government directed an additional \$20.8 million to the new Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. These funds were administered by DIMIA and expended on improving service infrastructure. The pilot Early Intervention Program for On-Arrival Accommodation clients in Victoria during 1996–97 has been incorporated in the mainstream program nationally. The Federal Government has committed \$14.3m annually to deliver the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (Liberal Party and National Party Coalition 2001).

The next section considers the capacity of key federal departments to adequately address the settlement needs of young refugees. Although state and territory governments assist the federal government in the resettlement and longer-term assistance of refugees, it is beyond the scope of this project to consider these roles in detail. Different states and territories take different initiatives according to their assessment of need and priorities.

## Overview of current federal services and programs

### Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA)

The Department of Immigration was established in 1945 and has since undergone several name and portfolio changes. In November 2001 it became the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs with a mission, among other things, to recognise that Australia is ‘enriched through the entry and settlement of people’. Funding and reporting is organised on a program basis, and the Department’s activities are divided into nine divisions, including the Refugee and Humanitarian Division. The Refugee and Humanitarian Division manages the resettlement of people under the government’s Humanitarian Program and provides advice to government on the size and composition of the program, being responsible for ensuring policy is in accordance with international obligations. Resettlement activities comprise a complex

and interconnected series of services and program initiatives. These services constitute the backbone of the service infrastructure available to refugees, at least in the initial period of settlement.

The service infrastructure administered by DIMIA is briefly described in Table 7. With the full-scale introduction of Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) in 2001, certain services for humanitarian entrants coordinated by DIMIA such as the Community Refugee Settlement Services (CRSS) and On Arrival Accommodation (OAA) were phased out and replaced by new services under the Strategy (listed earlier in this chapter). DIMIA has contracted a number of providers to deliver these services.

### Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS)

#### Youth Bureau

Following the federal election in November 2001, the Youth Bureau was re-located to the Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS). Prior to this, youth affairs had been part of the education and training portfolio. The aims of the Youth Bureau are:

*to ensure that the Government’s policies improve life prospects for all young people through improved coordination at Commonwealth and state levels, communication and consultation with young people, delivery of programmes and services for young people, promotion of positive perceptions of young people in the community, promotion of accredited development opportunities for young people and the provision of national leadership on youth issues.*

With its new mandate for youth affairs, DFaCS could be expected to accept a lead role in developing and coordinating strategies to support young refugees beyond the initial settlement phase and in their longer-term transition to independence.

#### Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET) program

As part of its new responsibility for youth affairs, DFaCS administers the Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) program. The objective of JPET is to assist young people who face multiple barriers to participate in education or vocational training by the provision of intensive support. In addition to the program’s overall focus on homeless young people, it targets several client groups, including young people

**Table 7: Description of DIMIA programs and services**

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*Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)*

TIS assists the settlement of migrants by providing language services that facilitate their equitable access to government and community services. It does this on both a cost and fee-free basis. A fee-free interpreting service is provided to certain English-speaking residents and groups in the community who provide settlement related services, to communicate with non-English-speaking permanent visa holders and Australian citizens. The groups eligible for these services are medical practitioners, parliamentarians, trade unions, local government authorities and some non-government organisations. DIMIA also provides a fee-free service for extract translations of eligible personal documents for permanent visa holders and Australian citizens during their first two years of permanent residency in Australia through TIS. TIS provides services on a fee-for-service basis to individuals, Commonwealth and state and territory government agencies, community organisations, and private sector businesses and organisations in relation to commercial transactions.

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*Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)*

The Adult Migrant English Program ensures that refugees and humanitarian entrants (as well as all other migrants) have access to English language tuition soon after arrival in Australia. Students receive tuition in a competency-based curriculum for a total of 510 hours or until a functional level of English is reached (whichever is earlier).

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*Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS)*

The CSSS provides grants to not-for-profit community and service organisations to deliver settlement services to refugees, humanitarian entrants and migrants. The CSSS funds projects that fill gaps in mainstream service provision, as well as projects that encourage mainstream service providers to accept responsibility and respond appropriately to their diverse client base. CSSS projects involve direct service provision, facilitating client access to mainstream services, and community participation in planning and delivery of services. The CSSS replaced the previous Grant in Aid scheme in 1998.

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*Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and Migrant Service Agencies (MSAs)*

MRCs and MRAs provide a base to deliver, support and attract settlement services for migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants. They provide multilingual information, advice and referral services, develop specific services to meet the needs of migrants, and provide a base for communities' educational, cultural and social activities. They also promote awareness of migrants' needs in Australian society. There are 30 MRCs and 4 MSAs in Australia.

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*Immigration Advisory Services Scheme (IASS)*

The Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS) has been in existence since late 1997 when the Application Assistance Scheme and the Immigration Advisory Scheme were merged. IAAAS provides application assistance to protection visa (PV) applicants in immigration detention, disadvantaged PV applicants (including temporary protection visa holders) in the community, and disadvantaged non-PV applicants in the community. It also provides immigration advice to disadvantaged members of the community. In 2000–01, IAAAS service providers provided assistance to 4,377 cases of new asylum seekers in detention, 337 new protection visa and 89 other new visa applicants in the community. Assistance and advice is funded by the Commonwealth at no cost to the applicant and is delivered by 20 service providers throughout Australia.

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*Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme*

In past years, there have been large intakes of unaccompanied humanitarian minors, predominantly from Indochina, but this is no longer a policy priority. Following a review in 1993, the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme has been wound down. In the review, it was recommended that where numbers of arrivals fell below eight in any state, the scheme would close (Refugee Resettlement Working Group 1994). There are still some young people who enter Australia unaccompanied and/or whose care arrangements break down upon arrival; however, their number is small. DIMIA shares with state welfare authorities the cost of settling unaccompanied humanitarian minors, unless they number less than eight, in which case the state bears full responsibility.

from refugee backgrounds. The definition of 'refugee' employed by the program is outlined in Chapter 3. Several JPET providers focus specifically on refugee young people. JPET is an important program, not only because of its direct support for young people from refugee backgrounds, but because in many respects it serves as a model of best practice in addressing the needs of this client group (see Chapter 6).

### *Income support*

Following a Commonwealth departmental restructure in 1997, responsibility for the design and provision of income support according to the Social Security Act 1991 was moved from the Department of Social Security to the family and health services portfolio. At the same time, service delivery was contracted out to Centrelink (see below). DFACS's responsibility for income support policy is of particular significance to meeting the needs of young refugees and their families because of the disadvantage these people experience in the labour market. Young people in particular, whether on their own behalf or within a family unit, are likely to rely at least partially on financial assistance for several years into their settlement. However, not all young people from refugee backgrounds are eligible for mainstream income support payments (see Table 8).

The income support payment of greatest relevance to young people as applicants in their own right is Youth Allowance. The introduction of Youth Allowance by DFACS (in July 1998) represents the biggest shift in income support policy for young people in 20 years. Youth Allowance replaced several existing payment types including AUSTUDY for full-time students aged under 25 years, Sickness Allowance for those under 21, and Youth Training Allowance and Newstart Allowance for unemployed young people under 18 and 21 respectively. Youth Allowance is a means-tested payment for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years who are studying, training, seeking employment, or temporarily unable to work. In order to receive Youth Allowance a young person has to meet a number of obligations collectively known as the activity test. Undertaking full-time education or training, looking for work, or undertaking a combination of activities may fulfill the Youth Allowance activity test. Young people with low levels of proficiency in English could undertake an English as a Second Language (ESL) course, to satisfy the activity test. An exemption from the activity test may be given if the young person has special circumstances.

Since January 1999, young people aged under 18

who have not completed Year 12 or equivalent must generally be in full-time study or training to qualify for Youth Allowance (DFACS 2001, p.17). Exemptions can be made where this requirement for full-time study is seen as unreasonable, for example, where the young person lacks stable accommodation, has caring responsibilities, or is unable to find a place in a suitable education or training program. Of particular relevance here, an exemption from this requirement can also be made in recognition of the refugee status of the applicant. At August 2001, some 38 young people under the age of 18 in receipt of Youth Allowance were granted temporary exemption from full-time study on the grounds that they were refugees prior to making their claim (DFACS 2001, p.19).

### *Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program*

DFACS, in conjunction with the states and territories, administers the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) for homeless people. SAAP enables those experiencing homelessness to access accommodation support, in the form of refuges (crisis accommodation) and transitional medium- to long-term accommodation, or support without accommodation. Several housing programs, notably in Melbourne, have developed expertise in working with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including young refugees.

### *Department of Education, Training and Science (DEST)*

Despite the removal of the Youth Bureau from the DEST portfolio, DEST maintains an important role in youth affairs reflecting the centrality of education and training to youth policy. Access to appropriate education is an important component of any plan for enabling a successful transition to independence for young refugees. Education is the responsibility of state governments, but DEST has carriage of this program area at the federal level. Young refugees typically encounter the Australian education system through English Language Centres, then mainstream schools, or Adult Migrant English Programs (funded by DIMIA) and TAFE institutions. The department directly assists young refugees by providing funding to state departments of education for English language tuition in schools. English language tuition in schools is only available to young people aged 18 years or under in some states but other states allow those aged 19 or over

to access this support as well. In addition to schools, DEST has responsibility for a range of youth-focused vocational, training and apprentice schemes, and administers the Jobs Pathway Programme.

## *Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)*

### *Job Network and employment support*

As the department responsible for employment policy and for the oversight of services to assist job seekers, DEWR has considerable potential to impact on young refugees. The macro-system for delivery of employment support services in Australia underwent significant reform, particularly during 1997 and 1998 with the advent of corporatisation and the introduction of marketplace competition. Centrelink has been contracted by the department to administer access for job seekers to the Job Network – a network of private, community and government organisations contracted by government to help people find employment. Job seekers are currently able to secure assistance at one of three levels:

- Job Matching: to help unemployed people find a job;
- Job Search Training: to help eligible job seekers improve their job search techniques; and
- Intensive Assistance: which provides individualised assistance to those job seekers who are long-term unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged and who are receiving an income support payment from Centrelink. Within Intensive Assistance, job seekers are classified into a further three funding levels (DEERSB 1998).

The Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) determines the level of employment support required by job seekers. The JSCI is a computer-based tool comprising 16 factors. A final score derived from combining responses to each item determines eligibility for Job Network services. Refugee status as such is not a factor in the JSCI; however, country of origin and English language proficiency are included. Further, a secondary process of classification is activated where job seekers are seen to experience a disadvantage requiring professional or specialist judgement. Torture and trauma is given as an example of this kind of disadvantage. As part of its oversight of the implementation of JSCI, DEWR has given a commitment that refugee and humanitarian visa holders from certain refugee-producing countries specified by DIMIA will be

referred to a Migrant Liaison Officer or an occupational psychologist as a matter of course (DEWRSB 1998). In theory, therefore, the JSCI classifies individuals with refugee experiences at the higher levels, thus ensuring access to the most comprehensive array of support services. Again, not all people from refugee backgrounds are eligible for this support.

## *Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC)*

In addition to its responsibility for Medicare, the Department of Health and Aged Care administers several areas of policy development and social programs that are directly relevant to the welfare of young refugees. The most significant macro-level policy is the national health policy for children and young people endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers Conference in 1995. This policy explicitly recognises that ‘there is an increasingly diverse and rich cultural mix in the Australian population with correspondingly diversified attitudes to health and health care’ and further, that ‘young refugees ... have particular needs, their experiences often contributing to mental health problems and requiring special support’. The department also has responsibility for the National Non-English Speaking Backgrounds Sexual Health Strategy; however, it is unclear to what extent young refugees have been targeted under this strategy. The department also funds the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma discussed later in this chapter.

## *Attorney-General’s Department*

The Attorney-General’s Department has a relatively minor role to play in providing direct support to young refugees. Community Legal Centres are mainstream services that provide generic support to anyone in the community with legal problems. However, in 1996–97, Community Legal Centres signed a new service agreement that committed each Legal Centre to the Commonwealth Access and Equity Strategy.

The Attorney General’s Department also funds a number of welfare rights organisations in several states, notably Victoria and New South Wales. These organisations have shown considerable interest in inequities in income support entitlements for new arrivals, and in the impact of Youth Allowance. They are able to offer case management support for people whose welfare rights appear to have been denied.

## Centrelink

All government social security payments (and related services) are provided through Centrelink, a statutory authority currently within the DFaCS portfolio. This means that Centrelink is responsible on a day-to-day basis for implementing equity and access policy with respect to the delivery of critical payments and services, including income support and the coordination of services under the Job Network.

One mechanism relevant to this goal is Centrelink's Multilingual Telephone Information Service, which can give information about social security payments in the inquirer's own language from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call.

## *Visa classification and eligibility for support*

The rights and entitlements of young refugees living in Australia are dependent on their residency status and visa classification. As explained in Chapter 2, young people with refugee experiences enter or are allowed to stay in Australia under several types of visa allocated within both the Humanitarian and Migration Programs. Most mainstream government services, including income support, are only available to migrants with permanent residency status. Refugee and humanitarian entrants may be entitled to additional resettlement supports and services in recognition of the barriers to settlement that confront them on arrival. The specific eligibility criteria for individual services and programs are complex, but some general points can be made here about variable entitlement according to visa classification and residency status.

Table 8 indicates the different entitlements of offshore and onshore Humanitarian Program entrants and entrants under the Family Stream of the Migration Program (some of whom are young people with refugee experiences). It also details the entitlements of onshore applicants for refugee status whose claims are still being processed and who are living in the Australian community during this process. Asylum seekers who arrived in the country without valid documentation are subject to mandatory detention and consequently do not have direct access to the system of supports and services available to people living in the community<sup>8</sup>

Aside from asylum seekers held in detention, it is clear from Table 8 that temporary protection visa (TPV) holders (recognised refugees who arrived without valid documentation) have the most limited entitlements.

These restrictions are linked to the means by which TPV holders entered Australia; they do not arise from assessment of the relative need of this group. The policy of restricting entitlements for people who arrived without valid documentation is intended to deter unauthorised arrivals, and hence people smuggling syndicates that arrange for their passage to Australia, by making Australia a less attractive destination. TPV holders are given an initial three-year period of residency in Australia, with possible extensions,<sup>9</sup> but during this time, they are not eligible to sponsor close family members to join them in Australia and nor are they able to enter and exit the country freely (see DIMIA Fact Sheet 64, Nov. 2001). The entitlements of this group of refugees stand in marked contrast to those of refugee entrants under the offshore program who have immediate eligibility for income support and access to the full range of settlement services offered as part of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.

Onshore asylum seekers who originally arrived in Australia under valid visas also have restricted access to services, reflecting the unresolved nature of their applications for refugee status.<sup>10</sup>

People of refugee background who have been sponsored to Australia have limited access to government assistance relative to Refugee category entrants since sponsors are expected to assume some of the financial support responsibilities otherwise assumed by the government. This applies to refugee young people who arrived under the Family Stream of the Migration Program. To a lesser extent, this also applies in the case of entrants under the Special Humanitarian Program who have also been sponsored to Australia, although under different conditions (see Chapter 2).

## *Eligibility for income support*

Migrants generally have to wait two years after arriving in Australia before they become eligible for most social security payments including Youth Allowance, unemployment and sickness benefits.<sup>11</sup> This is known as the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period. It is expected that entrants under the Migration Program either have sufficient means to support themselves or else can rely on the support provided by their Australian sponsor (under an Assurance of Support). These expectations do not apply in the case of entrants under the Humanitarian Program. Refugees and humanitarian entrants, including Special Humanitarian Program entrants who are assisted to Australia by a 'proposer',

are exempt from the waiting period and gain immediate access to income support payments where required. The partners and dependent children of humanitarian entrants are also exempt from the waiting period (as long as the relationship existed before arrival in Australia). The exemption from the waiting period recognises the particular difficulties that refugee families are likely to encounter in the early period of their settlement. It also recognises that, as sponsors, refugee settlers may not be in a position to give a great deal of material support.

As explained in Chapter 2, however, some people with refugee experiences enter Australia under the Family Stream of the Migration Program to join close relatives who arrived as refugee or humanitarian settlers. Like other family stream migrants, these young people are subject to the two-year waiting period in the expectation that their sponsors will support them financially. In the event of a sponsorship relationship breaking down, a young person can apply for Special Benefit. This payment is only available 'in cases of hardship brought about by a change of circumstances deemed to be beyond the person's control' and eligibility for the benefit is stringently means-tested and reviewed every 13 weeks (see Centrelink web site).

In general, mainstream income support is only available to people with permanent resident status. This means that people recognised under the UN Convention as refugees but who are temporary protection visas holders will not be able to gain access to income support payments (unless they become eligible for a permanent protection visa). An exception may again be made regarding access to Special Benefit. TPV holders generally have to rely on voluntary organisations, church or community groups for financial assistance if they are unable to find work.<sup>12</sup>

Income support for people living in the community whose applications for recognition as refugees are still being processed is available through the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme.<sup>13</sup> The Scheme provides financial assistance to applicants who are unable to meet 'their most basic needs for food, accommodation and health care' while their claims are being processed. The Scheme is administered by DIMIA through contractual arrangements with the Australian Red Cross.

### *Eligibility for housing support*

Only entrants under the Refugee component of the offshore Humanitarian Program are automatically entitled to on-arrival accommodation under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy and

related Community Support for Refugees services. Special Humanitarian Program entrants may also be eligible if their proposers are unable to assist. Accommodation assistance is not extended to the close family members of humanitarian visa holders sponsored to Australia under the Family Stream of the Migration Program. Similarly, asylum seekers and TPV holders are not eligible for any government assistance in finding accommodation, although, as noted, Rent Assistance is available to private renters.

### *Eligibility for job search services*

Offshore refugee and humanitarian entrants are eligible for the full range of employment assistance coordinated by Centrelink. Migrants under the two-year waiting period have access to free Job Matching services through the Job Network.<sup>14</sup> However, they do not have access to higher levels of support under Job Search Training or Intensive Assistance until this waiting period is over. The Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET) program described earlier in the chapter is unusual in that it explicitly makes provision for intensive employment assistance to young people from refugee backgrounds, whether they arrived under the Humanitarian Program or the Migration Program.

Temporary protection visa holders are able (and expected) to work but they have limited access to Centrelink employment support services.

All job seekers can use the Job Network Access self-help facilities in Centrelink offices, which include telephones, photocopiers, fax machines, computers and daily newspapers. These services are free of charge.

### *Eligibility for health services*

All entrants to Australia, including asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders, have immediate access to Medicare, Australia's universal health scheme administered by the Department of Health and Aging. Similarly, all migrants are eligible for referral to the Early Health Assessment and Intervention Program and for torture and trauma counselling where required.

### *Eligibility for English language tuition and education*

All permanent protection visa holders (whether under Humanitarian or Migration visa classifications) are eligible for English language tuition under the Adult Migrant English Program or in secondary schools, depending on their age. Asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders do not share this entitlement.

**Table 8: Eligibility for services**

	<i>Accommodation</i>		<i>Income</i>	
	<i>Accommodation under Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)</i>	<i>Community Support for Refugees (CSR) Program</i>	<i>Centrelink</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>Convention refugees (offshore applicants)</i>	4–8 weeks assistance to locate longer term accommodation, basic package of household items.	Usually 6 months, may be ongoing relationship.	Immediate eligibility to apply for all relevant benefits.	-
<i>Special Humanitarian Program (offshore entrants)</i>	May be referred to IHSS accommodation services if proposer is unable to assist.	May be referred to CSR services if proposer is unable to assist.	Immediate eligibility to apply for all relevant benefits.	-
<i>Family reunion entrants (including those with refugee experiences)</i>	No	No	2-year waiting period.	-
<i>Asylum seekers (onshore applicants) arriving lawfully</i>	No	No	Not eligible for Centrelink until granted permanent protection.	Eligible for income support under the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme after initial 6-month period.
<i>Temporary Protection Visa holders (unauthorised arrivals)</i>	No	No	Eligible for some benefits, but not Newstart or Youth Allowance.	-

<i>Education/English tuition</i>			<i>Health</i>	<i>Support</i>
<b><i>Adult Migrant English Program</i></b>	<b><i>Adult Community &amp; Further Education</i></b>	<b><i>Secondary school</i></b>	<b><i>Department of Health and Aged Care</i></b>	<b><i>Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) /Migrant Service Agencies (MSAs) Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS)</i></b>
510 hours	Voluntary access	Up to 4 terms of intensive English tuition.	Immediate access to Medicare. Torture and trauma services as required. Eligibility for Early Health Assessment and Intervention and Torture and Trauma services as needed.	Case coordination. MRC/MSA services. CSSS services.
510 hours	Voluntary access	Up to 4 terms of intensive English tuition.	Immediate access to Medicare. Torture and trauma services as required. Eligibility for Early Health Assessment and Intervention and Torture and Trauma services as needed.	Primarily by proposer, but may be referred for IHSS services if proposer is unable to assist or the relationship with the proposer breaks down. MRC/MSA services. CSSS services.
510 hours	Voluntary access	Up to 4 terms of intensive English tuition.	Immediate access to Medicare. Torture and trauma services as required.	Family/sponsor expected to provide support. MRC/MSA services. CSSS services for those with low English proficiency.
No, until granted permanent protection.	Voluntary access	Up to 4 terms of intensive English tuition.	Access to Medicare. Torture and trauma services as required.	Access to support depends on resources of the asylum seeker(s). MRC/MSA services once they receive permanent protection. CSSS services once they receive permanent protection.
No	No	No	Immediate access to Medicare. Eligibility for Early Health Assessment and Intervention and Torture and Trauma services as needed.	Access to support depends on resources of the TPV holder.

TPV holders are further prevented from accessing English language tuition from Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) funded courses. These restrictions apply to educational opportunities more broadly. The circumstances for those at the younger end of the 12- to 25-year age group are slightly different. It is compulsory under Australian law for all children under the age of 16 years of age to attend school. Unaccompanied humanitarian minors on TPVs living in the community receive the same treatment as Australian citizens with respect to primary education. With respect to secondary and other forms of education, they receive the same treatment as other non-citizen children and temporary residents.

## *Critical review of government policy and services*

The following review aims to assess government policies, programs and services in terms of their impact or likely impact on young people from refugee backgrounds. The review is based on an analysis of all available federal policy documents (especially from the six key access and equity departments), a survey of pertinent literature and, most importantly, on the views of 17 'key informants'. Mention is made of the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme, because, despite the diminished role of the scheme, it provides insights from past experience with the entry of unaccompanied humanitarian minors that serve to highlight important issues.

### *Policy focus and integration*

Australia has some of the most comprehensive settlement policies and programs in the world. On-arrival services are particularly well developed. There is a commitment to regular evaluations and continuous improvement in program planning and delivery, and to explicitly integrate services across government

departments through the National Integrated Settlement Strategy and the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.

However, in refugee policy statements there is largely a silence about young people as a specific group. Our key informants were generally of the view that Australian social and youth policy is weak in its recognition of young refugee issues. Policies of general relevance to young refugees are of two main types: either general refugee policies or policies about young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In the first type of policy, the implicit assumption is that refugees deserve special support that is sensitive to the specific experiences faced by refugees such as torture and trauma. Further, it is assumed that if families are supported and functional, then young people who are part of those families will have their needs addressed within the family unit.

An alternative policy position recognises that young people have specific needs notwithstanding the level of support they receive from their families, and that young people from diverse cultural backgrounds may need additional support and specialist services to ensure that their needs are adequately met in their transition to adulthood. Adolescence is a life stage and young people in this stage of life deserve culturally appropriate support from those who have expertise in understanding adolescents. But generic youth policy does not have the means to address the needs and disadvantaged position of young refugees.

The special needs of people who are both young and have a refugee experience are at serious risk of falling into the crevasses between the two policy positions. Existing refugee policy is blind to issues of youth, and existing youth policy is largely blind to issues associated with the refugee experience. This point is fundamental to the arguments in this report. As noted earlier, since the initial research and consultation was undertaken for this project, the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council has developed a Refugee Youth Strategy. If acted upon, this strategy promises to put into specific focus the

*Existing policy is either blind to issues of age or to issues associated with the refugee experience.*

### *Monitoring systems*

*A monitoring system common to both On Arrival Accommodation (OAA) services and the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS) is needed. Currently, people who enter Australia through OAA are easier to track than those placed with CRSS groups or being supported by their families. Monitoring could take account of the longer-term progress of new arrivals and the quality of support offered to them. Such a system could have considerable benefits to future evaluation processes, and would enable earlier intervention in the lives of young people who need additional support to settle effectively.*

settlement needs of new arrivals with refugee experiences aged between 12 and 25 years.

In his seminal study evaluating government policy pertaining to refugees, Jupp (1994, p.14) notes that 'there is little evidence that interdepartmental needs-based planning takes refugee needs specifically into account'. The National Integrated Settlement Strategy, the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy and Access and Equity Strategy have gone some way towards rectifying the problems noted by Jupp, especially in their promotion of inter-departmental planning and Commonwealth-wide responsibilities for supporting refugees.

Together, the National Integrated Settlement Strategy and particularly the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy represent the policy framework within which the settlement needs of young refugees are to be addressed. The ideas underpinning NISS appear sound; however, earlier evaluations raised some doubts about the effectiveness of the implementation of these policies. At the time the consultation was done for this study (largely in 1998), there was some doubt about the degree of government commitment to fully resourcing and implementing the strategy. At this time, the Commonwealth/State Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs had not been convened and the (then) Interdepartmental Working Group on Migrant Settlement and Other Planning Issues went for almost two years without meeting in 1997 and 1998. An evaluation of NISS completed in 1996 revealed that although the strategy had been broadly successful in bringing together key players across different levels of government, it suffered from a

low profile, optimal use was not made of several of its components and it was not well linked with other planning and policy development processes, including access and equity strategies (DIMA 1996b).

Key informants acknowledged the improvement in levels of integrated planning, yet none felt confident that young people's needs were being adequately met under the NISS framework. Difficulties were seen to arise at the ground level where 'integrated planning' is translated from verbal and written agreements into action.

### *Coordination and case management*

Individual case management was widely regarded as the most appropriate approach for addressing the needs of young refugees at the program level, and it was recognised by informants that several programs incorporated case management principles at least to some degree. Case management enables a focus on the whole person, allowing each young person to be viewed as part of a family, the wider service system, and in the context of an ethnic community network.

Good coordination and consistent support were seen to be the hallmarks of effective case management, usually enabled by the nomination of a primary caseworker. The diversity of the refugee community contributes to the complexity of individual cases and exacerbates problems of coordination. Effective coordination was seen to depend on high levels of shared knowledge across mainstream and specialist service providers and, to a large extent, on the personal knowledge base of individual workers (especially regarding eligibility criteria across a range of services).

The achievement of satisfactory levels of cooperation and coordination, was seen to be obstructed by several circumstances, both political and practical:

- Increased competition between agencies for increasingly limited funds tends to undermine cooperation.
- When refugee clients arrive on short notice as can happen, practical coordination will be difficult even when the professional motivation to coordinate is strong.
- Communication between refugee camps and internal bureaucracies may also be poor, thus hampering the effectiveness of on-arrival support services. Forging real partnerships based on common ground is probably the key to systemic change to improve coordination.

Beyond integrated planning, Jupp's concerns about the paucity of needs-based approaches remain relevant. This is particularly evident in the case of eligibility for services.

### *Equity and effectiveness of eligibility criteria*

Earlier in this chapter we explained the relationship between visa classification and eligibility for services. Certain groups of (young) people with refugee experiences were identified as having restricted access to mainstream and humanitarian settlement supports. Chapter 2 showed how the current visa system fails to reflect the strength of claims for humanitarian protection. Our interest in this section is with the inequitable treatment of young people with refugee experiences on the basis of their settlement support needs once in Australia.

### *Family reunion and the expectation of sponsor support*

As explained in Chapter 2, refugee and humanitarian settlers appear to be relying increasingly on the Family Stream of the Migration Program as a means by which to sponsor close family members to Australia. This follows the declining opportunity for sponsoring family members under the Special Humanitarian Program which allows people with 'close ties' to Australia to obtain permanent residency on humanitarian grounds. Unlike the 'family reunion' provision under the SHP, sponsored and sponsoring parties under the Family Stream of the Migration Program receive no special consideration relating to their needs as refugees

or people who have experienced 'gross violation of human rights in their home country'.

The result is that people who have similar refugee experiences, do not receive equivalent treatment. Unlike entrants under the offshore Humanitarian Program, arrivals under the Migration Program are not exempted from the two-year waiting period for income support eligibility. The distinction arises because it is assumed that people who are already settled in Australia have adequate knowledge and resource bases to support those they sponsor. This assumption seems unreasonable for sponsors from refugee backgrounds. First, the settlement difficulties of the sponsors themselves need to be taken into account. Secondly, whereas in the past new arrivals of working age could be expected to find employment reasonably easily, this is no longer the case, particularly for young people, and the material demands on sponsors are consequently likely to be greater.

Sponsorship arrangements often do not work in the same way in the case of refugee and humanitarian entrants. Sponsors may feel desperate to secure the safety of family members trapped in refugee-producing situations and sponsor family members even though their resources are limited. Sponsors are often reticent to notify authorities of an inability to cope with the financial burden of sponsorship, fearing negative repercussions for themselves and the people they have helped migrate to Australia. Chapter 4 drew attention to the particular difficulties experienced by young people as both sponsoring and sponsored parties.

While Special Benefit may be made available to young people whose sponsorship arrangements have broken down, this is the exception rather than the rule, and access relies on a familiarity with the income support system that many young refugees do not have.<sup>15</sup> Existing arrangements do not take into account the known difficulties refugee people have in accessing mainstream services and 'negotiating' the income support system. This suggests the need for a mechanism whereby exemption from the Newly-Arrived Resident's Waiting Period is activated more automatically for family migrants sponsored by humanitarian and refugee settlers, in recognition of the greater risk of hardship among this group. Another possibility is to increase the number of places available under the Special Humanitarian Program which would extend the more appropriate terms and conditions of this program to a larger number of new 'family reunion' arrivals. If expansion of the SHP was done by separating the respective quotas for the onshore and

offshore components of the Humanitarian Program, the vicious circle created by the interrelation of diminishing opportunities for authorised family reunion and increased risk-taking resulting in unauthorised arrivals would be intercepted.

### *Unauthorised arrival: need vs deterrent*

In general terms, eligibility for income support is determined on the basis of residency status. Few would argue with this as a general principle. However, the logic of the links between migration visa categories and eligibility for government assistance has been severely eroded since the introduction of the temporary protection visa (TPV). This visa was designed in response to the large increases in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving on Australia's shores without authorisation at the end of the 1990s. Allocation of a temporary rather than a permanent protection visa reflects the way in which those claiming protection arrived in the country and the choices they made en route, not the legitimacy or otherwise of their claims for refugee status and not their relative needs for support once in Australia. By definition these visas give holders 'temporary' status as residents; it is not intended that people under the terms and conditions of TPVs settle and make Australia their home. It may be argued on this basis that young people on temporary protection visas should not be considered as part of a target population for strategies to assist settlement and long-term independence. The consequences of this argument are particularly hard on these young people. Even if TPV holders only stay in Australia for the initial three-year period allowed by their visa, this is a significant length of time, particularly for adolescents, since it comes at a stage in life when people are expected to gain the skills and experience to support themselves as adults later on.

The penalty for unlawful arrival in Australia seems particularly unjust when applied to people who, as minors, had little choice in the matter. A precedent for this recognition currently exists (from July 2001) in the Special Eligibility Stream of the Migration Program. Under this provision, minors who originally entered or remained in Australia unlawfully with their family, and who can show 'close ties' to the country having spent their formative years here, are able to access permanent residency on the basis that their unauthorised arrival was due to the unlawful activities of their family and 'through no fault of their own' (see Chapter 2). In years to come, asylum seekers who arrived in Australia at the beginning of the 21st century may also qualify for similar treatment. Unfortunately, this retrospective

acknowledgment of lack of blame could not undo the damage done by restricting entitlements and withholding legitimacy at an earlier date. This suggests that an 'as if' principle should apply in the case of young people, that is, an assumption that they are going to be living indefinitely in Australia and, as such, should be assured access to education, English language and, where relevant, employment and other mainstream supports from the outset.

### *A needs-based approach*

Key informants felt that the allocation of resources on the basis of past entry status and visa classification, rather than current need and the legitimacy of claims for humanitarian concern and protection, is misplaced. Current arrangements were seen to cause considerable hardship for those affected and to reflect fundamental inequities in the allocation of resources. Most believed a review of eligibility criteria for government assistance to be long overdue. There was a strong preference for a needs-based approach to determining eligibility, though there were different ideas as to what this might mean in practice. The problem with eligibility criteria was alternatively diagnosed as insufficient attention to individualised assessment of need, or insufficient flexibility in determining eligibility because of the automatic link between entitlement and visa classification. Development of a needs-based approach will require difficult negotiation between sometime conflicting government goals – those relating to population policy, border protection policy, settlement policy and youth policy.

### *Settlement policy and government expenditure*

In summary, there are strong equity grounds for ensuring that young people with refugee experiences are eligible for government assistance on the basis of need, rather than visa category. The current system is not only unfair, it is also likely to be contrary to a more strategic approach towards settlement. Settlement policy for refugees is premised on an understanding that timely and comprehensive support in the early stages of settlement will help ensure successful longer-term settlement and hence reduced government intervention and financial outlay in the longer term.<sup>16</sup> Under current arrangements, however, refugee young people are denied access to basic services and entitlement when they first arrive in Australia that may be critical to their longer-term independence.

Informants argued that a key principle in settlement policy should be to ensure young people are

adequately supported once resident in Australia whether on a temporary or permanent basis. This has implications for government expenditure. If the level of humanitarian entry remains constant, a needs-based approach to eligibility for government assistance and services would increase expenditure and social security outlay in the short-term. For example, a needs-based approach might entail extension of eligibility for mainstream income support to TPV holders and a more flexible policy regarding exemption from the two-year waiting period for income support for Family Stream migrants joining refugee sponsors in Australia. One response consistent with a commitment to ensuring adequate support for all young refugees who are resident in Australia, would be to limit intake to compensate for the additional expenditure. Aside from the negative humanitarian implication of reducing intake, the longer-term economic outcomes of this approach are not necessarily positive. This is particularly evident in the case of family reunion. Where resident in Australia, immediate and extended family often provide a range of material and psychological supports to young people that are critical to their successful settlement and which in turn reduce the need for intensive government assistance at a later date (see Morrissey, Mitchell & Rutherford 1991). From this perspective, family reunion should be seen as an integral part of a strategic policy for long-term settlement. Larger refugee communities do not necessarily require greater government expenditure over the longer-term. Again, the rationale for more generous and inclusive support in the early stages of settlement is clearly even stronger with respect to younger people who may live in Australia for many more years.

### *Consultation with refugee young people*

Informants commonly felt that existing consultation processes meant that older refugees tended to speak on behalf of younger refugees. These difficulties are compounded when community leaders (or those who Anglo-Australians feel comfortable relating to as community leaders) are encouraged to speak in general terms about the needs experienced across the entire migrant community. Parental understanding of the needs of young refugees often takes precedence over young people's own perspectives. A parental perspective is more likely to orient towards a traditional way of life – a source of much intergenerational conflict in refugee communities. Young people lack appropriate opportunities to articulate their own needs. It was

noted in Chapter 4 that, particularly when they first arrive, refugees are often extremely reticent to articulate their needs or to be seen to ungrateful for any help they receive. Youth workers are often ill equipped to advocate on their behalf. This problem is entrenched by the noted tendency to devalue advocacy work in comparison with direct service provision. As a consequence, young people's self-articulated needs are generally under-represented in mainstream consultation processes.

### *Level and distribution of financial resources*

Finally, informants drew attention to the inadequacy of financial resources to support young refugees – a circumstance attributed to the limited policy focus on this client group. The distribution of existing resources was also regarded by some to be inequitable. In particular, it was claimed that funding is not distributed in accordance with the settlement patterns of humanitarian entrants. Areas with larger populations of people from refugee backgrounds should reasonably expect to attract more resources than other areas. Notwithstanding this, a special needs allocation may be required for high-need communities with an impoverished social service infrastructure or communities with significantly high rates of unemployment, even when numbers of humanitarian entrants in these areas are low. Rural communities are an example. It is unclear how rational the distribution of funds is given the distribution of need.

### *Cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding*

The general lack of cultural sensitivity and knowledge in the program environment was noted as a limitation of current programs. Social programs operate in a societal context of less than optimal understanding and tolerance of 'non-mainstream' cultural traditions.

Community sensitivity to the diversity of need among refugee entrants to Australia is limited by stereotypes based on assumptions about ethnicity – that all people from a particular country share basically the same culture and history. It is important to recognise, for example, that many Tamils from Sri Lanka, unlike Singhalese people, may prefer not to be referred to as Sri Lankan but have their own sense of national identity. Similarly, Khmer and Ethnic Chinese people from Cambodia hold quite distinct and

different cultural identities. The same issue arises between many Kurds and the national identities implied by Turkish or Iraqi citizenship. Ongoing community education is needed to raise awareness of these issues.

Moreover, community anxiety about levels of immigration and, in particular, Australia's international responsibility towards refugees, has become particularly pronounced in recent years. The broader context in which programs and services are implemented is a particularly volatile one at the current time and it is important for government and senior political figures to show leadership. Debate on asylum seekers dominated the federal election in November 2001. What became known as the 'children overboard' incident just prior to the election strongly points to an unfortunate political opportunism in the most senior ranks of government in taking advantage of public anxiety surrounding asylum seekers. The then Minister for Defence, the Minister for Immigration, and the Prime Minister himself expressed moral outrage at the actions of refugees who had allegedly thrown children out of a boat into rough seas in order to pressure the Australian navy into giving them asylum. If nothing else, the incident demonstrated all too clearly a readiness among our most senior politicians to believe the worst of asylum seekers, particularly in a context where there are political points to be won. What sort of families, it was asked, would do that to their children? The allegations were later revealed to be false, and the photographs apparently verifying the original allegations shown to depict a different occasion when both adults and children were in the water because their boat was sinking. It is not surprising in this political context that there has also been a failure to properly inform and educate the public as to the circumstances of people from refugee backgrounds.

### *On-arrival services*

Policy, planning and on-arrival services are strong points of Australia's resettlement program. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has accumulated significant experience and expertise in providing these services over time. Not everyone consulted was positive about on-arrival services. Some argued that the decentralisation of settlement services has resulted in reduced access. Decentralised services are more difficult to sustain within the constant restructuring of the service system and become too fragmented to be highly

effective. Another criticism was that on-arrival services were not sufficiently flexible. While on-arrival services are appropriate for the provision of generalist assistance for all humanitarian arrivals, they usually exclude people whose sponsor relationships have broken down. Such people can fall through the net and fail to receive support services, an outcome that has particularly worrying implications for the longer-term settlement of young people.

The Community Refugee Settlement Scheme was seen to be in need of reform. Informants highlighted the need for improved selection of voluntary groups and greater emphasis on their capacity to develop and maintain links with community organisations as a selection criterion. It was argued that an extensive and compulsory training program should be delivered to all new groups. Since the time of these consultations, a new program, Community Support for Refugees (CSR) has been established to work alongside the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. This program includes training for volunteers (see description earlier in this chapter).

On-arrival services are subject to a clear demarcation of responsibility between government departments, a feature that may contribute to their success. Post-settlement services, on the other hand, are by nature inter-sectoral and such demarcation may be counterproductive. The question of responsibility, within and between government departments, for the welfare of refugee young people beyond the initial settlement phase, was identified by key informants as a particularly sensitive area.

### *Ethno-specific and 'mainstream' services*

There are a number of more controversial issues in the debate about policies and programs, however, that have implications for the effective support of refugee young people. An ongoing source of tension is the question of whether it is better to develop ethno-specific services, or to encourage mainstream agencies to support a wide range of different ethnic communities. In an ideal world, mainstream services would provide appropriate services responsive to all who need them. But in reality, ethno-specific services may be needed to provide direct services to their constituents especially in the early stages of settlement, and then to provide information about mainstream services to their clients so that they may begin to use the broader community services system like other groups. Ethno-

specific services are in an excellent position to understand the needs of their own community. On the other hand, they are more likely to adopt a parental perspective on need. They may also be unstable and fragile in a volatile political environment. Ethno-specific workers are not necessarily trained or skilled in understanding issues associated with adolescence or working with young people.

Mainstream services can complement ethno-specific services by ensuring subsequent service provision in the longer-term. Mainstreaming, as a policy, is limited to the extent that it represents a reduction in choice and provides insufficient recognition of the importance of cross-cultural expertise. Directing additional support to mainstream services also runs the risk of lessening accountability – that monies otherwise earmarked specifically for refugees may contribute to mainstream programs that do not actually provide quality services to refugees. To ensure such organisations provide services to refugee young people, a condition of some of their funding could be a requirement to provide services to disadvantaged groups, with realistic targets and performance indicators for service delivery written into service agreements.

Realistically, a combination of ethno-specific services and mainstreaming is probably required. Ethno-specific services may be the first port of call for new arrivals, but mainstream services are perhaps best placed to follow up identified needs at a later stage.

Like ethno-specific services, some special-needs services are required alongside mainstream services. Youth services are at times inappropriately treated as specialist services. Although special-needs services risk contributing to the marginalisation of people with legitimate needs, tacking ‘special services’ funding onto core services does not, of itself, ensure that organisations are adequately prepared with appropriate resources, expertise and commitment to meet special needs.

### *Contracting out*

A second controversial issue is the contracting out of services, particularly given the perceived tendency for performance to be measured against inappropriate criteria. Services operate in a funding environment which is outcomes focused and geared to maximise cost-effectiveness, but many service providers believe that such a strict market philosophy has serious limitations when applied to universal service provision, or to high-need groups within the community. The benefits associated with the contracting out of services are

increased flexibility and enhanced capacity for developing holistic approaches. There is no inherent contradiction between access and equity objectives and cost-effectiveness. The major challenge for service providers arising from this situation is probably how they can best affect cultural change in management practices in order to engage constructively with the imperatives of contracting out.

The remainder of this chapter looks at the strengths and weakness of specific program or service areas.

### *Education and training opportunities*

Schools represent the one universal institution in the community services infrastructure. Refugee young people can be reached through schools, and schools are well placed to provide prevention and early intervention support services (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 1998). Several key informants suggested that up to 80% of the resources available to young refugees should be directed through schools, preferably through full-service schools capable of providing referral, information and a range of support services to their students. While this is an important policy suggestion with general value for all young people as well as young refugees, such services would tend not to reach the 18- to 25-year-olds who have left school (although school-based strategies do not necessarily prevent non-students from accessing services on school premises).

Several concerns were raised about education policy, programs and services including suggestions that:

- Interpreters are under-utilised in educational settings.
- A review of fair discipline policy in secondary schools is urgently required, especially in light of anecdotal evidence that young refugees are being expelled at a higher rate than their Anglo-Australian counterparts. (Terms of reference for such a review should include investigation into parental involvement in school and children’s education, the nature and extent of fear of authority among young refugees, and accountability requirements for implementation of discipline policies.)
- Inequitable treatment of asylum seekers is perpetuated within the education system.
- Young people aged 18–24 years are under-served, especially in Victoria where they are not counted (for funding purposes) if attending secondary school at Year 10 or below. The

purpose of this exclusion is to encourage older students to attend TAFE (for which fees are payable). When educational needs are first assessed, some 18- to 19-year-olds slip through a gap in service provision, needing the security and formality of a secondary school environment, perhaps being well educated in their home country but having insufficient English language skills to cope with the demands of Year 11. Difficulties in placing 18- and 19-year-olds in the Australian system suggest that those aged 18 or over need supplementary services to guarantee access to English language tuition and secondary education.

- Funding for the education of refugee young people has a short-term focus. More funding should be made available for extended and intensive provision of education support that includes but is not restricted to ESL training.

A major ongoing issue for educational policy is balancing age and skill level as the main determinants for where best to place young people in schools. Currently, age-appropriate placements are usually made for junior secondary school, whereas entry to senior secondary school is generally dependent on skill-based assessment. Age-appropriate placements, however, can result in limited pathways into employment and may compromise access to work over the longer-term. For example, in Victoria, at Year 10 level, students who are not achieving can be kept down as part of the screening process for Years 11 and 12. This can either function as a bottleneck in the system, when age-appropriate placements suddenly stop at Year 10 or, in the event that students are allowed to continue graduating, students may become discouraged and frustrated at their inability to cope, and drop out at a high rate. Alternative educational options at Year 10 level for those who are not coping with age-appropriate work are mostly short-term and externally funded. The open marketing of schools increases the problem because schools are more reliant than ever before on the pass rates of Year 11 and Year 12 students in order to attract students in the future.<sup>17</sup>

Another issue raised during consultations was that young refugees are generally not well placed to take advantage of new opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships. Recruitment for these types of positions often happens through family and community networks. Local history can play an important part in determining which applicant is ultimately successful and

young refugees are rarely part of these community networks. It was suggested that these factors need to be considered in selection processes.

### *Income support*

Three major concerns about income support policy were raised during the consultations:

- The treatment of asylum seekers and those issued temporary protection visas is unfair and undermines the potential for successful settlement in cases where affected individuals are allowed to remain in Australia (see discussion of eligibility criteria earlier in this chapter).
- The application of the two-year waiting period in the case of family members sponsored by recent humanitarian and refugee entrants under the Family Stream of the Migration Program results in inequitable and potentially undermines chances for successful settlement (see discussion of eligibility criteria earlier in this chapter).
- The potentially negative impact of Youth Allowance for young people with refugee experiences. There was a concern that some marginalised young people under the age of 18 who did not satisfy the Youth Allowance activity test would be left without income support. It was anticipated by some informants that young people with refugee experiences would be over-represented in this group. At the time this study was conducted, no quantitative evidence was available to either confirm or disconfirm this expectation. Under Youth Allowance, young people under 18 who have not completed Year 12 or equivalent are generally required to be in full-time study or training to qualify for the payment (DFaCS 2001, p.17). However, an exemption can be made from this requirement (see discussion of income support earlier in this chapter). Young people with low levels of proficiency in English could undertake an English as a Second Language (ESL) course, to satisfy the Youth Allowance activity test. It should also be noted that an exemption from the activity test may be given if the young person has special circumstances.

Youth Allowance brought with it the abolition of unemployment benefits for those aged 18 years and under, although exemptions may be granted to young people with limited English skills, providing they

### *Referral to torture and trauma services*

*A Bosnian young woman attending an inner urban school was acting out. She was referred to a school psychologist, and the psychologist did not identify specific factors contributing to the presenting problem. It later emerged that the young woman was a survivor of torture, and her behavioural difficulties were clearly related to these experiences. Despite this new information coming to light, the psychologist did not recognise the appropriateness of making a referral to a torture and trauma specialist service, believing that her health problems could be handled within the school.*

undertake English language training. Marginalised young people, who drop out of school before turning 18 and do not satisfy criteria to be classified as homeless, yet who are detached from family support, may be left without income support. There was a concern that young refugees may be over-represented in this group although no quantitative evidence is available to confirm this expectation.

### *Health services*

In the mental health sector, the network of torture and trauma services is advanced, and has been significantly improved over recent years. The main problem affecting service provision relevant to torture and trauma is that resources are insufficient to meet existing needs. The report *Mental Health for Multicultural Australia* (Australian Transcultural Mental Health Network 1993) highlighted the following problems:

- The work of torture and trauma services is largely ad hoc and points to the need for a national strategic approach.
- Contact between the various service providers is inadequate.
- There is no physical centre to enable workers from the relevant mental health disciplines to meet in order to develop coherent clinical, research and education programs; transmit skills; or access bibliographic and other resources, research advice and assistance.

In mainstream agencies, the lack of knowledge about mental health issues, especially torture and

trauma, is pronounced, and so referrals to torture and trauma services are infrequent.

At the same time, some informants were concerned about the over-diagnosis of mental health problems in young refugees, most notably in the case of post-traumatic stress disorder. Sometimes mental health labels are a convenient way of marginalising normal responses to events because of behaviour that is rarely found in the broader mainstream community.

The following key concerns were raised in relation to general health services for young refugees:

- Networking between health systems and other non-government organisations seems relatively underdeveloped.
- Delivery of health services is predominantly informed by a medical model of practice. This model is particularly limited with respect to working with young refugees, because it tends to underestimate the importance of establishing trust and rapport with young people who have suffered refugee-like experiences and, more broadly, overlooks the need to develop culturally sensitive ways to approach young people.
- Inadequate attention is given to establishing dental health services relevant to young refugees, although NSW Dental Services is currently drafting a Refugee Dental Care Policy (NSW Department of Health 1997) and have targeted humanitarian entrants as a special needs group in the delivery of public dental care.
- Culturally relevant drug and alcohol treatment services, especially detoxification units, are not available.

In summary, the understanding that underpins Australia's provision of services for people who have experienced torture and trauma is advanced by world standards. No major change in direction is required. The pressing issue is whether program resources are sufficient to provide effective support to meet refugee need. Drug and alcohol services were generally not regarded as culturally sensitive, whereas sexual health services and dental health services were not perceived as accessible.

### *Employment support services*

Securing employment is crucial for refugees to make a successful transition to independence. How well the new arrangements of Job Network, the Job Seeker Classification Instrument, corporatised public provision of employment support and competing private providers of employment support deal with the needs of young people with refugee experiences is still largely an unknown.

The Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET) program has been widely acknowledged as a program with great potential to assist young refugees. The potential of JPET is seen to arise from its commitment to holism and flexibility in program design. The program is not narrowly focused on predefined and short-term service 'outcomes', and ongoing support can be provided to service users over an extended period.

Concerns were raised about the following:

- Lack of appropriate training for Centrelink staff, such that at risk-refugee young people are not identified, inadequately assessed or not referred to appropriate employment service providers.
- Inadequate resources to assist refugee young people into employment.
- Inadequate information about career pathways and options.
- Structural barriers to employment, most notably bias and racism exhibited by potential employers and the devaluing of biliteracy and bicultural skills.
- Recognition of overseas qualifications remains slow and inefficient, despite frequent criticisms and almost as frequent attempts to upgrade the processes involved. The recognition of refugee qualifications is a very difficult and time-consuming matter. More attention could usefully be given to introducing interim measures that improve access to retraining

programs, explicitly acknowledging the stress caused by lack of documentation.

### *Justice and law*

Support services for young refugees in difficulty with the law are thin on the ground. Inadequate information about the extent and nature of the relationship between refugee young people and the juvenile justice system makes it difficult to argue for or plan effective support services. Official statistics about refugee youth and crime are complex because of different state laws, different definitions of youth, a very weak capacity to identify refugees among the offending population (except perhaps through crude measures like country of birth or surname), and differing law enforcement responses. The complexity of these issues is heightened by unreported or undetected crimes.

Cunneen (1995, p.119) notes that the central problem with official data is that it is 'limited to the end point of the system'. Data may provide some detail on incarcerated populations but do not extend to the reasons why individuals were incarcerated, or whether police and sentencing practices were strictly equitable. The assumption that the process from the point of detection and arrest through to incarceration treats all ethnic and cultural groups equally bears further investigation.

The need for cultural sensitivity and awareness applies as much to personnel in the criminal justice system as to other service providers. This is particularly important for police officers responsible for much of the front-line work. Community liaison divisions within police departments require relevant and up-to-date information about the needs and experiences of young refugees. Some states have implemented strategies to inform police departments about the needs of refugee young people, although these initiatives have been piecemeal. Anecdotes told by a number of the young people and informants consulted suggest there is still scope for significant improvement in police relations with young refugees and ethnic communities more generally. Apart from training, the recruitment of non Anglo-Australian police officers would be another important longer-term strategy toward achieving this goal.

Further concerns about the relationship of refugee young people to the law include:

- Failure to disseminate and target information about the law, legal procedures, rights and obligations to young people from refugee backgrounds.

- Inability of legal and correctional institutions to deal effectively with the specific issues facing young refugees, particularly because limited cross-cultural training is offered to staff in these institutions. Keys Young (1997) discussed a range of strategies to tackle this problem.

## Housing

Housing is another crucial element in the successful transition to independence. Without appropriate housing, the likelihood of family breakdown increases and the cultural support network around a young person is jeopardised. At the time the initial research for this study was carried out, newly arrived refugee entrants were generally allocated a flat by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs or accommodation in the community (under the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme). The term of On-Arrival Accommodation was from 13 weeks to a maximum of six months. The young people consulted in this project were mostly positive about these options. Previous studies have also found that refugees generally spoke favourably about On-Arrival Accommodation (Francis 1996).

*The first thing I remember about Australia was that the apartment was so nice. We heard many stories that the Immigration Department's accommodation would be like barracks, a dirty place. We were just hoping that it would not be that dirty, but it was really good, great to have a nice flat for the first three months* (Bosnian refugee, female, aged 22).

However, this accommodation support was only available to Convention refugees; Special Humanitarian Program entrants were expected to receive assistance from their proposers. The On-Arrival Accommodation program was phased out with the implementation of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy in 2001. Under the strategy, all offshore humanitarian entrants assessed as being in need of accommodation support are provided with housing on arrival and are given assistance to enable transition to appropriate longer-term accommodation as soon as possible. This assistance includes a package of basic household items. Under the strategy, a period of only four weeks is allotted to new arrivals in which to find longer-term accommodation, although this may be extended an additional four weeks where necessary. The impact of this change has yet to be assessed.

Three main concerns were raised about housing policy and services. First, there is a perception that the housing sector perpetuates an Anglo-centric approach to the issue of what constitutes appropriate housing services. Innovative models of housing service provision need to be developed. Options like ethno-specific housing, communal housing for extended families, different configurations of private and living space to suit the cultural preferences of residents have been given little attention, and more creative thinking on the part of program designers is desirable. What is considered 'over-crowding' by Western standards may be culturally acceptable or even preferred in some non-Western cultures. At the same time, when acculturating to their peer group at a faster rate than their parents or carers, young refugees can be torn between two cultures and resent the forced sharing of space. In other words, there may be different levels of cultural acceptability even within a single household.

Concerns were also expressed about the national Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP). These related to the lack of inter-cultural expertise in support for young refugees, the separation of management and support functions, and inflexibility in how case management is implemented. Few SAAP services have developed inter-cultural expertise to work with clients from ethnically diverse backgrounds and most of those that have, provide only long-term housing options. Emergency accommodation suitable for young refugees is rarely available. Given the extent of homelessness in the young refugee population, this is indicative of significant unmet need for emergency housing services. Ethno-specific targeting of services is discouraged by the SAAP administration. Only 3% of services specifically target people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; however, it is clear that where targeting occurs, people have better service access. Targeting is more common in Western Australia (4.4%) than in any other state, and Western Australia also has the highest proportion of people from non-English speaking backgrounds among service users (12% of the total). As states with large proportions of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, New South Wales and Victoria must be encouraged to ensure that services begin targeting these young people, as a matter of some urgency.

There is little or no training within SAAP to improve staff sensitivity to issues surrounding the experience of young refugees. Nonetheless, some communities have initiated their own strategies to promote access and equity in SAAP services (see Nguyen 1997). In Victoria,

separation of the management of SAAP crisis accommodation from transitional housing may disadvantage young refugee clients simply because what was formerly under one agency must now be negotiated between two. An obvious inefficiency is that the cost of employing interpreters has now increased. Finally, greater flexibility is required in determining appropriate caseloads for SAAP staff. It is important that workers feel able to negotiate a lower caseload when working with high-need service users such as young refugees.

A third concern was the mismatch between the housing stock available for private rental and the demand from refugee families. Refugee families are often large by Anglo-Australian standards. Some African families may have six, eight or even ten children but a family of this size is no longer common in mainstream Australia. Options for cost sharing, which those in financial hardship may wish to pursue, are generally not open to these larger families. In summary, there is a shortage of appropriate, cheap private rental. This market failure points to the necessity of government intervention. There is a case for improving community and public housing access for refugees, perhaps using a segmented waiting list approach for this group.

Antonios (1994) identified a further problem in relation to housing for refugees. She argues that refugees have a particular need for public housing that is inadequately provided for under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. By not requiring uniform access and equity provision from the states, the agreement effectively enables the 'disjointed and haphazard approach' within state housing authorities to continue (Antonios 1994, p.38). The absence of systematic collection of ethnicity data by state housing authorities makes it difficult to assess their capacity to meet the needs of refugees, but anecdotal evidence suggests priority for refugee and humanitarian settlers is often overlooked.

### *Language services*

Currently, some schools host English Language Centres for new arrivals. It is more common, however, for schools to run English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. ESL policy is distinct from language centre policy in most schools. ESL programs tend to offer longer-term assistance, up to four terms of intensive English language tuition for new settlers. Extensions of time are negotiable and argued on a case by case basis. This arrangement compares favourably to the Adult

Migrant English Program, which can offer only 510 hours in English language tuition to new arrivals. TAFE colleges often deliver Adult Migrant English Programs, but the exact nature of services offered varies considerably from institution to institution.

While language services have improved in recent years, some specific concerns were raised:

- Overall levels of funding for both ESL programs and English Language Centres are insufficient to service existing needs.
- ESL programs have image problems and suffer from low status. Shared resources, minimal autonomy and marginalised status are the hallmarks of ESL programs. In Queensland, for example, where mainstreaming is the norm, ESL programs in secondary schools are not allocated support staff. In Victoria, Schools of the Future are in a position to decide how to spend available resources and ESL programs may not be able to compete effectively with other higher status options, such as music or physical education. State departments of education could adopt a more interventionist approach to protect ESL programs, for example by encouraging schools to publish pass rates, and providing incentives to accept students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The maximum 510 hours of English language learning under the Adult Migrant English Program is insufficient for many young people to acquire the basic language skills needed to gain employment.
- Intensive language support is generally not provided prior to entry into secondary education or English Language Centres. Language difficulties experienced by young people can be compounded if not noticed and addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.
- There is continuing over-reliance on young people as family interpreters, and this is inappropriate in all but the most straightforward of dealings.
- The problem of multiple languages within families is not adequately addressed.
- Workers in mainstream organisations tend to receive very little training in the use of interpreters.

A notable strength of the Australian system relates to the structuring and regulation of the interpreter profession including an accreditation process for inter-

preters. In the United Kingdom, in contrast, there is no code of ethics for interpreters and no formal accreditation.

Rado and D'Cruz (1994) suggest that the focus of literacy tuition in Australia is undergoing a slow but steady cultural shift towards an increasing recognition of biliteracy as an appropriate goal. They argue 'If Australia wants to enter the international market, the greater the number of citizens who are biliterate, the greater the advantage to the individual and the nation' (1994, p.xiii).

## *Support for high-needs groups*

Certain groups of young people within the population of young refugees are likely, by dint of their pre-migration, migration and/or arrival experiences, to have more acute, wide-ranging or more urgent needs during their resettlement.

## *Unaccompanied humanitarian minors*

Unaccompanied refugee minors generally require intensive levels of support. Zulfacar (1984) has argued for a comprehensive, coordinated pattern of service provision for unaccompanied minors, expressing concern about their severely disadvantaged position relative to other young migrants.

There were a total of 218 young people in the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors Scheme at May 2001. (This Scheme is outlined in Chapter 2.) Just under half (48%) arrived in Australia without authorisation and were subsequently granted temporary protection visas. Despite the fact that some new support services have been established, Hartley and Anderson (1998) argue that these services have had 'limited success in providing ways for many of these young people to establish firm attachments to mainstream groups and institutions'. Key informants further argued that:

- It is inappropriate to link the Unsupported Humanitarian Minors Scheme with protective services, as happens in some states.
- The implications for refugee minors of the contracting out of child protection services in Victoria need to be investigated.
- Supervision for protective workers in some states is inadequate.

The scheme was relatively flexible and had a long, mostly successful history. Its key strength was that, on

arrival, assessments to determine the suitability of parent or guardian options could be conducted jointly by federal and state departments. This helped promote more coordinated approaches to service provision, particularly important where care arrangements are not working. Regardless of whether minors are actively targeted for resettlement under the offshore Humanitarian Program, those that do arrive will need additional assistance.

## *Young asylum seekers and refugees with temporary resident status*

Asylum seekers can easily be overlooked in a discussion of the impact of government policies, programs and services for refugees. Asylum seekers are people who claim protection under the UN *Convention on the Status of Refugees* while already in Australia. As noted, asylum seekers who arrive in Australia without the necessary documentation are deemed 'unauthorised arrivals' and are subject to mandatory detention until their claims are processed. Asylum seekers who arrived initially on valid visas and who remain in the community when making their claim for refugee status also have restricted access to services in Australia. Asylum seekers can generally access schooling and basic health care and may obtain income support from the Red Cross (under the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme) but they are not allocated a caseworker to assist them access available supports. Access to services is often determined on presentation of a bridging visa. However, a bridging visa takes effect only after the original visa has expired leaving some people without needed support in the meantime.

Particularly for young people who are kept in detention, the period when claims for protection are being processed is one of indefinite waiting and uncertainty. It comes at a stage in life when, aside from enjoying the supposedly 'carefree years of youth', young Australians are expected to take advantage of educational opportunities, to make themselves employable and generally to develop good living skills. Young asylum seekers are clearly not in a position to prepare for the future in this way. Further, the psychological impact of detention on young people already traumatised by past persecution and the hazardous journey to Australia, is likely to be considerable. Overall, the response of the Federal Government to these young people can be seen to undermine rather than increase their chances of long-term adjustment, whether they become residents of Australia or another country.

Once a claim for refugee status has been granted, a former asylum seeker's eligibility for services again ultimately depends on how they first arrived in Australia: with or without valid documentation and whether or not they are seen to have bypassed possible asylum en route to Australia. The entitlements of unauthorised refugee arrivals were outlined in Table 8.

Australia's response to asylum seekers has been challenged on the basis of non-conformity with the United Nation's *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Australia is a signatory to the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which sets down the international policy context for supporting young people. Australia's failure to adhere to the terms of this convention has been alleged on the grounds that:

- Young asylum seekers are detained for long periods. The detention of unauthorised arrivals is currently mandatory in Australia, and access to the judicial review of detention is restricted.<sup>18</sup>
- The conditions of detention are inadequate on several counts (HREOC 1998). Detainees have restricted access to services, including legal services.
- Young asylum seekers in the community are ineligible for English language tuition in secondary schools (in some states).
- The Australian legal system does not assess claims for refugee status from children (those under the age of 18). The validity of young people's refugee experiences is not explicitly recognised independent of other family members. Sometimes the young person is the persecuted member of the family, even when parents are not. This can happen where there is under-age conscription into the military.

Australia's response to unauthorised arrivals has been condemned by Amnesty International (Khan 2002), the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1998) and other human rights advocates, church leaders and community agencies. As early as 1995, Ludbrook (1995, p.109) concluded that Australia's treatment of selected young asylum seekers is 'harsh, culturally insensitive and in breach of international human rights conventions'. The number of critics has increased since then, following new border protection legislation, the establishment of offshore Immigration Reception and Processing Centres and 'safe haven' and temporary protection visas. In 2002, concern over the treatment of asylum seekers, particularly the policy of

mandatory detention, was of sufficient magnitude to provoke the first-ever visit from Amnesty International's Secretary General to draw attention to human rights violations within Australia (Khan 2002).

Examination of the predicament of young asylum seekers held in Immigration Reception and Processing Centres and those subject to the conditions of bridging and temporary protection visas was largely beyond the scope of this report. These are clearly areas that require attention.

## Summary

The de facto policy framework for supporting young refugees is based on the Access and Equity Strategy, the National Integrated Settlement Strategy, and particularly the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. The key issue is how well access and equity policies translate into adequate support to meet the needs of young refugees.

The principal shortcomings of policies and programs affecting young people with refugee experiences were identified as:

- the absence of generic policy specifically addressing the needs of young refugees;
- a general lack of coordination (on the ground) and integration (in policy and planning processes);
- inadequate resources, especially financial resources, to meet the needs of young refugees and, more specifically, to finance the additional collaboration necessary to achieve integrated service provision;
- unresolved issues of access and equity, especially regarding eligibility for services;
- a lack of awareness and cultural sensitivity regarding the diverse needs of refugees, both in the program context and in the wider society;
- inequities in the distribution of resources which can disadvantage newer communities, young people and/or areas attracting the greatest number of new arrivals; and
- an absence of successful protocols for consulting with young refugees and ensuring their input.

The key strengths of current policies and programs were identified as follows:

- the existence of a sophisticated array of programs, especially at the on-arrival stage;
- a commitment to incremental improvements to programs and policy processes by ongoing

evaluation and reform;

- an acceptance of individual case management as a foundation principle of program design; and
- in principle recognition of the importance of an holistic approach to service delivery.

Referring to mental health policies for people from culturally diverse backgrounds, Minas and his colleagues noted: 'the major problem [...] is not in the policies but in the widespread non-implementation of clearly stated policy objectives, and the lack of explicit strategies and designation of someone to be responsible for implementation of policy' (Minas et al. 1996, p.79). This observation appears to apply just as well to other areas.

Employment, education, housing and income are the policy areas most central to promoting young

refugees' transition to independence. These areas were seen to require more development in order to support young refugees as a specific-needs group. On-arrival and language training services were highly regarded, though with some points of criticism. Concerns again centered on the Anglo-centric design of many programs and services, a widespread lack of understanding of young refugees, lack of expertise in meeting their needs and inequities in the treatment of asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders.

The least developed program areas are those that potentially respond to the longer-term needs of refugee young people. This caused some informants to argue that the federal departments responsible for education, income and employment services should assume greater responsibility for addressing the post-settlement support needs of young refugees.

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- 1 See Amnesty International Australia 2001, *Factsheet 01, Question and Answer*, viewed 30 August 2002, <<http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/ref-fact01.html>>
  - 2 The number of offshore places allocated to Convention refugees (as opposed to places for Special Humanitarian Program applicants), has been fixed over the last few years at 4,000 places.
  - 3 The principles are those of access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.
  - 4 Many of the details included in this section come from DIMIA Fact Sheet 93, Sept 2001.
  - 5 A copy of RRAC's Refugee Youth Strategy Paper can be downloaded from DIMIA's web site at <http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/publications/index.htm>
  - 6 Much of the information included in this section can be found in DIMIA Fact Sheet 66 *Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy* (Oct 2001).
  - 7 See DIMIA Fact Sheet 67, Nov. 2001.
  - 8 Consideration of the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers held in Immigration Reception and Processing Centres has been largely beyond the scope of this report. Equity issues relating to the rights of asylum seekers who do not meet UN criteria for protection as refugees, but who might otherwise be seen as deserving support under broader humanitarian criteria, have also been beyond its purview. Both are important issues that require attention.
  - 9 In line with Australia's international obligations to refugees, TPV holders are able to apply for a subsequent protection visa which may be granted after 30 months if they demonstrate a need for Australia's ongoing protection.
  - 10 The entitlements of asylum seekers are addressed in greater detail later in this chapter
  - 11 Family payments for those with dependent children are not subject to the two-year waiting period. However, this payment provides help with the cost of raising children and is not intended to be sufficient to live on.
  - 12 The TPV also confers eligibility for Rent Assistance, Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Double Orphan Pension, Maternity Allowance and Maternity Immunisation Allowance (see DIMIA Fact Sheet 64, Nov. 2001). These payments are not intended to amount to a livable income and only apply to people in particular circumstances.
  - 13 See DIMIA Fact Sheet 62, Nov. 2001.
  - 14 Shortly after the introduction of the new system, community advocates and agencies raised concerns about its efficacy and the minister subsequently announced a further \$55m for Job Network to enable certain non-beneficiaries to gain employment support.
  - 15 The Welfare Rights Unit has documented case studies of some people with refugee experiences who entered Australia as family migrants, who were physically unable to attend a tribunal to put their case for income support because they were literally too weak through lack of food.
  - 16 As noted earlier, the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) developed by DIMIA recognises that 'rebuilding the lives of these people [refugees and humanitarian entrants] involves [provision of] extra support to enable them to become acquainted with the Australian environment and the services available so that they can fully participate in the Australian community' (DIMIA Fact Sheet 66, Oct 2001).
  - 17 It must also be pointed out that some refugee youth distinguish themselves among the highest academic achievers in Australian schools.
  - 18 In November 2001 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission announced an inquiry into the treatment of children in Immigration Reception and Processing Centres (*Age 28 Nov. 2001*). Following its five-day visit to the detention centre at Woomera (South Australia), the Commission confirmed 'that Australia's detention of the then 236 children in the camp was a breach of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. It said the children were being inadequately educated, and that health services and general living standards were poor' (Goddard & Liddell 2002).



This chapter aims to identify key elements of ‘good practice’ in addressing the support needs of young people with refugee experiences. It starts with a brief look at the concepts of good practice and quality assurance as they relate to human service contexts. Concrete examples of good practice in policy-making, program development and service delivery are highlighted in this chapter, including successful or innovative models developed overseas. While much can be learned from good practice wherever it is developed, the specific circumstances of young refugees and the community and government infrastructure that they can draw on for support differ considerably between countries and this often means direct comparisons are unhelpful. Nevertheless, in this chapter we make a first attempt to identify generic principles that underpin good practice in service design, delivery, evaluation and management, while recognising the necessarily context-dependent nature of implementation.

## *Quality and excellence in service organisations*

Originally the notion of quality assurance was developed in manufacturing but now has a much wider application. However, the adoption of a quality assurance perspective in the human services should not be undertaken uncritically. Jones and May (1992) note

several difficulties in applying quality control concepts to evaluation of human services. Most importantly, they point out that the notion of ‘enhanced service quality’ may itself be contested in a human services context. Quality is the concern of service providers who define it in terms of professionally derived standards, but it is also the concern of clients or consumers who may perceive quality quite differently. The consumer perspective is often neglected. Efforts to enhance service quality can consequently move in two, not necessarily parallel directions. One is the professional route that emphasises the importance of professional education and accreditation, peer review, improved practice theory and methods. The other emphasises the development of empathy and trust between organisation, worker and consumer, with more consumer participation and input. This is consistent with Sanderson’s dichotomy between the ‘technical’ dimension of quality assurance that refers to how well a service (or worker) conforms to its specifications, and the ‘subjective’ dimension of how well a service satisfies the requirements of its users (Sanderson 1992, p.17; and see Beilharz & Chapman 1994).

Most of the practitioners consulted in this study argued that ‘quality’ cannot be defined or conceded without taking into account young refugees’ perceptions of how successfully their needs have been met. This perspective presumes consultation with young refugees will feed into both the development and evaluation of policy and programs.

## *Elements of good practice work*

How can models and examples of 'good practice' be identified? The strategy adopted in this study was to consult widely with nominated 'good practitioners', that is, people seen by their peers as experienced and knowledgeable in working with young people from refugee backgrounds. Consultation was structured into two rounds of workshops in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. (The workshop and consultation processes are explained further in the research design section of Chapter 1 and in Appendix 8.) Insights from front-line workers were integrated with suggestions from key informants made during the course of the project, and information from the wider literature on quality in social service practice. In addition, the interviews with refugee young people yielded many useful insights from a client perspective. The combination of information sources enabled an understanding of the sociopolitical context in which services are delivered in the different states as well as an overview of the ideals of practice abstracted from practitioner experience in Australia and overseas.

### *Cultural and linguistic appropriateness*

It is not surprising that the key elements of good practice identified in discussion about meeting the needs of young refugees overlapped significantly with best practice associated with service responses to both young people in general and culturally diverse populations in general. Good practice in addressing the needs of refugee youth at an agency level implies a capacity to take into account the intersecting perspectives of youth and cultural diversity in the design and delivery of services.

Good practice is founded on inter-cultural sensitivity and an awareness of the nature and possible impact of the past experiences of young refugees. Staff in mainstream organisations were seen to need additional support, resources and training to raise their awareness of refugee-producing situations and relevant sociopolitical and cultural sensitivities, and to develop an understanding of the typical experiences of young refugees, both before and after migration. Empathy with young people presents a particular challenge for ethno-specific services since these often identify more easily with a parental perspective on the types of service required. Conversely, over-identification with young refugees was seen as a potential problem within some mainstream organisations.

Over-identification with the client is generally associated with high burnout rates, especially for volunteer workers. Workers with people from some cultural backgrounds may be deemed honorary family members in recognition of the support they are offering. Inclusion in family life in these instances is considered a 'natural' part of the process of establishing rapport and trust with the young people. However, once co-opted into the family, it may be difficult for workers to extricate themselves or to give advice that they know family members will have difficulty accepting.

Issues of cultural and linguistic appropriateness are relevant to all levels of an organisation's practice: the nature of services delivered, the process for delivering these services, the system and culture of management, and the nature of external organisational relationships. Culturally appropriate practice requires both an organisational and a personal commitment.

Training in respect and cultural sensitivity is important, but 'culture' ought not to be thought of as simply a fixed body of information to be learnt by staff in a discreet series of training sessions (Barker 1980; Minas et al. 1996; Hartley & Anderson 1998). Social and cultural values may change over time and, therefore, developing cultural sensitivity must be seen as an ongoing process of learning and professional education and re-education.

A broader perspective on cultural awareness recognises how one's own values, as well as the overt and covert values of institutions, impact on service users from different cultural backgrounds. Culturally sensitive service delivery involves:

- knowledge of other cultures: treating young people as sources of knowledge about their own culture and being willing to learn from them is important in this regard; and
- insight into the impact of one's own values, ideologies and cultural patterns on others (Barker 1980).

### *Appreciation of family context and involvement of family*

*It is unrealistic to try and solve refugee children's [or young people's] problems without raising the issue of the insecurity of the refugee parents, because dealing with the children alone would be [like] wallpapering a damp wall (Tsele 1987, p.13).*

The involvement of the family has commonly been identified as a key element of good practice with

young refugees and is important for ensuring culturally appropriate responses (Hartley & Anderson 1998; Aristotle 1997). At the same time, there is an inevitable tension between acknowledging the primary role of the family as caregivers and providers of support for a young person, and being aware that the young person is growing up and will almost certainly have views independent of his or her family. Cultural norms about independence, responsibility for decision-making, and the respective roles of children and parents must be carefully considered. A starting point is to ask questions (and find people who can assist in answering them). The questions might include:

- What is the usual mode of relationship between parents and children in this culture?
- How has it changed during the refugee experience?
- Did the young person have to increase his or her responsibility within the family prematurely during the flight to freedom?
- What does the young person want? How would he or she like to involve his or her family in making decisions and using services?

### *Individualised service delivery and a holistic approach to identifying need*

Two important principles for good practice in service delivery emerge strongly from the relevant literature

(see Hartley & Anderson 1998):

- individuals' problems should be examined in their social, cultural, economic and family contexts; and
- the focus must be on the whole person rather than on 'the problem'.

A high value was placed on individualised service delivery. This was seen to entail an expectation among service providers of diversity and difference within the population of refugee young people. The multiplicity and complexity of issues in young people's lives and the diversity in individuals' experiences and needs should be brought to the forefront when planning appropriate interventions. Case management was generally seen as an appropriate vehicle for maintaining a flexible person-centred approach to the delivery of services. The following example demonstrates the importance of responding flexibly to young people in accordance with their differing needs.

Forum participants emphasised that needs assessments should be thorough and regularly revised to enable responsiveness to the changing circumstances of clients and to give effect to a needs-based approach to determining eligibility.

It was emphasised that case management was not about one or two workers being 'everything and all' to a young person. Despite commitment, dedication and skill, workers move in and out of young people's lives. Case management must aim to avoid dependencies,

#### *The need for flexible and individualised response*

*Two young men from Eritrea arrived in Australia as stowaways on a ship. They were not related, and had no pre-existing friendship before their journey. They just happened to board the same boat. However, because they had arrived together and appeared to get along well, they were treated similarly, and the younger man who was under 18 was placed into the care of the older man (allegedly against the wishes of both young men). This arrangement broke down after a short time, and the men separated. To date, one of the young men has failed to recover from his experience. He has had mental health difficulties, general adjustment problems and is in trouble with the law. The other young man has settled relatively well and is succeeding in his school/work.*

and instead attempt to strengthen the young person's connection and relationships with family and the broader community.

Forum participants highlighted the importance of developing trust and rapport with young refugee clients. This was seen to require particular patience, allowing sufficient time for good relationships to develop without undue pressure for immediate results.

Another recurring theme was the need to adopt a non-labeling approach to working with each young person. This meant finding ways of identifying the strengths and capacities of the young person, including their existing networks of social support, and building on these to achieve positive results. Focus should be on developing self-esteem, and encouraging self-acceptance, self-confidence and assertiveness through empathetic, caring responses.

## *Integration and coordination*

Two further core features of good practice work with young refugees were identified. These were the need for:

- closely managed and supported referrals; and
- broader, more sophisticated and well-established networks between agencies and services.

It was widely recognised that young refugees are less likely to initiate access to alternative (referred) services than most other service users and that referral protocols need to reflect this. Referral protocols must be developed to facilitate the movement of young refugees from agency to agency, and this should be initiated and encouraged at a senior management level as well as implemented by front-line staff.

Forum participants also made it clear that the supports needed by young refugees cross traditional

### *Good practice early intervention and partnerships:*

#### *Early intervention program in refugee health*

*The Early Intervention Program was piloted by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) in 1996 and is currently being implemented on a national scale as part of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.*

*The pilot program was a joint venture of DIMIA, VFST, Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and five Migrant Resource Centres in the western, northern and south-eastern regions of Melbourne. The pilot program provided health assessments to residents in on-arrival accommodation (OAA). The health assessment provided by VFST staff determined the level of need for medical services and referrals were made to GPs, dentists, pathologists, radiologists, other specialists and hospitals. By introducing newly arrived refugees to these services and ensuring that they receive sensitive and effective care, their ability to access the Australian health system with independence and confidence is enhanced. Torture and trauma issues are often raised during the assessments. OAA staff address issues that can be appropriately handled in the short-term. Issues requiring longer-term counselling are referred on to the Foundation's generalist team.*

*Source: VFST Annual Report 1995–96*

## Good practice housing:

### Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB)

*The Springvale Youth Housing Service auspiced by the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and based at Nobel Park Youth Research Centre is an example of good practice in providing housing services to young people, many of whom are refugees. The features of this service are as follows:*

*The target group is young people aged 15 to 25 years from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are six workers; four are multilingual. Each worker has a maximum caseload of 11 young people (over six months), which was expected to rise to 12 later in 1998. Cases are reviewed every three months. The support needs of service users are often very high and complex.*

*The workers supervise 10 houses containing a total of 20 residents, plus six additional young people housed in one-bedroom units that are managed by the local council. A further 40 or so young people in the community (with other families) also receive support from the workers. Some live outside the region, but may return daily for support. As at June 1998, only four service users were not refugees.*

*The 10 available houses have two to three bedrooms. Properties are usually designated male or female only. Properties are available for medium or long-term housing. Those under 18 years are eligible to stay for up to 18 months, whereas those over 18 are eligible to stay 12 months.*

*SCAAB's policy ensures that interpreters are used as required. Workers do not allow themselves to be regarded as interpreters when supporting service users to access other services. Rather, they maintain a co-worker status with other (mainstream) services.*

*Service access is offered with flexibility: informal outreaching occurs (three nights per week) and formal appointments are also offered. The Springvale Outreach Service, co-located at the centre, is conducted jointly with the local council (City of Greater Dandenong). The outreach service involves a bus on two nights and a foot patrol on the third night. The service is staffed by drug and alcohol workers, a nurse and a lawyer. Workers at the outreach service are often multilingual. A needle exchange is also offered.*

*Exits from the housing service are made to permanent, long-term housing. Exits are a slow process because follow-ups are conducted over at least three months. Problems occur because very little secure, low-cost housing is available to young people.*

*Funding for the housing service is provided by the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program, through a joint Commonwealth/State agreement.*

### Good practice mentoring:

#### UK Children's Panel

*Up to 300 young people seek asylum in the United Kingdom each year. Most of these young people have been invisible to the mainstream community services, to immigration officials and borough services. The British Refugee Council was concerned about this fact and initiated a project to guarantee individual support for each of these young people.*

*The UK Children's Panel was developed in response to the increasing number of minors entering the United Kingdom seeking asylum. Legislation was passed by government to ensure that each unaccompanied child had an advisor, and a panel of trained advisors for unaccompanied refugee children who enter the UK was established. A panel member is assigned on an individual basis to support each child aged under 18 who enters the country without their parents or lawful caregivers and applies for asylum. Advisors are carefully matched to the young people. The advisor acts as a friend and advocate, helps the young person to understand the asylum process, links them into appropriate social services and ensures the provision of sound legal advice. A program coordinator oversees the program and ensures that the relationship continues being positive.*

sector and service boundaries, and are sufficiently complex that inter-organisational relationships and protocols with a diverse range of agencies are essential for good service provision. For example, a housing service networked with other housing services and some generalist support services may be adequate to the needs of most clients. However, when working with a young refugee, this same service may need to forge and utilise connections with recreation services, dental health services, torture and trauma services, ethno-specific organisations, religious groups and other agencies not normally encountered in the daily work of mainstream housing service providers. This is consistent with Hartley and Anderson's (1998) conclusion that an integrated network of services and strong linkages between complementary services are key features of good practice. Hartley and Anderson also identify multiple entry points to the service system as prerequisites to effective service delivery.

### *'Whole of organisation' commitment*

Work with young refugees requires flexibility, cultural knowledge and commitment. Front-line staff must, therefore, be sufficiently skilled to fulfil their responsibilities to this group of young people. A 'whole of organisation' commitment to people with refugee-like experiences is equally necessary. This commitment must be evident in every facet of organisational functioning, and be well integrated into the organisation's operational culture.

Doyle and Rahi (1991) have documented organisational approaches to the multicultural realities facing social service organisations. They argue the 'melting pot or assimilationist' approach is increasingly outdated though this approach has been dominant during the 20th century. The 'ethno-specific service approach' and the 'add-on multicultural approach' devolve responsibility for meeting the needs of young refugees respectively to the refugee communities themselves or to the government (in that extra funds are requested before real and systemic change is undertaken). The 'integrated multicultural' approach,

## *Good practice inclusion and consultation with young people:*

### *Y-select*

*The South-East Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) is the umbrella organisation for approximately 125 ethnic Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) throughout the USA. One of SEARAC's major program areas is leadership development. SEARAC aims to foster intergenerational dialogue and improve the status of young leaders within the larger framework of Asian community organising. In 1995, SEARAC sought to develop the leadership ability of young people. Y-Select was designed to increase the skills of South-East Asian young people so that they could respond to needs in their communities and breathe new life into MAAs and, simultaneously, to establish a mechanism for narrowing the intergenerational gap that threatens the longevity of newly established communities.*

*Fourteen young South-East Asians attended leadership training with seven Executive Directors of MAAs. The young people then attended national non-profit agencies for one week's work experience. Following this, the 14 returned to their local MAA and began a 12-month internship, during which time they were expected to plan and implement a youth project. Interns were visited regularly, and offered both technical and personalised support. Participants reconvened to share their experiences and consolidate their training. Both interns and mentors participated in evaluations and assessments of the project and a report prepared by the young interns was publicised.*

the fourth and most appropriate model, 'requires total organisational change through a comprehensive process of dismantling visible and invisible barriers in order to achieve the full participation of all minority groups within the community' (Doyle & Rahi 1991, p.8). The advice that emerged from the good practice forums was broadly consistent with this fourth model.

### *Early intervention and long-term support*

When young people with refugee experiences first arrive in Australia, particularly if they arrive without close family, their needs are complex, multifaceted and pressing. The sooner these needs can be addressed, the less long-term disadvantage is likely to result; the logic of early intervention is particularly apt with respect to developing effective service responses to refugee young

people. Language, education and health needs are all likely to be compounded unless addressed rapidly.

Many forum participants stressed the potential role of schools in early intervention because of their capacity to identify and reach at-risk young people. Some participants suggested that the bulk of resources available to young refugees should be directed through schools, preferably through full-service schools, capable of providing referral, information and a range of support services to their students.

Timely and appropriate provision of information is critical. Past experiences often make refugee young people distrustful of government officials and other public authority figures. This makes initial contact particularly important. The window of opportunity for sensitive response to requests for assistance is small. Minimal waiting periods were consequently seen as highly desirable.

At the same time as the importance of early intervention was emphasised, forum participants highlighted the need for ‘long-term goals, long-term planning, long-term interventions’. The depth and range of support needs prevalent in the young refugee population means that a long-term perspective should be adopted. This relates both to the activities of individual services and agencies, and to ‘settlement’ policy as a whole. Good practice here requires cross-portfolio commitment within and across the different levels of government.

### Consultation and community support

Consultation with refugee young people as part of the planning process for individual agencies and for broader policy development was identified as a foundation principle of good practice. Consultation should include the involvement of service users in decision-making and, where appropriate, issues relating to the management of the service.

Forum participants identified substantive consultation with relevant ethnic communities and the integration of services into the local community as important aspects of good practice. Again, working with young people in the context of their family is an integral part of this.

There is also a clear need for awareness-raising

within the wider community about the needs and experiences of young refugees. As highlighted in the discussion of multiculturalism and racism in Chapter 4, there is much work to be done in this regard and the gap between ‘ideal’ policies and ‘real’ behaviour must be a focus for policy development.

### Research orientation

One suggestion that emerged from the forums was the particular need for evidence-based policy development. Because of the complexity of issues surrounding the experiences and needs of refugees and the challenges of developing effective responses, it is important to recognise the value of research, policy and direct service work and the capacity of each to assist and inform the other.

The following practice issues require additional exploration:

- the additional importance of addressing the recreational needs of refugee young people;
- the potential of mentoring;
- the provision of outreach; and
- the use of the arts, especially in creative alternatives to verbal communication. The Western understanding of information provision is limited and culturally bound. Other ways of sharing information include storytelling.

**Table 9: Summary of good practice for working with young refugees**

<i>Philosophical assumptions</i>	<i>Organisational issues</i>	<i>Process practices</i>
Cultural awareness and knowledge	Agency level access and equity policies	Consultation with refugee communities and refugee young people
Culturally appropriate practices	Long-term commitment and goals	Advocacy of refugee rights and entitlements
Knowledge about young people	Integration or coordination with services in the community relevant to the needs of young refugees	Culturally appropriate personal professional relationships with young people from refugee backgrounds
Trust and rapport	Case management undertaken in ways appropriate for refugee young people	Reliability and consistency in the delivery of support
Flexibility	On-going reflexive intercultural training program for staff	A cooperative team approach among staff
Expectation of diversity	Strategic interventions	
Community development with both the professional communities of service providers and the refugee communities	Committed and skilled staff	
Early intervention	Research-oriented approach to practice because of the complexity of issues	
Family and community involvement managed with cultural sensitivity		
Identification of need		
Focus on resilience for practice		

### Good practice employment, education and training

*In 1994, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (formerly the Ethnic Youth Issues Network) in Victoria conducted an employment, education and training pilot project for young refugees, which was the precursor for obtaining JPET funding. The pilot project established two positions in English Language Centres to coordinate services to young refugees, advocate on behalf of the target group and provide counselling and referrals for refugee young people. The project represented 'one of the links needed in the chain of support for refugee young people' (MacKenzie 1995) in that the project facilitated and monitored the transition of refugee young people from specialist support services to mainstream services.*

*What makes this project an example of good practice is:*

- a legitimate gap in the service system was identified (and documented), and a careful response was planned and implemented on a pilot basis;*
- the support workers were strategically located;*
- support workers were culturally sensitive and specialised in understanding the complex needs of the target group (needs-focused);*
- the focus was on early intervention and case management; and*
- capacity for community development work was in-built.*

Lessons about the importance of non-Anglo-centric communication also derive from validation therapy. These alternative methods are not widely acknowledged or used.

## Summary

Good practice work with young refugees rests on several core tenets. First, total organisational commitment is required. This can be understood in terms of Doyle and Rahi's (1991) 'integrated multicultural approach' to organisational change. Second, good practice work with young refugees relies on sound cultural understanding of both refugees' issues and young people's issues. Third, good practice involves focusing on individuals in their socioeconomic, cultural and family contexts, and understanding their

problems as part of this broader context.

In addition to these core tenets, good practice work with young refugees requires:

- a holistic approach to identifying and responding to need;
- closely supported and managed referrals as part of an integrated service system;
- flexible and individualised service delivery;
- active maintenance of cultural appropriateness;
- the involvement of family members and the development of broad community networks; and
- commitment by front-line staff to developing their cultural knowledge and skill in the supportive context of a 'whole of organisation' commitment to meeting the needs of refugee young people.

### Good practice mainstreaming

*Organisational arrangements must be facilitated to ensure that issues faced by young refugees are not marginalised, but incorporated effectively into the mainstream. Two states with the largest numbers of young refugees have adopted different approaches to encouraging advocacy of refugee young people and fostering inter-agency coordination. In Victoria, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (formerly the Ethnic Youth Issues Network), was auspiced by and co-located with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVIC). The historical inter-dependency of the two agencies has been a constructive and mutually beneficial arrangement which has assisted a high priority for ethnic youth issues in the advocacy community and the policy processes. Although the CMYI is now independent, close working relations continue. In New South Wales, following a similar path, the Youth Action and Policy Association has established a steering committee for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a standing committee of the association. In this way, issues faced by these young people can be raised, explored at length and addressed by those with the relevant expertise within the context of broader organisational support and commitment.*

### Good practice family involvement, prevention, raising awareness and understanding

*In Toronto, the East Metro Youth Service targets young people aged 12 to 18 years. The agency has a high level of commitment to providing services to migrant young people. The service established a family interaction program, in which families are matched with another family from another cultural group to share an important social or cultural event, such as Greek Easter and Chinese New Year. The children of each family who attend junior high school, report to the school about what they have experienced and learnt from attending the event. They also write a school project about the activity. At the end of each year, the families involved are brought together to evaluate their experiences and share some traditional Canadian hospitality.*

## Good practice program design and development:

### Job placement and employment training

The Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET) program for homeless and at-risk young people is widely regarded as a highly successful support program within the employment, education and training sector. Indeed, JPET explicitly targets young refugees, who may not necessarily be homeless, as a disadvantaged group under the guidelines of the program. JPET is the only support program within the sector to acknowledge that the nature of the refugee experience implies high support needs in terms of these young people's chances of finding employment.

A notable feature of JPET is its recognition of the quality of the staff needed in the case management role. Staff have a strong commitment to make an 'extra effort to get outcomes' for their young clients (Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Taskforce, 2001). Given that refugee needs tend to be articulated by community spokespeople representing a parental perspective of young people's needs, JPET has an in-built capacity to provide an avenue for young refugees to express their own needs. The guidelines for JPET mandate workers to advocate on behalf of young refugees.

### Good practice policy development

An example of good practice policy development is the New South Wales Government's Strategic Directions for Refugee Health Care. This policy document represents a first attempt at formulating services specifically for refugees, rather than for immigrants or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in general. The policy was developed on the basis of consultation and was linked to other key policies such as NSW Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 and the NSW Government's Vision for Health. It adopted a broad definition of refugees, inclusive of those with 'refugee-like experiences' (for example, those who may have entered Australia to be reunited with refugee family members). The policy has an early intervention focus, and the health needs of specific refugee groups are discussed. The issues faced by unaccompanied and detached minors are distinguished from issues faced by other refugee adolescents.



# Agenda for change



This final chapter highlights some of the key findings of the research and presents strategies to enable youth service providers, schools, government and non-government welfare and income support providers to strengthen their capacity to meet the needs of refugee young people and assist their transition to independence.

## *Towards a national policy*

Young refugees are not a homogeneous group. Cultural difference, gender, age at arrival and the nature of pre- and post-migration experiences will all have a bearing on a young person's capacity to adjust to a new life and a new culture. At the same time, the experience of fleeing a country, being unable to return and then living with uncertainty about the safety of loved ones left behind engenders a state of stress and fearfulness not experienced by other young Australians.

Previous research has focused on either young people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds with an acknowledgment that some are refugees, or on refugees in general, regardless of age. Lack of explicit focus would be understandable if there were very few young refugees in Australia, but this is not the case. The number of young people with refugee experiences living in Australia (some 16,000 to 20,000 in total) is about the same as the number of homeless young people. This report argues that the number of young refugees, in conjunction with their broad

commonality of experience, is sufficient reason for this group to receive policy attention in their own right. An integrated or more holistic youth policy is required, covering all areas of the traditional 'menu' of needs.

Considerable progress has been made over the years in the support for refugee resettlement in Australia. However, the underpinning assumption with respect to support for young refugees has been that young people's needs are met within the family group and by supporting the family. This assumption should not go unchallenged, particularly where settlement is viewed as more than just a short-term period. The same rationale for having youth policy for young people generally can be applied to young refugees. It is a basic tenet of youth policy in Australia that young people have specific needs notwithstanding the level of support they receive from their families. It is further recognised that young people from diverse cultural backgrounds may need additional support and specialist services to ensure that their needs are adequately met.

Anecdotal evidence from people experienced in working with young refugees, and concerns arising from an analysis of young refugees' complex and multiple needs, suggest there are unaddressed problems in meeting the needs of this group. It is proposed here that a major reason for this is that young refugees are not explicitly targeted in policy. Nevertheless, Australia has some well-developed policies that affect young refugees indirectly. These include a range of youth

policies, access and equity strategies, the National Integrated Settlement Strategy and Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. The lack of identification of young refugees as a specific high-need or disadvantaged group in the aims, objectives and strategies of the relevant policy documents, however, represents a policy blind spot with serious implications for practice. A national policy for the support of young refugees is needed in order to achieve a cross-portfolio perspective. A national policy would also provide a framework for ensuring that the needs of young refugees are better addressed by more deliberate use of existing human and financial resources to support this group.

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### *Recommendation 1:*

*That a national young refugee support policy be developed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with other stakeholder state and federal departments.*

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## *Rationale for resource allocation*

Successful implementation of a national policy is dependent on several factors. Good policies are not likely to be effective unless the 'right' people are targeted and there are adequate resources attached to programs.

The significant number of young refugees in Australia is a compelling reason for committing more resources to their support. Besides the obvious humanitarian reasons for doing this, it also makes sound economic sense. While the support needs of young refugees are particularly pressing when they first arrive in Australia, with adequate and timely support, the contribution these young people can make to the country in the longer term is likely to be considerable. Refugees are people who have overcome many hurdles just to be in Australia, they are generally extremely committed to their new country, and they bring with them a unique array of cultural and linguistic skills and understanding. The biliteracy and bicultural skills of many young migrants represent an important, but underutilised national resource (Sherington 1993). It is increasingly being recognised that, where nurtured,

these skills can greatly enhance Australia's economic competitiveness. Rado and D'Cruz (1994, p.xiii) argue, 'If Australia wants to enter the international market, the greater the number of citizens who are biliterate, the greater the advantage to the individual and the nation'. To the extent that economic strength is a prerequisite to achieving broader social and humanitarian goals, it is reasonable that such considerations should be reflected in Australia's immigration policy as a whole.

Without adequate support, however, the opportunities young refugees have for longer-term independence and full participation in Australian society may be seriously curtailed. The high risk of homelessness among refugee young people revealed by this project is indicative of a broad failure of policy. Significant numbers of refugee young people are clearly falling through the social safety net; their lack of stable accommodation suggests a concurrent lack of the social connectedness essential for growth and independence. The social and economic costs of this policy failure are rarely considered but again it is useful to draw a parallel between government and community response to homeless young people. (For example, see Pinkney and Ewing 1997 for an analysis of the economic costs and benefits of an early intervention service response to homeless youth.)

Beyond adequate resources and appropriate response, to be effective, policies must be 'owned' by those who will implement them, the commitment to implementing them must be continually encouraged and reinforced, and adequate coordination across the relevant stakeholders must be developed. These three additional major challenges for translating policy into action – eliciting and requiring commitments from those responsible for implementation, increasing coordination of stakeholders and consultation with policy stakeholders – are addressed next.

## *Access and equity*

As part of its Access and Equity Strategy, the Federal Government has developed a *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* that should (in theory) guarantee adequate services for all, regardless of age and ethnicity. The charter is a statement that expresses Australia's commitment to multiculturalism and to overcoming possible barriers to getting access to government support that might arise from cultural and linguistic difference. It is clear from the findings of this study that access and equity are central issues for policy

focused on the needs of young refugees. From the limited evidence available, it appears that young refugees have low levels of awareness of social services and lower rates of participation in services relative to their need. Key informants continually raised concerns about access and equity for young refugees.

A particular challenge for mainstream organisations is to understand the common experience of young refugees, their settlement processes and the sociopolitical and cultural sensitivities of refugee service users. This does not imply a uniform approach towards refugee young people. A high value must be placed on individualised service delivery, premised on an expectation of diversity and difference within the population of refugee young people.

For ethno-specific services, on the other hand, the common challenge is to avoid assuming a parental perspective on the types of service required which will undermine the cultural appropriateness of the agency for younger clients. This does not imply exclusion of the young person's family. Instead it recognises and responds to an inevitable tension between acknowledging the primary role of a family as caregivers and providers of support for a young person, and being aware that the young person is growing up and will almost certainly have views independent of his or her family. Cultural norms about independence, responsibility for decision-making and the respective roles of children and parents must be carefully considered.

There are six components of accessibility according to Minas et al. (1996). These are:

- visible accessibility, which requires potential users to be aware of the existence of the service;
- physical accessibility, which must take into account the geographical location of the service and the availability of public transport;
- procedural accessibility, which includes concerns about referral and registration processes;
- economic accessibility, which is about the affordability of a service;
- psychological accessibility, which must consider the beliefs and expectations of potential service users; and
- cultural accessibility, which is service provision that takes account of the preferred language, values and behavioural norms of refugee service users.

To ensure access and equity, all of these issues should be considered. It is not the exclusive responsi-

bility of government to ensure access and equity; responsibility is shared with service providers in the community and private sectors. Insufficient attention has been given to how this commitment can be carried through in practice. Agreed standards for determining the adequacy of access and equity policies need to be developed. As an initial suggestion, an access and equity policy should include:

- a stated commitment to access and equity;
- strategies to guarantee or increase access and equity;
- specifically nominated individuals deemed responsible for the implementation of these strategies;
- appropriate timelines; and
- appropriate and measurable performance indicators.

Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that social service agencies follow through and are held accountable for the implementation of their access and equity policies. This might occur in a number of ways including adoption of the following measures:

- Access and equity outcomes could be built into service agreements ('x'% of service users must be of non-Anglo-Australian background consistent with the demographic profile of the community being served) so that access and equity principles are translated into practice.
- Funding bodies might from time to time commission access and equity evaluations of funded agencies. Publication and wide circulation of the findings from such evaluations would serve to convey the seriousness with which access and equity objectives are regarded and would bring community pressure to bear on those agencies that have not met their objectives.
- Consumers and ethnic organisations could be involved in the planning and management of community agencies, as a means of informal accountability to the community, which, it is hoped, would over time increase the capacity of agencies to respond sensitively and appropriately to the needs of their ethnic constituents.
- A children's and youth ombudsman or commissioner could be appointed. This position would establish independent mechanisms for airing and resolving grievances, for monitoring adherence to access and equity policies and for providing advice and guidelines to non-

government and community-based organisations. The ombudsman/commissioner might also report to government on emerging issues and policy implementation.

Further research into the viability and relative merits of these options might usefully be carried out, with the experience of individual states providing a good basis for further development.

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### *Recommendation 2:*

*That the allocation of government funding to social service agencies be conditional upon appropriate access and equity policies at the agency level, and be linked where appropriate to access and equity outcomes established under government guidelines and incorporated in service agreements.*

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## *Integrated settlement services*

The National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS) and Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) explicitly encourage the different tiers of government and the community sector to work together in the interests of people with refugee experiences. These are positive strategies with a great deal of potential but their effectiveness is constrained by limited resources. Young refugees are not adequately targeted within either the NISS or IHSS. Poor coordination and inadequate targeting are significant factors making it difficult to translate potentially progressive policy ideas into effective practice.

At the agency level, good service provision for refugee young people demands interagency relationships and protocols with a wider range of organisations than might be expected in mainstream community services. For example, a housing service networked with other housing services and some generalist support services may be adequate to the needs of most clients. However, when working with a young refugee, this same service may need to forge and utilise connections with recreation services, dental health services, torture and trauma services, ethno-specific organisations, religious groups and other agencies not normally encountered in the daily work of mainstream housing service providers.

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### *Recommendation 3:*

*That the Federal Government develop a comprehensive youth strategy for young refugees as an integral part of the National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS) and the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS).*

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## *Consultation with young refugees*

Direct consultation with young refugees is inadequate, and policy formulation and program development appear to be the poorer for it. There is a need for mechanisms to enable ongoing consultation with these young people. This might be facilitated by a non-government peak organisation. In 1994, the Australian Youth Foundation and the Australian Multicultural Foundation looked into the feasibility of a national youth peak structure for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Their study recommended that the functions of such a body could be integrated into the work of existing youth peak organisations. Consultation should be a foundation principle of a national policy for young refugees.

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### *Recommendation 4:*

*That the Federal Government ensure ongoing consultation with young refugees and the service providers working with them about the issues and support services that affect young refugees. Consideration should be given to resources needed to support the mechanisms for this consultation to take place.*

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## *Monitoring performance*

Data collection on young refugees' usage of services is underdeveloped. Researchers are often forced to guess whether or not young people are likely to have had refugee experiences on the basis of their country of birth. The potential for error is considerable. Improvements to data collection procedures would enable more rigorous assessments of whether access and equity considerations had been met. It is not

always feasible or appropriate for information on a migrant's entry or protection visa classification to be recorded. However, there are some possible exceptions to this. Given the relationship between visa category and access to income support, it is desirable that Centrelink and agencies dispensing emergency financial assistance record this information.

The problem of developing indicators of refugee experience falls within the larger project of developing a standardised approach to collecting data on the ethnic, cultural and linguistic background of clients in order to monitor the potential disadvantage (or in some instances, advantage) arising from these factors. In 1999 the Australian Bureau of Statistics responded to the widely recognised need for a nationally consistent framework for the collection and dissemination of data on ethnicity by developing *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*. These standards were endorsed by the Council of Ministers of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in April 1999. The aim was to develop a standard set of variables to measure cultural and language diversity that could be used in all administrative and service provision settings. Details of these standards are provided in Chapter 3. The initial project was directed primarily towards developing cultural and language indicators to replace the term 'non-English speaking background' (NESB). NESB was seen to be an inadequate indicator of possible socioeconomic disadvantage arising from cultural and ethnic diversity and, at the same time, a term that had evolved negative connotations, being unable to express the positive aspects of cultural diversity.

Ensuring the implementation of data collection strategies at the agency level is likely to be a recurring problem. Anecdotal evidence suggests there are ongoing problems in the adoption and implementation of the new ABS standards, particularly, but not exclusively, in the smaller agencies. In June 2001 the Commonwealth Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs published a guide to assist government departments and agencies to implement the standards. The guide includes a checklist for implementation and urges departments and agencies to develop a system for monitoring the implementation process.<sup>1</sup>

The systematic implementation of the ABS Standards is a pressing issue on which other policy research and development depends.

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#### *Recommendation 5:*

*That the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics develop a process to monitor the national implementation of the ABS Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity in both the government and non-government sectors.*

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### *Describing and meeting needs*

Within the constraints of tracking and collecting information about young refugees, this study has documented the range and depth of needs of this group of young people. The concept of need itself is somewhat problematic and is not easily applied to refugees without a full consideration of the underpinning cultural assumptions (see Chapter 4). The approach advocated in this report is for the adoption of a comparative definition of need, which acknowledges the relative disadvantage of young refugees, but which is tempered by appreciation of the capacities and resilience that young refugees generally bring to their situation.

It is clear that young refugees have complex and multifaceted needs upon arrival in Australia that can be compounded by their lack of familiarity with the Australian welfare system and by poor English language skills. Young refugees commonly experience a fractured adolescence and childhood (associated with the refugee experience), and their development may be 'frozen' as they work through complex issues of personal and ethnic identity. These young people may have difficulty in evolving a stable adult identity (Hartley & Anderson 1998).

The enormity of the challenge facing young refugees translates into a complexity of support needs that may seem almost impossible to meet. The findings of this study show that young refugees are more likely to experience significant periods of residential mobility, their risk of homelessness is six to 10 times greater than that of other young people in Australia, and at least some groups of refugee young people are also more likely to be in custody than other groups of young people. However, where a longer-term perspective is adopted, this negative outlook is not warranted. Young refugees, like young people generally, tend to be resilient and adaptive. They are proven survivors and

in most cases demonstrate an overwhelming and unambiguous commitment to Australia and to making the best of their lives in a new home.

An exclusive focus on the needs of refugees, without taking into account their capacities and determination, tends to generate an overly pessimistic discourse which underestimates the potential for a well-planned service response to assist young refugees make a successful transition to independence in Australia.

The issues are similar to those expressed in the policy debate over responding to 'marginal' and 'at-risk' young people. There is a tension between recognising and responding to risk with the consequent need to target limited resources to those most in need and, at the same time, avoiding the possible negative impacts of labeling, including the perpetuation of entrenched dependencies on government services. This discord is substantially resolved once it is realised that the notion of risk is an analytic category useful for making sense of the dimensions of a problem, while resilience emphasises the positive resources that individuals draw on to take charge when changing their lives. Recognition of resilience should fundamentally inform practice. Agencies supporting young refugees need to find ways to enable refugee young people to actively contribute to society, feel good about doing this and reach their individual potential. However, the resources needed for success should be measured in terms of the multiplicity and complexity of the needs of this group of young people, otherwise the ultimate effectiveness of support will be undermined. Young people with refugee experiences should therefore be seen as a 'high risk' group, meriting priority attention and specific allocation of resources in many areas of social policy, much in the same way as homeless young people have received such attention in recent years.

The complexity of needs signals the importance of a longer-term perspective on 'settlement' services and support than is currently the case. The review of government support undertaken for this study suggests that the least developed program areas are those that potentially respond to the longer-term needs of refugees. This is not a problem any department of immigration can solve by itself. The federal departments responsible for education, income and employment services will have to assume greater responsibility for explicitly addressing the needs of young refugees within their programs.

The explicit identification of young people with refugee experiences as a special needs group within the program areas of relevant departments is one way of enabling a longer-term perspective on strategies for assisting successful settlement.

An effective national policy for young refugees should focus not only on an initial period of settlement but beyond to their future lives as new residents and citizens of Australia. The importance of adopting a longer-term perspective on 'settlement' raises the issue of how to define the target population of young refugee *settlers*. Currently many young people with refugee experiences living in Australia are not considered by government to be prospective 'settlers'. This is true in the case of temporary protection visa holders who, by definition, are allowed to remain in Australia for a limited time; it is not intended that people under the terms and conditions of these visas settle and make Australia their home. Most mainstream government services, including income support, are only available to migrants with permanent residency status.

We argue that young people with refugee experiences who are resident in Australia on a temporary basis and/or whose claims for refugee status and protection are still being processed (asylum seekers), should be included in a national young refugee support policy even though their 'final' destination may be a country other than Australia (see chapters 2 and 5). Both temporary protection visa holders and asylum seekers are resident in Australia for an uncertain period of time. Even young people who remain ineligible for permanent protection visas and hence permanent residency status may remain in Australia for longer than three years since temporary protection visas may be renewed. For people in their teens and early twenties, even relatively short periods without adequate support can seriously undermine long-term life chances and independence (whether in Australia or elsewhere). On humanitarian grounds and on the grounds of enhancing the effectiveness of policy designed to enable early and effective settlement, all young people with refugee experiences living in Australia and seeking Australia's protection should be treated 'as if' they were going to remain in the country indefinitely. This would entail having access to education, income, employment and other mainstream supports from the beginning of their stay.

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### *Recommendation 6:*

*That broad youth policy in the federal and state jurisdictions explicitly address the special needs of young people with refugee experiences along with other special needs groups where appropriate.*

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## *Eligibility criteria*

Underpinning the discussion so far, as well as all of the above recommendations, is a key principle: that human needs should be addressed within the community service infrastructure. At present, eligibility for a range of mainstream and migrant-specific supports and services is determined on the basis of visa classification and residency status. The 'hierarchy of benefits' set in place by current distinctions in the visa classification system results in serious inequities in the treatment of young refugees. First, people with similar claims for refugee status, or more broadly, for humanitarian protection, are treated differently according to the means by which they entered the country. Second, young people with similar refugee experiences and similar settlement support needs entered, or were allowed to stay in, Australia on visas that confer very different entitlements to government assistance.

Young refugees living in Australia under temporary protection visas (TPV) were identified as a particularly disadvantaged group. These young people came to Australia without valid documentation and were subject to mandatory detention while their claims for protection were being assessed. Despite being recognised as refugees under the criteria of the United Nations Refugee Convention, TPV holders have very restricted entitlements compared to other refugees. The entitlements conferred by the TPV are intentionally restricted in order to serve as a deterrent to possible future unauthorised arrivals and the syndicates of people smugglers who arrange their passage to Australia. Under the conditions of their visas, these young refugees are allowed to live and work in Australia for an initial period of three years yet they are not entitled to most Centrelink services and income support payments, nor to English language tuition. As temporary residents, they are not eligible to sponsor their close family members to Australia and are prevented from entering and exiting the country freely.

A second group of young people with refugee experiences seen to be treated inequitably under current

arrangements are those who were sponsored to Australia by refugee settlers under the Family Stream of the Migration Program. A survey conducted as part of this project indicates that these young people are likely to have refugee experiences. The large majority (71%) of Family Stream migrants interviewed originated from countries undergoing considerable violence at the time of their departure, just under one-third reported that their family was subject to persecution, and 22% stated that they had been afraid for their lives. However, regardless of the strength of their own claims to special assistance on humanitarian grounds, family reunion entrants have limited access to the resettlement services available to entrants under the Humanitarian Program and are not exempted from the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period for income support. The logic of this distinction is based on an expectation of financial and accommodation support from the Australian sponsors of Family Stream entrants. This expectation is neither realistic nor fair when applied to sponsors who themselves have come from refugee backgrounds. Consultation with service providers and young refugees highlighted the hardship caused to young people entering as 'family reunion' migrants when sponsorship arrangements break down.

The likely impact of these restrictions to eligibility is to undermine the chances of some particularly high-risk groups of migrants for successful settlement. Current arrangements are not only inequitable, but from the point of view of strategic settlement policy, they are also likely to be ineffective. The approach to determining eligibility stands in marked contrast to federal youth policy generally, where emphasis is increasingly placed on ensuring young people at risk of not making a successful transition to independence are specifically targeted for preventative assistance. The overlap in the populations of young refugees and homeless young people heightens this contradiction.

In light of these considerations, a review of eligibility criteria for government assistance is urgently required together with an investigation into the design and implementation of a needs-based approach to determining eligibility. Chapter 5 articulates the case for ensuring that young people with refugee experiences are eligible for government assistance on the basis of need, rather than visa category. Development of a needs-based approach will require difficult negotiation between sometimes conflicting government goals – those relating to population policy, border protection policy, humanitarian settlement policy and youth policy.

Adoption of a needs-based approach is likely to

mean increased expenditure in the short-term, even if the level of humanitarian entry remains constant. This cost must be weighed against the long-term humanitarian, cultural and economic gains from adequate support of a group of young people who may live their whole life in Australia.

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#### *Recommendation 7:*

*That the eligibility criteria for government assistance to young people with refugee experiences be reviewed with the objective of investigating how a needs-based approach might best be implemented.*

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## *Racism and intolerance*

Meeting the needs of young refugees will always be difficult when they encounter racial intolerance on a daily basis. Despite an official policy of multiculturalism, there remain forms of institutional discrimination that can be difficult to change. The personal practices of individuals in contact with young refugees often involve cultural insensitivity and sometimes overt hostility or racism. Apart from the broader policies on multiculturalism in Australia, there needs to be continuing community education to encourage the community to respond positively and generously to disadvantaged groups including refugees and asylum seekers.

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#### *Recommendation 8:*

*That the Federal Government undertake continuing community education to encourage people in the broader community to respond positively and generously to refugees and asylum seekers, particularly by highlighting young refugees as future young Australians.*

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## *Good practice strategies*

'Good practice' responses to the needs of young refugees require at a minimum an understanding of common refugee experiences and of young people's issues in general. Beyond this, good practice also requires a 'whole of organisation' commitment: integration across management, in all organisational processes, in personal practice and in external relationships.

The key elements of good practice in service delivery for young refugees clients are:

- cultural and linguistic appropriateness;
- integration of services including both broader interagency networks and stronger networks, for example for facilitating referrals;
- recognition of diversity and individualised and flexible service delivery;
- a holistic approach to addressing the needs of each young person; and
- attention to family context and, wherever possible, family involvement.

An unintentional lack of cultural sensitivity is evident in service institutions and among service providers. It is important that mainstream professionals have ample opportunity to become sensitised to cross-cultural methods of working. In-service training and training of mainstream service providers by ethno-specific service providers can assist in the sensitisation of mainstream professionals. Opportunities to learn through experience also need to be provided.

Cross-cultural awareness training is often a low-priority, low-status activity in Australia. It is rarely mandatory, often poorly publicised, and the results of programs (for replication purposes) are poorly disseminated. As a result, cross-cultural awareness programs tend to preach to the converted. The following strategies could be adopted:

- In the interests of sensitising professionals to linguistic diversity, all community service students, as part of their study, could compulsorily practise working with interpreters or undertake placements in which they can learn and expand on cross-cultural skills gained in classroom situations.
- Formal reciprocal training programs involving ethno-specific services/agencies and mainstream agencies could be encouraged. This could involve ethno-specific and mainstream/specialist service providers exchanging their training services. Government could subsidise agencies involved for one hour of salary for every hour of training exchanged. An innovation like this would have the secondary benefits of generating increased employment opportunities for migrants and of fostering improved networks and integrated services.
- Another option might be to support trained 'culture brokers'. The role of a culture broker would be to bridge the gap between the culture

of the service user and the culture of the professional caregivers or the agency culture. Many people employed in the social service sector already undertake culture brokerage type work, especially those employed by Migrant Resource Centres; however, it is usually unacknowledged or undervalued. In refining this idea, a key issue would be how best to ensure the culture brokerage services can be flexible enough to benefit new refugee groups emerging in each region or community.

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**Recommendation 9:**

*That a proportion of government funds for organisations working largely with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds be tied to cross-cultural awareness staff training and organisational development.*

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## Further research

Some important issues have been beyond the scope of this project. One area about which little is known relates to the needs of those born in Australia to parents from refugee backgrounds. Members of this group are paradoxically referred to as ‘second generation refugees’. It is possible that this group of young people share many of the needs of young refugees, in the same way as children born to survivors of the holocaust have been found to have significant needs not dissimilar to their parents. On the other hand, Australian-born young people from refugee families grow up in the new community and are likely to adapt more easily and associate more closely with their peers in school.

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**Recommendation 10:**

*That further research be conducted to ascertain similarities and differences between the needs of refugees and their children.*

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Over the last few years, several hundred young asylum seekers fleeing persecution in their own countries and eventually arriving in Australia without documentation have been forced to experience often lengthy periods in Australian Immigration Reception

and Processing Centres while their claims (or their parents’ claims) for refugee status are being considered. Since October 1999, asylum seekers found to be refugees and allowed to stay in Australia but who arrived without authorisation have only had access to temporary protection visas (TPVs). This class of visa gives reduced access to mainstream settlement and income support services, does not allow holders to sponsor close members of their families to join them in Australia, and prohibits free exit and re-entry. The combination of traumatic migration experiences, mandatory detention and subsequent reduced access to basic services suggests young asylum seekers who came to Australia without authorisation are likely to be a particularly disadvantaged group. There is little documented evidence regarding the impact of this new policy and legislative context on young people’s capacity to achieve long-term independence within Australia. Regardless of the debate on the success or otherwise of the TPV as a disincentive for people smuggling and unauthorised arrival, there is a critical need for research into the settlement and post-settlement experiences of this group of young refugees.

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**Recommendation 11:**

*That further research be undertaken to investigate the needs and access to support services of refugee young people currently living in the Australian community who arrived without authorisation and/or who hold bridging or temporary protection visas.*

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## Conclusion

This report has described the needs of young refugees and has reviewed policies, services and programs whose coverage, at least in theory, extends to this group of young people. Areas for potential improvement have been highlighted and some examples of good practice have been suggested. Australia’s approach to resettlement has grown in sophistication over the past decade and it stands as a positive achievement in policy and program terms. Nevertheless, the findings of this project strongly indicate that the current policy and program framework is not able to adequately address the needs of young people with refugee experiences. The main limitations of Australia’s response to young refugees are:

- the short-range conception of the settlement process;
- an increasingly inequitable approach to determining eligibility for government services; and
- a failure in policy and program design to sufficiently identify the particular barriers and needs that arise from refugee experiences.

The case made in this report is that refugee young people require an explicit focus within youth policy and settlement policy.

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1 *The Guide: Implementing the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity* can be downloaded from the DIMIA website at: <http://www.immi.gov.au/>.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1:

### *Project reference group members*

Paris Aristotle	Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture
Carol Croce	Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition
Jo Elvins	(retired) Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Susan Ferguson	Youth Affairs Network of Queensland
Tony Fortey	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Nigel Hearn	Commonwealth Youth Bureau
Paul Hoban	Brunswick English Language Centre
Gail Hood	Milpera Intensive English Centre
Barbara Leggott	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Margaret Piper	Refugee Council of Australia
David MacKenzie	Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development, RMIT
Susan Ward	Ethnic Youth Issues Network
Debbie Wong	Youth Action Policy Association

## Appendix 2:

### *Secondary sources of data*

#### *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA)*

The LSIA is the most comprehensive survey of immigrants ever to be undertaken in Australia. It seeks to provide government and other agencies with reliable data to monitor and improve immigration and settlement policies, programs and services. There have been two LSIA surveys:

- LSIA 1 surveyed migrants who arrived in Australia between September 1993 and August 1995; and
- LSIA 2 surveyed migrants who arrived in Australia between September 1999 and August 2000.

The sampling unit for the LSIA is the Primary Applicant. The Primary Applicant is the person upon whom the approval to immigrate was based. The main concern of the LSIA is to collect detailed information about the Primary Applicant. However, information is also collected for everyone in the household and for the migrating unit as a whole. A household comprises all persons living at the same address as the Primary Applicant. A migrating unit comprises all persons in the household who migrated to Australia as part of the same migration application as the Primary Applicant.

Although information is collected for everyone in the household, the amount of detailed information collected for an individual will vary. For example, if the spouse is a migrating unit spouse, that is, part of the same migrating unit as the Primary Applicant, detailed information on the spouse will be collected from the spouse. Otherwise, basic information on the spouse will be collected from the Primary Applicant. In

most cases, only basic demographic information is collected for other people in the household.

Only a small percentage of Primary Applicants are aged between 12 and 25 years. The large majority of young people from refugee backgrounds who entered or were allowed to stay in Australia did so as part of the application of another family member and consequently information on this group of refugees is limited in comparison. Nevertheless the LSIA remains an important data source. (See DIMIA web site for a description of the LSIA.)

#### *Translating and Interpreting Service Information System (TISIS)*

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs provides a Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) to assist the settlement of migrants. Information about the use of this service is collected by an information system known as TISIS. The system was designed to improve management and financial processing and reporting. Thus, the focus of TISIS is on the nature of the agency that has booked the service, whether the service is being used on a fee-paying or on a fee-free basis, the type of service provided, and the user charge relating to the service. No information is available about the recipient of services, beyond language and gender. Consequently, it is impossible to determine whether young people from refugee backgrounds are accessing TIS at an equitable rate, and/or the type of services that young people are accessing. At the time the secondary analysis of data was undertaken for this study, the limitations of TISIS were being recognised, and a more developed version

of the TISIS was being developed to overcome some of these limitations.

### *Literacy survey of Victorian English Language Centres*

A survey of 10 secondary and six primary English Language Centres (ELCs) was undertaken in June 1995 by the Brunswick English Language Centre. The purpose of the survey was to document the literacy needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, as this information was not being collected through other processes or by other agencies. The schools themselves initiated the project and proposed that the cohort of young people with low literacy levels be re-surveyed at various intervals, thus developing longitudinal information about the educational and employment outcomes for young people with low literacy levels. Follow-up of the cohort did not occur as planned, and although the current project was willing to undertake some follow-up work, the cohort could not be located. Neither, then, have the preliminary results of the original survey been published or otherwise released.

In total, 1,288 primary and secondary students participated in the original survey, ranging in age from 8 to 20 years. A total of 404 (31%) students were identified as experiencing literacy problems: 117 (9%) were not literate in any language and 283 (22%) were semi-literate. No significant gender differences in literacy levels were noted. No significant differences between the literacy rates of primary and secondary students were observed.

Some 63% (810) of the sample were secondary school students aged mostly from 12 to 20 years. Notably, 22 (3%) secondary school students participating in the survey had no previous schooling, and a further 200 (25%) experienced a disruption of three or more years to their schooling. Young people from refugee backgrounds were commonly identified among those with the most severe disruptions to their schooling.

The term 'not literate' was defined as being unable to read or write in any language. The term 'semi-literate' was applied to students whose rate of literacy development was two years or more below their age level usually due to one or more of the following factors:

- no previous schooling;
- disruption to schooling of two or more years (primary) or three or more years (secondary);

- previous schooling in language other than first language; and/or
- suspected learning disability.

Data were based on information gained from parents and guardians at enrolment or parent-teacher interviews; formal and informal assessment in the first language; and observations of impaired learning progress made by teachers, ethnic teacher aides and school support staff such as psychologists, social workers or speech therapists.

### *Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)*

The possible use of data from the National Census of Population and Housing was investigated. However, the most recent data available were from the 1996 Census and new groups of refugees had come to Australia since that time. Also, although the Census data provides a number of questions for identifying ethnicity, refugee status is not indicated. Use of Census data to enumerate the population of people who entered as refugees or under family reunion must be estimated on the basis of an assumption that all Afghanis or Eritreans identified in the ABS data were refugees in the broadest sense at entry. In most cases this may not be an unreasonable assumption but for some groups the assumption does not hold. For other purposes, knowing the size of an ethnic group may be perfectly satisfactory.

### *National Settlement Database (SDB)*

The National Settlement Database is the main source of population figures for refugee communities in Australia. Settlement Database records are created from data collected during the processing of a migration application. Supplementary information is added from Settlement Information Forms, the AMEP Reporting and Management System and other DIMIA data collections (see DIMIA web site for details). The SDB includes data from onshore processed settlers, including those under the Humanitarian Program. However, information on temporary protection visa holders is not included on the SDB because, like other temporary residents, these people are not considered 'settlers'. The SDB is a key source of information on young refugee and humanitarian settlers (those with permanent residency).

## Appendix 3:

### Young refugees and the definition of homelessness

The definition of homelessness is contentious as it directly determines who will and will not be included in the homeless population. The landmark report, *Our Homeless Children*, by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1989), which was largely responsible for attracting much public attention to youth homelessness and ensuring considerable resources were diverted to providing support for young homeless people, described homelessness as:

*a lifestyle which includes insecurity and transiency of shelter. It is not confined to a total lack of shelter. For many children and young people it signifies a state of detachment from family and vulnerability to dangers, including exploitation and abuse broadly defined, from which the family normally protects a child. However, the Inquiry also found that there is a growing number of children who are 'homeless' because the whole family cannot obtain adequate shelter (Burdekin 1989, p.7).*

This statement implies a definition of homelessness, but also contains other features of the homeless experience. Thus, it cannot easily be operationalised for research purposes.

The most widely quoted definition of homelessness was proposed by the National Coalition for Housing, soon after the release of Burdekin's report *Our Homeless Children*. This definition is:

*an absence of secure, adequate and satisfactory shelter as perceived by the young person and for homelessness to exist, at least one of the following conditions, or any combination of conditions should be operative:*

- *an absence of shelter*
- *the threat of loss of shelter*

- *very high mobility between places of abode*
- *existing accommodation considered inadequate by the resident for such reasons as overcrowding, the physical state of the residence, lack of security of occupancy, or lack of emotional support and stability in the place of residence*
- *unreasonable restrictions in terms of alternative forms of accommodation (MacKenzie 1997, p.1).*

The above definition may be useful for program planning purposes as it includes both objective and subjective conditions. As such, the definition acknowledges some of the realities of homelessness as an experiential process, but again, this definition cannot be operationalised for research purposes.

A definition has recently been proposed for research and policy purposes that draws attention to the socially constructed nature of homelessness as a social problem (see MacKenzie & Chamberlain 1992, 1998; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs 1995; MacKenzie 1997). MacKenzie and Chamberlain's model of homelessness specifies different degrees of homelessness. The definitions used by the above named authors can be amalgamated as follows:

First-degree homelessness describes young people with no accommodation at all who may live on the streets or squats, whereas second-degree homelessness refers to those with only temporary accommodation with friends or relatives and those who move around between various forms of shelter. Third-degree homelessness describes those in long-term supported accommodation for homeless people such as youth housing programs. It may also include those constrained to live permanently in single rooms in

private boarding houses. Those experiencing incipient homelessness (and at risk of other forms of homelessness) are those who are housed but are without the conditions of home, for example without security, safety or in unhygienic, overcrowded or otherwise inadequate circumstances.

Even this definition requires amendment for the purposes of this research. There are two reasons why it is difficult to apply this definition to young people with refugee experiences. First, if all young people in temporary accommodation are deemed to be experiencing (second-degree) homelessness, the risk is that young refugees will be falsely over-represented in second-degree homelessness. New arrivals realistically require some time to find a relatively permanent accommodation option and must necessarily have temporary accommodation on arrival.

If, however, a young person (or family) remains in temporary accommodation after a significant period of time has elapsed then perhaps they should be considered homeless. In defining 'a significant period of time', it is worth reviewing the time period over which the settlement of refugees is assumed to occur, as this can provide guidance as to an appropriate time period for finding secure accommodation. Settlement accommodation services are provided on arrival and through the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme for six months. However, it can be argued that the government policy implicitly regards settlement as a process that requires about two years (and settlement services are thereafter required on a needs basis) (Cox 1996).

So, at what point can it be argued that permanent accommodation should have been secured? Taking the midway point between the six-month limit on the provision of accommodation services and the expectation that settlement will occur over a two-year period, it can be argued that young refugees should only be regarded as experiencing second-degree homelessness if they remain in temporary accommodation 15 months after their arrival. This proposal, although it may be sound, gives insufficient attention to the compounding effect that homelessness can have on young people's refugee experiences. If young people become (independently) homeless after such time that their family/caregivers have secured more permanent accommodation, then such persons may be considered to be even more disadvantaged than other homeless young people because they have experienced homelessness 'twice over'.

The second reason why it is difficult to apply the above definition of homelessness to young refugees

pertains to the cultural experience of home. This is particularly important for understanding incipient homelessness. For example, Anglo-Australian traditions value and prioritise private space and, conversely, demonstrate a low tolerance for sharing, relative to some other cultures. Young people with refugee experiences, however, may be caught in a cultural bind. The following scenario illustrates this point: Family A is comfortable (indeed prefers) to accommodate all eight of the family members in a three-bedroom unit, and the young person (who has become more acculturated to the Western tradition of wanting personal space) rejects this. The question then arises: is the fact that the young person perceives this 'overcrowding' to constitute homelessness when the family does not, grounds for regarding that young person as homeless? Even if the answer is yes (as I believe it to be), how can this be operationalised for research purposes? In short, it cannot. However, raising these issues and documenting the cultural bias of mainstream definitions of such social constructs as homelessness may usefully spur more researchers into thought and action to ensure that the cultural bias inherent in such definitions is acknowledged and removed.

In conclusion, the following definition of homelessness for the purposes of this research into the needs of young people with refugee experiences is proposed:

- Young people with no accommodation at all who may live on the streets or in squats are homeless in the first degree.
- Young people who have temporary accommodation with friends or relatives and those who move around between various forms of shelter *while their families have permanent accommodation* are homeless in the second degree (a). New arrivals who have been in temporary accommodation of any form continuously for more than 15 months (with or without their families) are homeless in the second degree (b).
- Young people who are in long-term supported accommodation for homeless people such as youth housing programs or who are constrained to live permanently in single rooms in private boarding houses are homeless in the third degree.

Young people who are housed but are without the conditions of home, for example without security, safety or in unhygienic, overcrowded or otherwise inadequate circumstances are at risk of homelessness.

## Appendix 4:

# Young refugees interview schedule

### *Preamble*

Hello. My name is Louise Coventry and I am a researcher from RMIT University. The project I am working on is about the needs of young people who have refugee-like experiences. This project is important because it will mean that the needs of young refugees can be better understood, and better programs and policies can be set up to meet these needs. I am very interested in your experiences in Australia, and I would like to ask you some questions about this. The questions will take about one hour. I would also like to record what you say, so I can remember it for later on. No one else will know what you have said. And when I type up your words, no one will know that they came from you.

Is this OK? Do you have any questions?

### *Demographics*

Circle: Gender ..... M/F

First of all, how old are you?

Where do you come from? Where did your parents come from?

What is your religion?

### *About the refugee experience*

Could you tell me how you came to leave your home?

How long was it after you left your home before you arrived in Australia?

### *On-arrival services*

What was the first thing that happened after you arrived in Australia? Then what?

How did that make you feel?

### *Housing*

Where did you live when you first arrived here?

What about now?

Who do you live with?

Are they employed? Full time or part time?

### *Income*

Do you get money here?

Do you know where it comes from?

### *Language and information*

What is it like being at the language school?

Do you have all the information you need to live in Australia?

Who helps you when you need to know something about Australia?

What do you know most about Australia?

### *Identity*

Where do you feel you belong? Why?

*Probe if several identities ... Which is most important?*

Why?

### *Juvenile justice*

Have you met any police officers in Australia?  
What happened?

### *Transition to independence*

What do you plan to do when you finish at the language school? Then what?  
How long do you want to stay at school?  
What sort of job would you like to get?  
Will you move out of home? When?  
What will your role be in your family?  
How long do you want to stay in Australia?

### *General*

Overall, what is it like living here?  
What is the best thing about living in Australia?  
What is the worst thing about living in Australia?  
What advice would you give to someone else from your country who was going to come to Australia?  
Is there anything else you would like to say about living in Australia?

### *Evaluation*

Is there anything you would like to say about your experience of participating in this interview?

### *Concluding comments*

What you have told me today has been very useful and I thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me. Your ideas will be used to contribute to a report about the needs of young refugees, and I will do my best to ensure that what you have told me today can be used to help make life better for all young people with refugee experiences in Australia. Thanks again.

## Appendix 5:

### Family interview schedule

I will start with some introductory questions about your background.

#### *Section 1: Demographic information*

1. In which country were you born? Answer for each person.
2. When did you arrive in Australia? Answer for each person.
3. In your home country, how many people did you live with? or Who was part of your family?
4. What are their ages? Are they male or female? Answer for each person.
5. Which one of these are you?
6. Are all of the people in your family (who you lived with in your home country) in Australia now?  
YES/NO
7. Which ones are not?
8. Who do you live with in Australia?

*I would like to ask some questions now about how young people grow up in your country.*

#### *Section 2: Cultural understanding of independence*

9. In your country, when do you expect a young person to leave home and set up a separate household?

10. In your country, what does a young person have to do to be ready to leave home and set up a separate household?

11. Is independence different from leaving home?  
YES / NO

12. What does independence mean in your country?  
For male children? For female children?

*If there is no concept of independence in the home country, please note this and explain.*

13. At what age would a young person generally be seen as independent?

*Now I would like to ask some questions about how your children might grow up in Australia.*

#### *Section 3: Independence in Australia*

14. What hopes do you have for your children now that you are in Australia?

Prompts to use if needed:

What sort of job do you hope they might get?

How far do you hope they would go at school?

What sort of relationship would they have?

What would their role in family be?

Are there differences in your hopes and expectations for male children as compared to female children?

15. Now that you are in Australia, at what age do you think your children will leave home?

16. Now that you are in Australia, how old do you think they will be when they become independent?

#### *Section 4: Capacity to provide support*

17. What is your role in caring for your children?

18. How long will your role last? What will happen then?

19. What do you think you might be able to do to help your children fulfil the hopes that you talked about before?

20. What support might come from other sources (e.g. your community, the government, schools, etc.) to help your children reach these goals?

21. Is there something else you would like to say about these things we have been talking about?

#### *Section 5: Evaluation*

22. Is there anything you would like to say about your experience of participating in this interview?

What you have told me today has been very useful and I thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me. Your ideas will be used to contribute to a report about the needs of young refugees, and the researchers will do their absolute best to ensure that what you have told me today can be used to help make life better for all young people with refugee experiences in Australia. Thanks again.

## Appendix 6:

### *Key informants*

Paris Aristotle

Terri Bednall

Aileen Burgess

John Byrne

David Cox

Carol Croce

Jo Elvins

Susan Ferguson

Bill Frost

Carmel Guerra

Paul Hoban

Peter Hosking

Merle Mitchell

Scott Phillips

Margaret Piper

Susan Ward

Debbie Wong

## Appendix 7:

### Good practice forums

#### *Round 1/Workshop 1: Employment, education and training*

Question: Imagine that Service A provides the best conceivable employment, education and training service to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The features of Service A include all the generic indicators of good practice described in the Introduction.

Next door to Service A is Service B. Service B provides the same high quality, best practice service as Service A, but its target group is young refugees. What is the difference between Service A and Service B?

#### *Round 1/Workshop 2: Housing*

Question: Imagine that Service A provides the best conceivable housing service to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The features of Service A include all the generic indicators of good practice described in the Introduction.

Next door to Service A is Service B. Service B provides the same high quality, best practice service as Service A, but its target group is young refugees. What is the difference between Service A and Service B?

#### *Round 1/Workshop 3: Racism, identity and culture*

Question: Imagine that Service A provides the best conceivable racism, identity and culture service to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The features of Service A include all the generic indicators of good practice described in the Introduction.

Next door to Service A is Service B. Service B provides the same high quality, best practice service as Service A, but its target group is young refugees.

What is the difference between Service A and Service B?

#### *Round 1/Workshop 4: Health*

Question: Imagine that Service A provides the best conceivable health service to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The features of Service A include all the generic indicators of good practice described in the Introduction.

Next door to Service A is Service B. Service B provides the same high quality, best practice service as Service A, but its target group is young refugees. What is the difference between Service A and Service B?

#### *Round 2/Workshop 1: Reception services*

Question: What distinguishes holistic, best practice services delivered to young refugees upon arrival in Australia from holistic, best practice settlement and post-settlement services delivered to refugee young people?

#### *Round 2/Workshop 2: Settlement services*

Question: What distinguishes holistic, best practice settlement services delivered to young refugees from holistic, best practice on-arrival and post-settlement services delivered to refugee young people?

#### *Round 2/Workshop 3: Post-settlement services*

Question: What distinguishes holistic, best practice post-settlement services delivered to young refugees from holistic, best practice reception and settlement services delivered to refugee young people?

## Appendix 8:

# Questionnaire for survey of young refugees

### Young Refugee Survey

This survey asks some questions which will help us understand better what young refugees need. This information may help improve the support to young people such as you. Do not write your name on this form. No one will know what your answers are. Some answers may seem personal, but please answer honestly. RMIT University appreciates your co-operation with this survey.

STUDENT VISA NUMBER:

1. Under which immigration category did you enter Australia? (Tick one only)

- Refugee ..... 1   
Special Humanitarian Program ..... 2   
Special Assistance Category ..... 3   
Family Reunion ..... 4   
Not sure ..... 5

2. Gender:

- Female ..... 1   
Male ..... 2

3. Age:  years

4. Country of Birth: (Please write your country of birth)

.....

5. Who do you live with in Australia?  
(Tick as many as appropriate)

- Mother..... 1   
Father..... 2   
Step-parent..... 3   
Other Relative(s)..... 4   
Non-Relative(s)..... 5   
Parent's De-facto partner..... 6

Foster parents..... 7

Sister(s) and/or Brother(s)..... 8

Any Other..... 9

.....

6. Who did you live with in your country of birth? (Tick as many as appropriate)

Mother..... 1

Father..... 2

Step-parent..... 3

Other relative(s)..... 4

Non relative(s)..... 5

Parent's De-facto partner..... 6

Foster parents..... 7

Sister(s) and/or Brother(s)..... 8

Any Other..... 9

.....

7. Where do you live now? (Tick one only)

If with family members:

In own house/flat paying rent ..... 1

In on-arrival accommodation [OAA] or  
Community Refugee Settlement place .. 2

With sponsor ..... 3

If by yourself:

- House/flat [alone or sharing]..... 4
- Supported accom [SAAP]..... 5
- No fixed address..... 6
- Staying temporarily w/friends/rels..... 7
- Other ..... 8

Q8: For students with one or both parents in Australia

8. Are your parent(s) employed in Australia?  
(Tick one only)

- Both parents F/T working..... 1
- One parent F/T working only..... 2
- Both parents P/T working only ..... 3
- One working P/T & one working F/T..... 4
- One parent working P/T only ..... 5
- Parent(s) not working ..... 6

9. Where does your income come from?  
(Tick one only)

- I have no income ..... 1
- Asylum seekers payment [Red Cross]... 2
- Centrelink payment ..... 3
- Austudy at Homeless/Indep rate ..... 4
- Austudy at Standard rate ..... 5
- Salary/wages ..... 6

About Education (Q10 – Q14)

10. Before you came to Australia, did you finish?

- Primary School ..... Yes  No

11. Before you came to Australia, did you finish?

- Secondary School ..... Yes  No

12. Before you came to Australia, did you finish?

- Technical College after Secondary School ..... Yes  No

13. Before you came to Australia did you finish?

- University ..... Yes  No

14. Between leaving your country of birth, and

arriving in Australia, how often did you go to school? (Tick one only)

- Went to school sometimes ..... 1
- Did not go to school at all ..... 2
- Went to school most of the time ..... 3
- Other (please specify) ..... 4
- .....

15. After English language training, what do you hope to do? (Tick one only)

- Go the secondary college, finish Yr 12 1
- Try to get a job ..... 2
- Go to school for a while, then get a job 3
- Get into a training course ..... 4
- Get into a TAFE College course ..... 5
- Go to University ..... 6
- Some other option ..... 7

16. How long do you want to stay in Australia?  
(Tick one only)

- Only a short while – less than 1 year .... 1
- A few years ..... 2
- Many years ..... 3
- Perhaps for the rest of my life ..... 4
- Don't know ..... 5

17. To what extent do you feel you belong in Australia? (Tick one only)

- A little; I've only been here a short while.. 1
- Somewhat; I'm getting used to here.....2
- About half Australian and half my COB.... 3
- Mostly Australian ..... 4
- Only Australian, I don't belong elsewhere 5

18. How many times have you moved house since coming to Australia?  times

19. How many times have you been questioned by police officers in Australia?

- Never   times

20. At 25 years of age, do you expect to be living in a household separate from your parents?

- Definitely YES ..... 1

- Maybe YES ..... 2
- Probably NO ..... 3
- Definitely NO ..... 4

21. At 25 years of age, do you expect you will have a job and be earning your own money?

- Definitely YES ..... 1
- Maybe YES ..... 2
- Probably NO ..... 3
- Definitely NO ..... 4

Questions 22 – 49 ask you about your experiences in your country of birth. If the statement is true for you, tick YES; if the statement is not true for you, tick NO.

22. There was a lot of violence in my country.

- Yes  No

23. Lots of people in my country were killed.

- Yes  No

24. People in my home town were not very frightened.

- Yes  No

25. In my country, people were put in prison for no good reason.

- Yes  No

26. I felt safe walking the streets in my home town.

- Yes  No

27. I know of people who have just disappeared, never to be seen again.

- Yes  No

28. My family did not feel safe or secure in my country.

- Yes  No

29. Our family home was destroyed.

- Yes  No

30. My family was persecuted in my country.

- Yes  No

31. No- one in my family went to prison.

- Yes  No

32. Lots of people were persecuted in my country.

- Yes  No

33. A member of my family was tortured in my country.

- Yes  No

34. Members of our family were bashed and hurt.

- Yes  No

35. My family was scared for their lives in my country.

- Yes  No

36. I felt scared in my country.

- Yes  No

37. No-one in my family was killed.

- Yes  No

38. I have spent time in prison myself.

- Yes  No

39. My family and I were homeless for a while.

- Yes  No

40. I was not tortured in my country of origin.

- Yes  No

41. I felt I was persecuted in my country.

- Yes  No

42. I was nearly killed myself once.

- Yes  No

43. There were lots of homeless people in my country.

- Yes  No

44. In my country, some people disappeared, never to be seen again.

- Yes  No

45. I was bashed and hurt in my country.

- Yes  No

46. Many people did not feel safe in my country.

- Yes  No

47. Only a few people had their homes destroyed.

- Yes  No

48. People were tortured in my country.

- Yes  No

49. There was a civil war in my country.

- Yes  No

Thank you for your cooperation

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