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Executive Summary

Research was undertaken in Western Australia with 76 humanitarian entrants and 22 service providers to identify settlement issues for humanitarian entrants in the first four years after arrival. Special focus was on differences for those who had been in Australia for one to two years compared to two to four years.

Key findings include:

- Humanitarian entrants express a strong sense of gratitude at being able to live in Australia.
- Gratitude is expressed for both the formal assistance provided, and general kindnesses of the broader population.
- Settlement issues identified remain fundamentally similar to those identified in previous research, although health appears to be less important, and housing and belonging more important, than previous research suggests.
- Employment remains of vital importance, regardless of how long humanitarian entrants have been in Australia. The current Job Services Australia model is seen by both humanitarian entrants and service providers as seriously failing this section of the community.
- There are few differences between those who have been in Australia for longer periods compared to those who arrived more recently. The main differences have to do with language ability, confidence in negotiating the system, and for some, levels of disillusionment about what is possible in terms of employment and connection with mainstream Australians.
- One implication may be that services are not developing independence and self-reliance after the six months of intensive support. Service providers emphasised the need to build capacity among communities. Alternatively it may simply reflect greater longer term need i.e. that many humanitarian entrants would benefit from intensive support for a longer period than is currently provided.
- A much clearer understanding of humanitarian entrants’ sense of belonging and understanding of integration is provided by this research.
  - There is a strong desire to be accepted as part of the Australian community, and particularly to make friends with mainstream Australians. For many, however, there is a sense that this desire to connect is not reciprocated.
  - Religion is an extremely important source of social networks and support. Sport is also important, particularly for younger and male refugees, as are ethnic communities (both formal and informal).
  - For many, a sense of connection is based on links with service providers, which come to be seen in personal and informal ways rather than as formal service provision. But simply having access to services is a strong part of humanitarian entrants’ sense of belonging in Australia. It formed the basis of a ‘civic identity’ for many.
  - A sense of belonging does not necessarily increase the longer humanitarian entrants live in Australia. For some, growing perceptions of structural and interpersonal exclusion mean belonging is less likely the longer they are here.
Integration was a difficult concept for participants to articulate. Those who were able to, saw it as a long-term two way process of ‘merging’, rather than assimilation. It implied emotional aspects, such as being relaxed and confident in their new country, but also material aspects such as equal access to services. Many suggestions for improving integration were made.

- Friends, family and ethnic/religious communities are important in the settlement process at all stages, often providing practical assistance as well as emotional support.
- Racism remains a problem, most commonly associated with employment and housing.
- Lack of appropriate, affordable, decent housing is a growing problem, particularly for single men and large families, but also more generally.
- The need for coordination of services was identified in relation to several settlement issues including employment, English language and housing.
- For communities that have been here longer issues around the antisocial behaviour of young people and discipline were raised. These were linked to inadequate support at high school and external social pressures.
- While humanitarian participants did not articulate differences in access to services through the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and Special Grants Programs (SGP), service providers noted that SGP often falls short due to its inability to offer intensive casework support.

**Policy Implications/Recommendations**

A focus on empowerment and fostering the building of social networks and capacity would assist integration. One concrete method by which this could be achieved is through better linking the Humanitarian Settlement Support program, and the Settlement Grants Program, which provides more structured but less individualised assistance. Another would be to introduce programs to encourage mutual trust and friendship, and to support social and emotional connection, such as a ‘family mentoring program’ that links Australian families with humanitarian entrants for ongoing social support. The use of community based volunteers may also assist with the development of more ‘natural’ social networks between refugees and the wider community, obviating the need for extensions of formal service provision.

The lack of coordination between service providers (government and NGOs), partly because of the competitive funding model, works against coordination of service provision, encouraging a fragmented rather than holistic approach. It also does not encourage long term investment in the sector nor the development of institutional knowledge that would ensure capacity building and consolidation of knowledge and experience in the area.

Service providers identified the limited resourcing and fragmented nature of their support as like “breathing through a straw”. As well as greater and more secure resourcing, consideration should be given to linking access to the number of contact hours an individual has used rather than a set time period.
While un/under-employment is a difficult issue to solve, the challenges of recognising prior skills and training continue to loom large. Improved access to skills assessment and bridging programs or alternate pathways would allow the Australian economy to make better use of its human resources, and also address settlement issues including poverty, mental health issues and social inclusion. A clear explanation to applicants about why their qualifications have not been accepted would also improve their confidence in the system.

More opportunities for local work experience, through short term internships, for example, would assist integration into the workforce.

The current Job Services Australia model is seen as unsatisfactory by humanitarian entrants and service providers. Dedicated case-managed services offered through settlement service providers may be more effective.

Obtaining a driver’s licence remains a barrier for humanitarian entrants, which affects a range of other aspects of settlement, particularly employment options. More resourcing for driver training programs is required.

The need to develop adequate English language skills impacts employment, educational opportunities, access to housing, and social connection. It may be that an increase in the number of hours of free English classes is necessary to ensure refugees have adequate levels of English to undertake the work and study they desire, and to engage with other Australians. The need for work-related English was also identified. To improve uptake and retention in the existing program, solutions to barriers such as the need for income from employment (a bonus incentive as part of the current welfare payment may be appropriate) and issues around childcare for women also need to be found.

For young people from refugee backgrounds, given their specific mental health, physical health, psychosocial and educational needs, a specific focus is required. While many do very well, some are falling through the cracks. Improving the interface between the communities and the policing and justice systems was seen as one aspect in solving the problem. The need for cultural support for African young people was noted in particular. Homework support groups and sports were seen as other ways of engaging young people.

The cost of living in Western Australia was identified as a problem, particularly for those on welfare. It is not suggested that humanitarian entrants should be entitled to a higher level of benefits, but that the level of welfare more broadly may need to be reviewed.

Housing is a significant concern. Issues included the high cost of rentals, poor quality, discrimination, frequent relocation, and exclusion from the ownership market due to high prices. Once again, this is not a ‘refugee specific’ issue. The lack of stock of private and public housing in Western Australia appears to be part of the problem, and there is urgent need of an increase.

A major challenge is to change community attitudes to humanitarian entrants. There is a need for community education at all levels, including education and cultural awareness training for employers, real estate agents, and the wider community, and the need for
political leadership to reduce stigmatising discourses. A holistic approach is needed, starting at the political level and integrated into the education system generally, including media training.

Finally consideration of the effects of immigration policy on refugee families is needed. The Australian immigration system penalises refugees seeking family re-union by reducing the number of places available by the number of visas granted for those seeking asylum onshore. Given the link between family reunion and positive humanitarian settlement, this is problematic – the programs should be de-linked.
Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background

This document reports the results of research investigating the experiences of refugees settled in Western Australia with respect to five key areas: education, health, employment, housing and social support. While six months of intensive settlement support and assistance has traditionally been provided by a number of service providers, this has recently been extended to 12 months of assistance provided by two organisations, PVS Workfind for north Perth and northern Western Australia (accommodation services are provided by the Multicultural Services Centre) and Communicare (south Perth and southern WA). After this initial period little is known about humanitarian entrants' settlement experiences. Anecdotal information suggests that while many establish themselves well in this time, in terms of both formal and informal networks and connection with mainstream services, employment and so on, some need further assistance. This research provided an opportunity to gather data about settlement experiences, with the aim of informing policy and practice in achieving the goal of restoring a ‘normal’ life to humanitarian entrants.

The research involved a cross-sectional investigation of the settlement of humanitarian entrants to Western Australia one to two years after their arrival, compared to two to four years post-arrival. Through a series of interviews facilitated by bicultural research assistants, and a photographic representation exercise, plus focus groups with service providers, a comprehensive picture was developed identifying:

- The experiences of refugees after the initial intensive government-funded settlement support period;
- factors affecting ‘successful’ settlement; and
- implications for practice and policy

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 outlines existing literature in Australia undertaken over the last 15 years, indicating the main issues relevant to refugee settlement, with a focus on aspects related to integration and social inclusion. It suggests significant relevant research has already been undertaken. The findings of this earlier research were used to design the current project. The following chapter outlines the methodology. Chapter 4 gives an overview of participants and the key issues identified as the most significant by participants. There follow several chapters on specific issues such as housing, health, education, employment, and several chapters on identity, networks and belonging. Chapters 11 and 12 analyse data from the social network maps, and the photovoice exercise.
Chapter 2 – Review of Existing Research

Before reporting the results of the current research it is appropriate to provide a summary of the existing research in Australia that identifies settlement issues for humanitarian entrants. It is also appropriate since the year 2011 marked the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Refugee Convention, providing a useful context in which to consider the current state of settlement in Australia. The review also is an opportunity to offer a definition of successful settlement which involves integration along a number of parameters. These parameters form the basis that structured the current research.

At the end of 2010, there were 43.7 million people displaced by persecution and conflict, including 15.4 million refugees, 840,000 asylum seekers and 27.5 million internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2011). Almost 100,000 refugees were resettled by 21 resettlement countries through the UNHCR program in 2010, including the United States of America (71,362), Canada (12,098), Australia (8,516, offshore figure), Sweden (1,786), and Norway (1,097).

Australia accepts around 13,750 refugees annually, and is ranked third in the world in terms of its resettlement commitment, and first in terms of per capita intake, and for some decades has offered settlement services based on general principles of equity and multiculturalism. These services are seen as among the best in the world. However, there has been little systematic review of empirical research relating to settlement in Australia. This summary is provided as an overview. This chapter begins with an outline of resettlement objectives generally and details of Australia’s humanitarian intake and government-funded services. It then reviews research undertaken over the last 15 years focusing on a number of dimensions including economic (employment, housing, education and language); health (physical and mental); socio-cultural (support networks, racism, culture shock); and spatial (urban and regional settlement) issues.

Resettlement, Integration and Social Inclusion

In Australia, successful settlement and integration into the host community are the key objectives of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) uses a variety of measures of economic participation (labour force outcomes, occupational status, sources of income, level of income and housing); social participation and wellbeing (English proficiency, satisfaction with life and Australian citizenship); and physical and mental wellbeing, to assess settlement outcomes. Information collection relating to these factors is not systematic however.

Given that successful settlement is defined as integration it is worth considering what this term means. It comes with significant baggage, particularly in the Australian context (see Jupp, 2009: 135), but has been used in research and by policy makers to define the goal of a well-settled person or community. Integration is at the core of successful long term settlement: “a durable solution entails a process of integration into a society; it will be successful and lasting only if it allows the refugee to attain a degree of self-sufficiency, to participate in the social and economic life of the community and to retain what might be described...as a degree of personal identity and integrity” (Goodwin-Gill, 1990: 38).
(2004: 86) also describes “successful settlement” in terms of integration, i.e. the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities. The UNHCR Integration Handbook: Refugee Resettlement (2002) similarly provides a definition of settlement based on integration, which is seen as a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and on-going process. It includes the restoration of refugees’ security, control, and social and economic independence; promotion of family reunification, and connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support; and promotion of cultural and religious integrity and restoration of attachments to community and culture, as well as the countering of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia.

The integration process is influenced by the institutional environment of the receiving society as well as personal capacities of the settling population (Valtonen, 2004: 88). Ager and Strang (2008: 166-191) suggest four domains which act as both markers of integration and the means of achieving it: employment, housing, education and health. Social connections, in the form of bridges, bonds and links, which are facilitated by language, cultural knowledge, safety and stability, are another important dimension. Finally, they argue, the foundation of integration is built upon rights and citizenship.

Integration is a dynamic two-way process, requiring from refugees a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one’s cultural identity; and from the host society a willingness to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population. But, importantly, unlike assimilation, it also implies mutual adaptation, an openness to change to improve the overall culture of the host society (Delanty, 2000). This is somewhat fraught in the Australian context, given that the nation’s identity was built on a mono-cultural White Australia Policy which has only been challenged for three of Australia’s eleven decades of existence (the late 1960s to the late 1990s, during which time more open immigration and policies of multiculturalism were established). While Australia has the highest proportion of overseas born people in the Western world, it has remained relatively Eurocentric in outlook and identity (Hage, 1998). The last decade has seen a retreat from the multiculturalism of the late twentieth century, with xenophobic tendencies being inflamed by a conservative government (Joppke, 2004; Tilbury, 2007a; Tate, 2009). This has had implications for refugees being settled during this period, which are evident in the research discussed.

Australia’s Humanitarian Entrant Intake

Australia has a planned annual Humanitarian Program designed to respond to international refugee and humanitarian developments. This program has two components; the onshore protection program, which protects people already in Australia who are recognised as refugees under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of Refugees (known as asylum seekers until their cases are determined), and the offshore resettlement program, which offers resettlement as a durable solution for people overseas who need humanitarian assistance and who have no other option available to them. Table 2.1 shows numbers of onshore and offshore visas granted, and the proportion of the total migrant intake made up by the humanitarian program over the last 15 years.
Table 2.1 Humanitarian Program Outcomes for the visas granted, 1995-96 – 2009-2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Onshore</th>
<th>Offshore</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Of Total Immigration Intake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>15,050</td>
<td>16,250</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>9,650</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>10,470</td>
<td>12,060</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>1,830</td>
<td>9,530</td>
<td>11,360</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>9,960</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>5,740</td>
<td>7,990</td>
<td>13,730</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>8,450</td>
<td>12,350</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>11,660</td>
<td>12,530</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>2,049</td>
<td>11,802</td>
<td>13,851</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>12,096</td>
<td>13,178</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>1,386</td>
<td>12,758</td>
<td>14,144</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>1,831</td>
<td>11,186</td>
<td>13,017</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>2,215</td>
<td>10,799</td>
<td>13,014</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>2,497</td>
<td>11,010</td>
<td>13,507</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>4,523</td>
<td>9,301</td>
<td>13,770</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures from Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) annual reports, 2005-06 to 2009-10, adapted from Hugo (2011) and updated.

The table shows that Australia’s humanitarian intake decreased as a proportion of its immigration intake until 2009-10, indicating a lowering of commitment to this segment of its migration program. However, it must be noted that a dramatic rise in migrant numbers occurred in the mid to late 2000s due to labour shortages caused by a booming economy, while the numbers of humanitarian visas granted did not, resulting in this proportional decrease.

Historically refugees to Australia came predominantly from Europe as post WWII Displaced Persons, and then from Lebanon or Indo-China (particularly Vietnam) in the 1970s following civil disturbances, with smaller numbers from Latin America in the 1980s. In the last two decades refugees hailed mainly from the Middle East and North Africa, the former Yugoslavia, the Horn of Africa and West Africa and Afghanistan. Most recently Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bhutan are also key source countries.

Between January 2007 and January 2011, the total number of humanitarian entrants who settled in Western Australia was 5966 (DIAC Settlement Database, 2012). As seen in Table 2.2, the major countries of birth included Burma, Afghanistan, Sudan, Thailand (mostly of Burmese decent), Iraq, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Ethiopia, Liberia, Iran and Sri Lanka.
Table 2.2 Major Countries of Birth of Humanitarian Entrants settling in Western Australia from 1 January 2007 to 1 January 2011\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County of Birth</th>
<th>Humanitarian Entrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>1271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand(^2)</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Australia’s Services for Humanitarian Entrants**

In Australia, services to refugees and asylum seekers are provided by government and non-government organisations. More or less formal groups of volunteers also assist. Most government-funded services are contracted out to non-government organisations (NGOs), making coordination and long term development of institutional capacity difficult. Initial settlement assistance is reasonably extensive. One of the major services is the Adult Migrant English Program, which provides 510 hours of free English language tuition. Refugees can also access dedicated settlement services for the first six to twelve months of settlement (currently referred to as the Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (HSS)). This program provides reception and assistance on arrival (meeting at the airport, taking to accommodation, assisting with accommodation costs, orientation, and emergency medical and clothing assistance); information and referrals (to government agencies that provide income support, health care, English language classes and employment services), housing services (help finding suitable housing, assistance with leasing and connection to services like electricity, gas, and the telephone, provision of household goods such as a fridge, washing machine, TV and beds, information about household care and cleanliness), and a package of food and hygiene products for the first few days. It also provides short-term torture and trauma counselling to those assessed as requiring it. Those who come as sponsored entrants are expected to receive this assistance from their proposers, which often proves difficult as they are also likely to be refugees struggling to settle themselves.

In terms of cultural orientation, a five-day pre-arrival cultural orientation course is available, but after arrival mutual cultural understanding program provision has been patchy. The most recent revision of Australia’s settlement services in 2011 includes an onshore cultural

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\(^2\) Burmese heritage living in refugee camps in Thailand
orientation program. It remains to be seen how effective this is in preparing humanitarian entrants for the challenges of living in the new host country.

Approximately six to twelve months after arrival, humanitarian entrants are exited from HSS (although services may be extended for refugees with greater need). After this time, government funded services (known as the Settlement Grants Program or SGP) are provided according to need. These programs tend to have a specific focus, such as job search skills development, although the service providers are increasingly adapting them to provide case-based support. The funding provides for immigration assistance, housing, and ethno-specific funding for new communities, focused around the themes of orientation to Australia, developing communities, and integration. In the 2010-2011 round, many grants were targeted at young people and at African communities (Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), 2011). There is also a Complex Case Support Services program for humanitarian entrants facing significant and complex difficulties.

**An Overview of Dimensions of Settlement in Australia**

While not all humanitarian entrants have high and complex needs and many bring with them personal resilience, a sense of community and a strong work ethic, (Pittaway, et al, 2009; Correa-Velez, et al, 2010; RCOA 2010a), research suggests that refugees do not settle as easily as other migrants. In moving to new environments humanitarian entrants experience a range of issues related to language; education; differences of values; unemployment; family issues including family violence, inter-generational conflict, changing gender roles and child rearing practices; racism and discrimination; expectations; knowledge of and access to services; housing; and health and mental health issues (Waxman, 1998; Richardson et al, 2002; Richardson et al, 2004a, 2004b; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007; Tilbury, 2007b; Fozdar and Torezani, 2008; RCOA, 2008, 2009a, 2010a; Dhanji, 2009; Fisher, 2009; Fozdar, 2009; Pittaway et al., 2009; Nunn, 2010; Hugo, 2011). Many of these issues are mediated by poverty - most refugees arriving in Australia are poor in terms of income and assets and therefore face the same day-to-day dilemmas as others living in poverty, overlaid with pre-migration experiences, additional expenses, and policies which may exclude some from income support (Taylor, 2004). In addition, refugees must overcome the racism that still permeates Australian society (Majka, 1997; Klocker and Dunn, 2003; Pedersen et al, 2005a; Pedersen et al, 2005b; Forrest and Dunn, 2006; Pedersen, et al, 2006; Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006; Pedersen et al, 2007; 2008). They also face significant access barriers and there is an identified need for coordination of services (difficult, in a context of contracted services) and for providers to understand the ‘real’ as opposed to perceived settlement experiences (Waxman, 1998; Perrin and Dunn, 2007; Torezani et al, 2008).

Two comprehensive reports providing overviews of the settlement of refugees in Australia have recently been published. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship commissioned a study known as the Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals (SONA) report, undertaken by the Australian Survey Research Group (ASRG, 2011). This research compared the settlement experiences of those coming through the Humanitarian Program in their first five years in Australia, with those migrating through other streams, using a self-completion paper survey. It explored the relationship between settlement, defined as level of comfort living in Australia, and education, interaction with government, employment, income,
accommodation, English proficiency, regional location and social connection. Results are discussed as part of this review.

The second is a report by Graeme Hugo (2011) and his team, who undertook a comprehensive study of the economic, social and civic contributions of humanitarian entrants and their offspring using a number of existing data sources such as the Census data linked to humanitarian settlement data-base data, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants in Australia (LSIA) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force surveys, as well as the SONA data described above. They also interviewed or conducted surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders, service providers, researchers, and humanitarian entrants themselves. Hugo found that in the long term Humanitarian Program entrants and their children demonstrate considerable achievement and contributions to Australian society. This is due to a number of factors including a low rate of settler loss (in the form of return migration), relatively high fertility rates (part of the reason behind a much younger age structure compared to the general population) and high proportions of humanitarian entrant offspring working for the majority of their lives in Australia. As well as contributing to their countries of origin economically through remittances, humanitarian settlers make significant contributions within Australia through volunteering in both the wider community and within their own community groups.

This good news story is often lost in research, which tends to use a deficit model that focuses on refugees’ needs rather than their contributions. The following review of the literature must be read in this light, therefore.

**Economic Dimensions of Settlement**

**Employment**

Employment has been recognised as pivotal in successful settlement. Paid work is essential in refugees regaining identity and control over their lives as well as imperative in being able to support family members in the host country and overseas (Iredale, 1994; Iredale et al, 1996; Colic-Peisker, 2003; Dunlop, 2005). Refugees prioritise employment for these reasons (Urbis Keys Young, 2003). Indeed research shows a strong desire among refugees to be in gainful employment rather than on welfare (Fozdar, 2009). Despite this, refugees experience difficulty integrating into the labour market for various reasons.

Refugees in Australia have higher unemployment rates and lower earning and occupational attainment than other immigrants (Williams and Batrouney 1998; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007; Hugo, 2011). They are vulnerable to long term unemployment and are less likely to secure ‘good’ jobs (Junankar and Mahuteau, 2005). Some 18 months after arrival 43% of humanitarian entrants are still unemployed, due to language and other settlement factors, compared with 7% for those who enter Australia under other visa categories (Hugo, 2011: 110). However, this does not remain the case over longer periods - for the second generation a clear majority have higher levels of labour market participation than the Australia-born (Hugo, 2011).

There are many reasons for these poor employment outcomes. Hugo (2011) notes that the data is influenced by recency of arrival and the relative youth of the population. The most
recently arrived groups have the lowest levels of labour market participation. In securing employment, English proficiency is recognized as crucial (Waxman, 2001; Taylor, 2004) however other factors such as failure to have overseas qualification recognised, lack of work experience and referees, and structural and personal discrimination negatively affect outcomes (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007). The significance of qualification recognition issues was highlighted in a Joint Standing Committees report entitled *Negotiating the Maze* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006).

Evaluations of employment assistance service provision indicate the need for improved targeted assistance including financial incentives for service providers to focus on this disadvantaged group (Torezani et al, 2008). While some programs provide dedicated pre-employment and employment services targeted at refugees, it is unclear how successful these have been. It has also been recognised that there is no coordinated youth focus in early resettlement programs resulting in poor outcomes (CMYI, 2006; O’Sullivan and Olliff, 2006).

The perception by refugees and stakeholders of the reasons for employment difficulties has been the subject of several research projects. Tilbury and Colic-Peisker conducted research in Perth, Western Australia, among three groups of refugees – those from the former Yugoslavia, from the Middle East and from Africa (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007). Using a sample of relatively skilled/educated refugees, they found the main barriers to satisfactory employment identified by participants were a lack of Australian work experience (62%), lack of Australian referees (41%), and recognition of overseas qualifications (31%). Institutional and personal racism also affect outcomes (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006). Stakeholders in Hugo’s (2011:164) study noted that pre-migration issues such as exposure to violence, limited education, lack of documentation, lack of knowledge about the Australian labour market and misinformation about opportunities exacerbate issues derived from the Australian context such as health and mental health issues, literacy deficiencies, lack of access to skills recognition processes (including cost issues), limited social networks, inadequate employment assistance service provision (including lack of trained personnel, and financial incentives structures that disadvantage the most needy job-seekers), and unrealistic expectations, together with employer discrimination, affect outcomes.

Hugo’s study also found that levels of English language proficiency, and educational background were related to employment outcomes. Like the Australian population generally, the more education one has, the more likely one is to be employed. However, even highly educated refugees often have difficulty finding work. One third of employed humanitarian settlers work as labourers – three times the rate of other recent settlers (Hugo 2011:145). Despite relatively high levels of education, many are employed in manual occupations, with only 10% being managers or professionals, compared to almost 40% of all migrants, providing evidence of ‘occupational skidding’. Hugo reports income levels are correspondingly relatively low. His participants suggested that the idea of ‘sacrifice’ is common among first generation humanitarian entrants, who hope their hard work at often dirty, dangerous and low paid jobs will reap benefits for their children.

There is also evidence that some groups of refugees funnel into low paid, low skilled, low status, niche labour markets such as security, meat processing, child/aged care, and taxi
driving. This is the result of factors identified above, plus the limitations of their social networks resulting in a ‘chain employment’ effect within certain industries, producing a segmented secondary labour market (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006).

Perhaps partly as a result of breaking into the mainstream labour market, very high relative levels of entrepreneurialism are found among humanitarian entrants. It has been hypothesised that this may be related to a propensity for risk taking (Hugo, 2011), but it is as likely to be the result of lack of opportunities/success in the general employment market.

Although the available research offers significant insights into the employment outcomes of humanitarian entrants settling in Australia, there is a clear need for longitudinal research into employment outcomes for refugees, as highlighted by Hugo (2011).

**Education and training**

Education and training is another of the cornerstones of successful settlement, both in terms of English language education and in terms of training to maximise employment opportunities. However, one-quarter of refugees do not take up English language tuition for various reasons including the prioritising of employment (Urbis Keys Young, 2003) but also because of logistical difficulties, particularly for mothers of young children. As well as issues of access, concerns have been raised regarding the adequacy of the Adult Migrant English Program, in particular for those students who are illiterate in their first language, and in terms of its lack of focus on English for the workplace (RCOA, 2007; Moore et al, 2008). Olliff and Couch (2005) argue that six to twelve months of language training is grossly inadequate for those who have not experienced formal learning before and are not literate in their first language.

In terms of access to and experiences of post-secondary school education indications from Walker et al (2005) and OMI (2009) regarding apprenticeships and traineeships suggest there are numerous barriers including lack of knowledge of opportunities, language, income levels, and employer reticence. This is despite education and training being known to be important goals among refugee youth (Gifford et al, 2009) and re-training being an important pathway for re-entry into the workforce for adult refugees. Many humanitarian entrants and their offspring have sought to extend their skills through tertiary education, both as a means of improving their life-chances and assisting their communities, but also as a prestige factor (Joyce et al, 2010; Turner and Fozdar, 2010). Research indicates that the relationship between culture, community and learning significantly affects educational outcomes at the tertiary level (Turner and Fozdar, 2010). Refugee engagement with learning is mediated through different levels of community: an immediate ethnic group, a broader national refugee community, and the wider Australian community, the needs of which are often in tension, affecting achievement. Australian schools and universities need to orient to these issues to ensure positive outcomes.

There are particular issues for young people in terms of education and training. For school-aged children and adolescents Intensive English Centres (IECs) within mainstream schools provide students with intensive language training to ensure students are school ready, but little research exists regarding access to these services or their efficacy (Cassidy and Gow, 2005). For Australia’s newest refugee cohort, those from Africa, low levels of literacy,
significant cultural difference, and possible trauma related to displacement experiences leave refugees at a disadvantage in the school system (see Brown et al., 2006; Westoby, 2008; Naidoo, 2009).

A useful resource on education issues for young people is the RCOA’s annotated bibliography which details projects designed to identify or address refugee young people’s post-compulsory education and training needs (see RCOA, 2010b). Issues include disrupted education (Brown, et al, 2006; Moore, et al, 2008), difficulties navigating different education systems (CMYI, 2006); negotiating settlement, education and family responsibilities (Brown et al., 2006; Moore et al., 2008); low levels of literacy and challenges for students from oral-based cultures (Moore et al, 2008; Burgoyne and Hull, 2007); assessing and addressing learning disabilities (Moore et al, 2008; Fraine and McDade 2009; Kaplan 2009; Stolk 2009); negotiating the difference between expectations and reality (Brown et al, 2006; Moore et al., 2008); and the transition from IECs to mainstream education (Cassidy and Gow, 2005).

While some programs have been designed to assist refugee parents and teachers meet the needs of youth from refugee backgrounds (e.g., Kyle et al, 2004), there is a dearth of systematic information about how best to facilitate education at this level. Additional challenges arise when the abilities and interactions with peers of children from a refugee background affect their school performance (Driver and Beltran, 1998). The supportive role young people take at home and issues related to disrupted education or lack of education in their countries of origin make schooling in Australia challenging (Brough et al, 2003). This is similar to the findings of Cassidy and Gow (2005) in their study of students from Southern Sudanese backgrounds living in Sydney. The difficulties of little educational background and the pressures of supporting family in Australia and in Sudan make schooling in Australia a challenge, decreasing the likelihood of a successful transition to tertiary study which is a goal for many. In terms of training that leads to employment, action research in Victoria indicates mentoring, training and work placements are vital for successful employment outcomes (Mestan, 2008).

**Language**

Language is related to most settlement factors, particularly education, employment and social networks. It is vital for social inclusion. It is included in the section on material and economic issues as this is where it has its most obvious impact. This is not to deny its significance in terms of social aspects of settlement and integration.

Most refugees to Australia come from backgrounds where English is not their first language. However, the levels of English language proficiency vary widely among humanitarian entrants, making service provision difficult. Hugo (2011: 127) found that the proportion of migrants who arrived since 2001 who could not speak English well or at all was significantly higher for humanitarian arrivals (36.5 %) than for other visa groups, especially skilled migrants. A lack of proficiency in the English language has been consistently found to be a crucial factor affecting settlement for migrants in general (Wooden, 1994a, 1994b) and employment specifically. In 2006, 74 % of humanitarian migrants who did not speak English well or at all were not in the labour force (Hugo, 2011: 128).
As noted, while the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)\(^3\) is constantly being adapted to make it better suited to the needs of refugees, criticisms remain about its adequacy for those illiterate in their first language, and its suitability for the development of workplace and conversational English (RCOA, 2007; Moore et al, 2008). For high-level professionals among the refugee intake, the program has also been identified as inadequate (Tilbury et al, 2005).

**Housing**

Housing and a sense of place are vitally important for refugees’ sense of belonging in Australia (Sampson and Gifford, 2010) – the aphorism that one’s house is one’s home is particularly apt for refugees who have been denied access to a stable home of origin. Appropriate housing provides refugees with a place to begin to re-make ‘home’ (Dawson and Rapport, 1998). While housing is often listed as one of the crucial elements in successful settlement, there remains little research on the experiences of refugees in accessing stable housing or the factors influencing movement within a geographical area (see Tilbury et al, 2005; ASeTTS 2008; Burgermeister et al, 2008; Berta, 2012). In its annual reports, the Refugee Council of Australia has highlighted issues around housing as significant in the settlement process, and Shelter WA has produced several discussions papers on the issue (Pendergast, 2007; Burgermeister et al, 2008). The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute recently funded a three-year study which should begin to address this gap. The research that is available identifies refugees as a group vulnerable to experiencing housing crisis and/or homelessness (Beer and Foley, 2003). Although humanitarian entrants face the same problems as many other low-income households, they often lack knowledge of the language, customs and strategies to access housing (Beer and Foley, 2003).

Research has found that three quarters of refugees rent privately or use community housing and move, on average, three times in their first year (Beer and Foley 2003). It is unclear whether this level of housing instability is seen as a problem by refugees, or whether it is their choice. The 2006 Census data shows that humanitarian entrants are far less likely to be purchasing their own homes five years after arrival than other visa holders (Hugo, 2011). This may indicate the level of difficulty they face in the early years in establishing language competency, education and employment, resulting in a delay in their access to secure and stable housing.

Research exploring the housing experiences of refugees in Australia suggests a number of barriers (Ransley and Drummond, 2000; Coventry et al, 2002; Beer and Foley, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Flanagan, 2007; Australian Survey Research Group, 2011; Equal Opportunity Commission, 2011; Berta, 2012). These include: a lack of affordable housing in the private rental market; the tightening of eligibility for public housing; long waiting lists for public housing; a decrease in public housing stock; a lack of knowledge regarding tenancy issues; difficult application processes including lack of rental history / referees and identification, 

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\(^3\)The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides up to 510 hours of basic English language tuition to migrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds. AMEP eligibility is complex and Centrelink assists clients by assessing their eligibility and providing information on how to enrol in the AMEP within 3 months of arrival in Australia. (http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/amep/).
and discrimination from landlords and real estate agents; difficulty housing large families; and the inflated Australian real estate market.

No data is collected on the number of refugees and humanitarian entrants on public housing waiting lists. However, evidence suggests that when faced with primary homelessness (i.e. not having a roof over one’s head) humanitarian entrants will often stay with friends or family, resulting in overcrowding, family conflict and high levels of stress (Flanagan, 2007).

Health
Both physical and mental health issues are known to be significant for proportions of the refugee population. Humanitarian entrants are generally in poorer physical health on arrival, despite health checks on acceptance to Australia (although those coming through the onshore program go through slightly less rigorous checks) (Richardson et al, 2004b). It is not our intention to review all physical health issues here, but to highlight some key areas in which research has been undertaken.

Sexual health among young people is a specific area of concern that has been the focus of research (see Gifford et al, 2009; Gwairisa, 2009; McMichael and Gifford, 2009, 2010). Findings suggest that young people from refugee backgrounds are disadvantaged in relation to access to sexual health information by having very little knowledge of sexual health or sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) apart from HIV/AIDS. Specific barriers to learning about sexual health include concerns about confidentiality, shame when discussing sexual health, and the competing demands of resettlement. Action research projects indicate that young people from refugee backgrounds can develop stronger mental health and improved sexual health using targeted creative approaches (e.g., Gifford et al 2009; McMichael 2008).

Similar results have been found regarding general access to health care services for women. For example, Drummond et. al. (2011) recently found that issues such as shame or fear of what family and friends might think, of being judged by the treatment provider, of hospitalisation, and logistical difficulties were significant impediments to accessing health care services for refugee women. Refugee children and young people face additional health challenges including high rates of infectious diseases; incomplete immunisation; growth and nutrition problems and poor dental health. Research suggests that they have multiple risk factors for educational disadvantage and may have unrecognised developmental delay and disability (Davidson et al., 2004).

In terms of mental health, two consistent risk factors are linked to mental disorders in refugees: past trauma and post-migration stress (Silove and Ekblad, 2002). Settlement difficulties are seen by communities as compounding and contributing to mental health issues. In a study of understandings of depression among a number of refugee communities Fozdar found that settlement issues such as employment, language, housing, loneliness, culture shock, intergenerational and gender role issues, and racism were identified by communities as the causes of depression, in many cases to the exclusion of pre-arrival traumatic experiences (Tilbury, 2007b; Fozdar, 2009). There is a trend toward increasing problems after arrival (Schweitzer et. al., 2006). However, a focus on mental health and trauma may limit appropriate responses to refugee settlement issues (Colic-Peisker and
Tilbury, 2003; Tilbury, 2007b; Westoby, 2008; Marlowe, 2010). Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) argue that settlement approaches that focus on trauma can influence refugees to adopt a passive role in their settlement, rather than empower them to lead self-sufficient lives. This “therapeutic state-centric response” (Rajaram, 2002:247; see also Fisher, 2009; Fozdar and Torezani, 2008) may lead to research and service provision focused on mental health, which can pathologise refugees (Tilbury, 2007b; Matthews, 2008; Fozdar, 2009; Marlowe, 2010). Approaches that prioritise participation and contribution are preferable (Foundation House, 1998).

An increased focus on resettlement issues and post-migration stressors is apparent in recent research, however, marking a shift away from the earlier focus on pre-migration trauma. This research has shown that post-migration stressors can have a significant impact on settlement outcomes. One study with Tamil asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants in Australia found that while pre-migration trauma exposure accounted for some (20% of the variance) of post-traumatic stress symptoms, so too did post-migration stress (14% of the variance) (Steel, et al, 1999). Clearly addressing post-migration stressors is an important aspect of interventions.

Research in Australia has also found particular impacts on women. Ferguson and Pittaway (1999) explored the emotional and mental health experiences of women refugees in Australia and found that issues around female genital mutilation, gender inequalities, sexual assault, and marital experiences are prevalent and sensitive issues, but because of their sensitivity often remain invisible. While many refugee children display remarkable resilience and adaptability, mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic disorder are prevalent and often persistent (Davidson et al., 2004; Correa-Velez, et al, 2005; Raman et al., 2009).

In terms of service provision, the Australian health system has been aware of the need for culturally sensitive health provision for many years (Jayasuirya et. al., 1992; Minas et. al., 1996) yet research continues to show that this is an ongoing problem. Research into depression among Horn of Africa and former Yugoslav refugees in Western Australia in the early 2000s indicated perceptions of a lack of culturally appropriate diagnosis and care (Tilbury et al, 2005; Tilbury, 2007b; Fozdar, 2009). Afghan women of refugee background in Victoria also identified the need for culturally appropriate interventions and diagnostic tools in regard to maternal health and mental health issues (Rintoul, 2010). Indeed, across the whole humanitarian entrant population, there are significant barriers to accessing health care including financial, belief systems, language, an under-trained workforce, and legal and policy issues (e.g., Feldman, 2006). A strong perception of discrimination, miscommunication and poor quality service provision when accessing health and welfare services has also been documented in a diverse group of women from Africa and the Middle East (Allotey et al, 2001; Allotey and Manderson, 2003). While resources exist to assist General Practitioners (GPs) in treating refugees in culturally appropriate ways (e.g., Foundation House, 2007; NDGP 2008) it is not known how widely these are used.
Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Settlement

Social support, networks and community engagement
Reconstituting family and social networks assures emotional and material stability during settlement and is a significant source of comfort (Brough et. al, 2003). Connections with the wider Australian community, providing a form of social capital that enables access to knowledge about Australian services and systems, as well as values and cultural practices, are also vitally important.

While some research has focussed on the sense of exclusion and marginality that refugees to Australia feel, recent work indicates that for a majority the situation is rather rosier. In terms of a sense of connection to the local community the SONA survey found over half of humanitarian entrants felt well connected, and another 38% a little connected, proportions comparable to other visa category entrants (Australian Survey Research Group, 2011:43). It also found that on arrival, only a quarter of humanitarian entrants do not have family or close friends living in Australia, indicating that a majority have a support network from which they can draw immediately (2011: 42). 60% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt part of the mainstream of Australian social and cultural life (Australian Survey Research Group, 2011: 43).

Hugo (2011) found that settlers from humanitarian backgrounds are among the most spatially concentrated of Australia’s migrant populations. He attributes this to their being settled by service providers in areas close to others from their home countries and to necessary services. There is also likely to be a socio-economic effect – more recent arrivals tend to concentrate in more affordable areas with housing of the type required for their family size. This results in local social connections.

In terms of local neighbourhood networks Hugo found three quarters of his participants reported having strong networks of friends in the neighbourhood, with only 1.4% not mixing with neighbours. 95% participated in community activities such as local events, playgroups, religious services, school events, attending local parks and the library (Hugo, 2011:233). In terms of the types of activities engaged in, the SONA study found that humanitarian entrants participate in religious groups and cultural groups at much higher levels than family or skill stream entrants (60.9% versus 27.8% and 31.1% respectively; and 46.5% versus 22% and 19% respectively) (Australian Survey Research Group, 2011:43).

Refugees also participate in ethnic community activities at high levels – Hugo’s survey found that only 3.7% do not participate in religious services, festivals, community events or meetings (2011:228). Humanitarian settlers provide significant assistance to others in their communities including loaning household items, providing transport, assisting with shopping, meals, childcare or with loans (Hugo, 2011:227). Less than 10% had provided no assistance.

Material and emotional connections with those remaining in their countries of origin are also high. Despite being the poorest section of the migrant population, refugees are the most likely to send remittances to their countries of origin, contributing significantly to poverty reduction there (Hugo, 2011:203).
These internal and external connections produce a sense of belonging and increased well being. A number of studies indicate that refugees are generally satisfied with their lives in Australia, showing that a majority are happy. Hugo, for example, reports around 87% agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their lives in Australia, slightly higher than the 77% found among educated refugees by Fozdar and Torezani (2008). While satisfaction is high however, levels of comfort are somewhat lower for humanitarian entrants (56.9%), than for family (80.4%) and skilled (82.1%) entrants (Hugo, 2011:246).

A key feature of refugee communities as they become established is a formalisation of volunteer work that members undertake to assist other members of their ethnic communities in the settlement process. Rather than seeing this as ‘volunteering’, refugees tend to see it as a community obligation (Hugo, 2011:217). Although the level of reported voluntary work in the 2006 census was lower for humanitarian entrants than the general population, this is likely due to significant under-reporting (RCOA, 2009). Indeed, the SONA report found that almost 20% of humanitarian settlers contributed to community or family work, and Hugo’s survey indicates close to 60% have volunteered (Hugo, 2011:224). Voluntary work may consist of informal assistance provided to family and community members, or more formal work associated with community organisations. A common complaint from refugees is burnout due to the high demands on their assistance both by their own communities and by those service providers and organisations desiring to assist them, and by researchers.

Difficulties around applications for family reunification remain a significant issue identified by refugees in Australia. The UNHCR promotes the reunification of the refugee family as a component of restoring and preserving refugees’ lives; however, this requires appropriate legislative measures (UNHCR, 2002). Australian immigration law allows family reunion, but refugees frequently note problems in terms of definitions of ‘family’ and proof requirements (Tilbury et al, 2005; Tilbury, 2007b). Women suffer the restrictions on family reunion in particular. In a study of Somali women in Melbourne, family separations were found to be a source of significant anxiety and sadness. Loneliness and depression among these women centred on feelings of not belonging, and not having family nearby for support (McMichael and Ahmed, 2003; see also Tilbury and Rapley, 2004; Hutchinson, 2010). In another study of 63 resettled Sudanese refugees, concern about family not living in Australia was the most common issue associated with depression, anxiety and somatisation (Schweitzer et al, 2006). A growing problem is the fact that Australia links the Special Humanitarian Program, through which family re-unification is enabled, with the Onshore Program for asylum seekers who come to Australia and then seek asylum. This means that the reunification quota is affected by the number of people being accepted through the onshore program - for each onshore application approved, a place is lost for existing refugees trying to bring family over. Australia is the only country to link its asylum seeker program to its resettlement program. This creates tension between the two programs and a strain on the family reunification quota.

Thus while social networks of support exist for many refugees, issues around family reunion remains a significant source of concern for many.
Racism

Settlement experiences of refugees are clearly linked to the reception they receive in the host countries. Prejudice towards refugees among members of the host community presents a significant barrier to resettlement. Australian attitudes toward newcomers have vacillated over the last 100 years, as evidenced by public policy and the results from opinion polls (Neumann, 2004). Some of this can be attributed to the variable wording of opinion poll questions – the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, 2008; see also Power, 2010) reviewed questions used in opinion polls and found significant differences in results depending on whether the question was worded positively or negatively. Depending on wording, up to three quarters of Australians are against refugees, or two thirds in favour. For example, a 2006 Lowy Institute poll asked: “Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of Australia in the next 10 years. Please say whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.” One of the options, “large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Australia”, produced 75% agreement. On the other hand, in a 2003 survey conducted by JOBfutures and Saulwick when asked: “Would you say that over the past two or three years the number of refugees has represented a very serious threat, a quite serious threat, not a very serious threat or no threat at all to the country?” 61% of participants felt that the number of refugees posed no threat or a not serious threat.

A useful resource is Monash University’s inventory of Australian public opinion surveys which tracks large scale polls since 2009 on the topic of immigration, including attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers (Markus, 2011). Few of the polls ask about attitudes to refugees – most demonstrate a degree of negativity among the general population to immigration generally and high degrees of negativity towards asylum seekers specifically, but do not canvass attitudes towards refugees. One exception is the Lowy Poll which tracks the increasing perception that migrants and refugees constitute a critical threat to Australia (up from 31% in 2006, to 33% in 2008 and 39% in 2009). In terms of attitudes towards the number of refugees taken, the Essential Report in 2009 found that 62% favour a decrease. However the Scanlon report (Markus, 2010:37) found that 66.5% of Australians have a somewhat or very positive feeling towards “refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help coming to live in Australia as permanent or long term residents”. This wording takes into account the fact that the Australian public is generally unclear about the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees, which often results in the negativity felt towards asylum seekers who arrive by boat being transferred to all refugees.

Negativity towards refugees often manifests in racism, which occurs in both personal and institutional forms. In a Western Australian study of employer perceptions of issues faced by refugees, Tilbury and Colic-Peisker (2006) found that while many employers they interviewed had a degree of goodwill toward migrants and refugees and recognised that they face barriers in the employment market, they also almost universally denied the existence of discrimination in the Australian workplace. At the same time, the employers admitted they sometimes discriminated for the sake of their customers. For example, if customers did not like to see a receptionist in hijab, the firm would not employ such a person.
Racism is certainly felt by refugees in Australia (Tilbury et al, 2005; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007; Correa-Velez et al, 2010; Dhanji, 2009; Iredale, et al, 1996; RCOA, 2009), who frequently ask ‘at what point am I no longer a refugee and just an Australian’. Racism is identified as one reason for settlement difficulties.

**Culture shock (intergenerational disputes and gender role issues)**

Adjustment to cultural relocation requires considerable energy in the beginning stages of resettlement. Particularly with recent changes in the countries of origin, the ‘cultural gap’ between Australian society and incoming refugees has grown. Refugees point out that they are constantly told that Australia is a multicultural society, but they feel their cultural values and practices are devalued through a process of ‘cultural imperialism’ (Fozdar, 2009; Tilbury, 2007b, Tilbury et al, 2005).

When adapting to Australia, many refugees are faced with a sudden loss of identity and the need to reconstruct themselves within the new context (Colic-Peisker and Walker, 2003). Individuals and cultural groups vary in the rate and degree to which this process occurs (Sonderegger and Barrett, 2004). This can be a major source of tension and conflict for families, communities and service providers.

Refugees identify this process of transition as a significant challenge, particularly in terms of adapting to changed gender roles within the family where women are encouraged both structurally and interpersonally to be independent of their husbands, producing gender conflict, and where offspring are not only encouraged to be independent but also frequently have more opportunities for rapid integration in terms of language learning, schooling and the development of social networks, resulting in intergenerational conflict (Tilbury, 2007b; Fozdar, 2009; Tilbury et al, 2005; Atwell et al, 2009; Gifford et al, 2009; Correa-Velez et al, 2010). This causes significant stress, particularly for men, and is identified as the reason for some of the interactions refugees have with the Australian legal system, as it sometimes manifests as violence. One feature of the intergenerational conflict is to do with questions of identity, with parents wanting young people to retain their former cultural identity, and young people focussing more on dual integrated identities. Rodriguez-Jimenez and Gifford’s (2010) study into young refugees from Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan, found that young refugees’ identity orientations are different from their parents, and not focussed on ethnicity and religion.

Being part of a supportive family has been found to be a key factor in positive resettlement for refugee youth (McMichael, et al, 2011). At the same time, intergenerational issues and loss of trust, discipline and attachment can pose a serious threat to the family unit, and thus the successful resettlement of families. Interestingly, refugee children and adolescents in Australia who have the most positive attitudes towards both their culture of origin and Australian culture have the highest ratings of self-worth and peer social acceptance (Kovacev, 2004).

**Spatial Dimensions of Settlement**

Where refugees are settled is an important aspect of their experience as it can influence access to work opportunities, settlement services, and the ability to interact with people
who speak the same language and who have similar cultural and religious backgrounds (Hugo, 2011). In terms of distribution within Australia, while humanitarian settlers are reasonably evenly distributed, Hugo (2011:90) found that they have settled disproportionately in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Australia is a highly urbanised country, with the vast majority of its population living in the major capital cities. This affects patterns of refugee settlement. Additionally, as noted, there tends to be a concentration of refugees in certain suburbs as a result of settlement service imperatives, socio-economic influences and family and social networks. The overriding trend has been for most refugees to settle in major Australian cities, particularly Melbourne and Sydney (Hugo, 2011). There have also been increasingly dispersed patterns of settlement in urban metropolitan areas motivated by a number of factors including a general trend towards outer-suburban growth and the limited availability of appropriate affordable housing in the inner-cities (VFST, 2004). These changes in settlement patterns highlight the need for adaptive approaches to service provision. A report based on research in the rural-urban areas of outer Sydney (an area experiencing significant disadvantage and deprivation) accepted that service delivery should vary across regions depending on need (Macarthur Diversity Services, 2005).

Although research suggests that newly arrived migrants tend to settle in metropolitan centres near to family supports and other social networks and services, there has been a push by the Australian government in recent years to settle humanitarian entrants, and indeed migrants generally, in regional areas of Australia (CVWPM, 2004; Sypek et al, 2008). Particular initiatives have included grants for humanitarian community services, needs-based planning and improved settlement information in regional areas. The rationale behind such policies is that settlement policy should assist humanitarian entrants to contribute to and participate in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival, and help to (re)build regional economies.

Hugo (2011) argues that regional centres offer refugees opportunities and benefits that are more difficult to find in large urban centres, such as affordable housing; employment opportunities (although these are usually in low skilled and unpopular jobs) and a smaller community environment which remains appealing for refugees who have come from similar contexts in their home countries. More broadly, there is a renewed interest in Australia in regional development, particularly in terms of the shortage of workers which is seen as a major constraint to development. From Hugo’s research, one might conclude that refugee settlers are currently helping meet this demand and that this role could be more important in the future.

However, other research finds that the personal experiences of humanitarian entrants settling in regional areas are varied and that there are numerous additional constraints on accessing settlement and related services which both directly and indirectly exclude them from achieving settlement goals (e.g., Stevenson, 2005; Taylor and Stanovic, 2005; Nsubuga-Kyobe and Hazelman, 2007; McDonald et al, 2008). Johnson, Vasey, and Markovic (2009), for example, found that Iraqi refugees living in a regional town in Victoria had limited employment opportunities despite being professionally qualified in Iraq, and participants commonly stated that the wages were poor and the type of work demeaning. In addition, they found English skills difficult to obtain in their local area with English classes stopping
altogether, and that access to services in the social and health sectors was limited. It is difficult to determine whether these problems were simply ‘teething difficulties’ due to the newness of the regional settlement initiative. Other studies have produced mixed results. Correa-Velez et al (2011) compared the use of health services of humanitarian entrant men settled in urban compared to regional areas. They found that while participants reported good levels of subjective health and well being, men living in urban areas were more likely to have a long-standing illness and report poorer health than those settled in regional areas. In contrast, men living in regional areas reported poorer levels of well being in the environment domain and were more likely to visit hospital emergency departments.

Thus regional resettlement in Australia, while contributing to the economic development of regional towns, may lead to the formal exclusion of refugees from the wider community in some domains. Further research is needed to clarify this, and other regional versus urban settlement issues.

**Conclusion**

The literature reviewed above reveals a mixed picture of refugee settlement. While significant support is provided by government or through government-funded services, employment remains a problem area. For some, particularly those requiring higher levels, English language learning is also an issue. Despite service providers’ best efforts to ensure this is a priority, the fact that a quarter of humanitarian entrants do not complete the free English classes is a matter of ongoing concern. More esoteric problems such as connections with the wider community and sense of belonging are aspects of settlement that can be worked on by both the refugee communities and the wider Australian community. However, while there is some research on this aspect of settlement, much more detailed qualitative research is required.

It is clear from Hugo’s research that some of these standard resettlement problems will be resolved over time. This is not to say that the situation cannot be improved, with structural support but also better community engagement and more positive attitudes. The literature highlights areas for further exploration as part of the current project.
Chapter 3 – Methodology

Research Design

The research was undertaken as a collaboration between researchers based initially at Murdoch University and then at The University of Western Australia, and the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC). There was a clear benefit to working with the MMRC, which provided links with communities and bilingual assistants and daily interactions that enabled the researchers to understand the complexities faced by humanitarian entrants and services assisting them.

A qualitative research design was utilised using in-depth interviews and focus groups and a methodology called photovoice, which provides visual data allowing participants to represent their experiences in a medium other than language (see for example Morrow 2001; Rapport et al 2005). Due to its exploratory nature and its sensitive subject matter, this design was considered the most appropriate by the Research Manager, the sponsoring organisation and the steering committee.

The research coordinator for the project (Dr Lisa Hartley) was appointed in February, 2011, to work between the MMRC and UWA, coordinating the data collection, research tool development, and assisting with analysis and the write up of the report.

A steering committee chaired by the MMRC Director, and with representation MMRC, Centrecare, Fremantle Multicultural Centre, Edmund Rice Centre, ASeTTS, Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), was formed in February 2011 to guide the project and offer cultural and community advice. It provided advice on the development of formal documentation for the research (information sheets - See Appendices A - C; consent forms – See Appendices D - G and on development of the interview schedule - see Appendix H). The committee also provided access to information about service provision, made suggestions of bilingual assistants to undertake the interviews and clients to be interviewed, and provided feedback on the draft report. The committee met seven times during the course of the project, including a final meeting to provide feedback on this report.

Bilingual Worker Recruitment and Training

Interviews with humanitarian entrant participants were undertaken by trained bilingual workers. A total of 12 bilingual workers were recruited and trained on the formal training day. Only six of these workers actually conducted and transcribed interviews. A further six bilingual workers were individually trained by the Research Coordinator. A total of 12 bilingual workers completed interviews and transcription. The challenges in the retention of the bilingual workers included family stressors and obtaining full-time work.4

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4It should be noted that individual training was not only time consuming (e.g. finding an appropriately skilled bilingual worker, organising training, conducting one-on-one training), it also meant that the new workers had not benefited from talking about the interview schedule with other bilingual workers, as was done in the group training session. This potentially undermined the quality of the interviews. In addition, because the funded time frame allowed so little time to recruit and train bilingual workers, there was less time to screen bilingual workers. The researchers relied on the word of those referring the bilingual workers. As a result the quality of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Languages spoken</th>
<th>Gender Bilingual Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Kirundi</td>
<td>Male 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Male 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (Democratic Republic of the)</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Male 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td>Male 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Female 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tigrinya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Tigre</td>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberian Kreyol</td>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Krio</td>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Somali Arabic</td>
<td>Female 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Sudanese Arabic</td>
<td>Female 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Sudanese (Dinka, Bari, Zandi, Baki)</td>
<td>Male 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma (Myanmar)</td>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>Male 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chin</td>
<td>Male 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Male 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>Female 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Hazaragi</td>
<td>Male 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pashto, Dari</td>
<td>Female 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Female 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Male 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MMRC coordinated the training for the bilingual interviewers who attended a half-day training session held in April 2010. The training was facilitated by two experienced qualitative researchers (Drs Farida Fozdar and Lisa Hartley) who also have expertise in refugee resettlement issues. The training was conducted at MMRC. Interviewers were provided with education, practical advice and the chance to develop their skills in a range of aspects of qualitative interviewing including active listening and working with the interview schedule (See Appendix J). The training covered the background to the project, characteristics and assumptions of qualitative research, in-depth interviewing, ethical issues and transcribing. During the training, the bilingual interviewers were also encouraged to provide feedback on the draft interview protocol.

Interviews and transcripts was variable. For future projects the use of professional researchers, using interpreters, while more expensive, may produce more consistent and higher quality transcripts.
At the completion of training all bilingual interviewers signed a “Pledge of Confidentiality” (See Appendix G) to indicate their understanding of the importance of and willingness to keep information gained confidential.

The Research Coordinator was available for the duration of data collection to meet with and debrief the interviewers as necessary and to provide ongoing support and encouragement.

**Study Participants**

*Humanitarian Entrant participants*

Seventy six humanitarian entrants who had been in Australia for either 1 – 2 years, or 2 – 4 years participated in the research. The research attempted to elicit the views of a wide range of individuals and to represent the proportions of humanitarian entrants from different communities settling in Western Australia. Table 3.2 indicates the range of source countries of participants. Participants ranged in age from youth to elderly. Sixty-four interviews were completed, including seven undertaken with more than one person (either with a husband and wife, or other family members). Thirty-five were male and 41 female. For a full description of the demographics of the humanitarian entrant participants, see Chapter 4.

**Table 3.2 Humanitarian Entrant Participants by Country of Origin and Years in Australia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Years in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (The Democratic Republic of)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (Dinka)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (Bari, Zandi, Baki)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma (Chin)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma (Karen)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine/Jordan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were recruited through a number of methods. First, the names and contact details of potential participants were given to the Research Coordinator by the service
providers on the steering committee, after they had been asked their permission for their details to be passed on. Those names were passed onto the appropriate bilingual worker who called the individuals to discuss their willingness to participate. Individuals were assured that their participation was voluntary and would not affect their access to services, and that all of the information would be kept strictly confidential. If the individual agreed, an interview time and place appropriate for both the bilingual worker and participant was arranged.

Participants were also referred through the bilingual workers themselves. The bilingual workers had specific knowledge and understanding of their respective communities and were thus able to identify potential interviewees. For the majority of the interviews, this was the preferred method of recruitment because the interviews often required trust and rapport.

There were a number of challenges faced in the recruitment process. The original recruitment plan was to obtain referrals of potential participants from service providers. For the most part, however, this did not transpire mainly due to time challenges with service providers. In addition, there was particular difficulty in gaining access to some communities, including the Tamil and Iranian communities. This issue was addressed by finding bilingual workers with existing connections in these communities.

Photovoice participants
Participants involved in the photovoice aspect of the project were all humanitarian entrants who had been interviewed in the first phase of the research, apart from one participant who was recruited from another project at MMRC. A total of 13 people attended the training and completed the project. Their details are included in Table 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Family/Single</th>
<th>Years in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan/Palestine</td>
<td>Single male</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Family of 5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Family of 5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Family of 4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Family of 5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Family of 7</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Family of 3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma – family of five</td>
<td>Family of 5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>2 brothers</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Single male</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service provider participants
Three focus groups were conducted with service providers, facilitated by the Research
Manager and Coordinator. The first focus group was conducted for service providers in the South Metropolitan Perth Area. It was held at the Fremantle Multicultural Centre and seven representatives attended. A second focus group was conducted for service providers in the North Metropolitan Perth Area. It was held at the MMRC and seven representatives attended. A final focus group was conducted with the members of the Steering Committee.

Organisations and government departments that participated in the focus groups included:
- Centrecare
- Central Institute of Technology
- Communicare
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)
- Edmund Rice Centre
- Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia (ECCWA)
- Fremantle Multicultural Centre
- Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre
- South Metropolitan Area Health Service
- Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
- Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI)
- Save the Children
- West-Metro Police Crime Prevention and Ethnic Engagement Office

Data Collection

Three sets of data were collected over a period of seven months from April 2011 – November 2011.

Humanitarian entrant interviews

One-on-one interviews with humanitarian entrant participants were undertaken by bilingual interviewers at times and places suitable to both parties. To minimize difficulties with communication and understanding and to ensure inclusion, interviews were undertaken in the language participants felt most comfortable with. These included Kirundi, French, Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigré, English, Liberian Kreyol, Krio, Somali Arabic, Sudanese Arabic, Burmese, Chin, Karen, Tamil, Hazaragi, Pashto, Dari, Farsi and Arabic.

Prior to the commencement of each interview, participants were given written (translated as appropriate) and verbal information about the research, and the opportunity to ask questions. Verbal consent for the interviews to be audio taped was obtained. Guarantees of confidentiality were also given to participants. The bilingual workers followed a semi-structured interview schedule that asked questions relating to their experiences in Australia with regards to education, training, employment, English lessons, health, belonging, integration, citizenship and social networks (see Appendix H). Following completion of the interviews, the bilingual workers transcribed the interviews into English.

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5 A methodological note is appropriate here. The material collected from service provider focus groups was in some ways more useful than that collected from humanitarian entrants themselves. This is because the service providers were able to provide an overview of issues, and were also far more cognizant of the available services, differences between communities, matters of funding and jurisdiction, and trends over time.
Support network maps

Interview participants were invited as part of their interviews to map their sources of support on a series of concentric circles. This methodology was designed to identify visually the main sources of support (formal and informal) humanitarian entrants used. Participants were asked the following question: “Thinking about the people that you know, and the groups and organisations you are involved in, and about your settlement in Australia, who provides support and what sort of support?” Examples of different types of support were suggested such as talking, visiting, help with childcare/schooling, getting children to school, driving lessons, assistance with shopping/finding the right foods, using public transport, technology, negotiating bureaucracies, filling in forms, phoning and any other types of support. Participants were invited to map the closeness of these helpers on the concentric circle map by placing a sticker and identifying the category of helper and types of assistance, and were then asked whether these had changed over time.

Stickers were labelled as follows:
- Family member
- Close friend (identify whether from community or mainstream)
- Sponsor
- Acquaintance
- Volunteer
- Community leader
- Religious leader
- Organisation
- Government agency

An example of one of the maps is included below.
**Photovoice training and methodology**

A sub-sample of the humanitarian entrant participants was invited to take part in training with a professional photographer and photovoice trainer, the Research Manager, the Research Coordinator and a work placement student from Curtin University’s School of Public Health. This training focused on developing skills in using photography to express settlement experiences in a creative way.

Participants took part in a three-hour training session (see Appendix K). Participants were given a digital camera to use over the course of the project and beyond, and were taught basic skills, such as zooming, using the flash and deleting (some already had considerable skills in camera work). Through a series of interactive exercises, the participants were instructed how to use photography to capture their settlement experiences and were briefed on the importance of gaining the consent of those whose photographs they took. Participants were also given an information sheet on the project and signed a consent form.

Participants were asked to take at least five photos on each of the following themes, over a period of three weeks:
- My home
- My learning experiences
- My employment experiences
- My friendships
- My life in Australia
- Where I feel I belong

The Research Coordinator and the work placement student uploaded the photos to a laptop and recorded the stories behind the photos, as told by participants, in a word document. For two of the participants, a bilingual worker was used in this process.

**Service provider focus groups**

Focus group discussions were conducted by the Research Manager and Coordinator with a range of service provider agency staff from the Perth metropolitan area. The contact details of potential participants were provided by OMI. Normal consent procedures were followed. The focus groups were audio recorded and upon completion, downloaded and transcribed by the Research Coordinator.

Participants were asked which ethnic groups they were seeing and what services they were providing, any differences in needs perceived over time, and by community, reflections on changes to service provision, issues for onshore processed refugees, and suggestions for improvements to service provision (see Appendix I for the focus group questions).

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of the transcript data was undertaken by the Research Manager and Coordinator independently coding a sample of transcripts for major themes. Categories were compared, then re-examined and refined. The aim of refining these categories was to maximize both internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. All transcripts were then imported into the qualitative data analysis program QSR NVivo 11 using these codes. Once this had been completed, the relationships between the categories were examined. A similar method of analysis was used for the focus group transcripts. Particular attention was paid to any
differences between participants who had been here fewer years compared to those who had been in Australia for longer.

Analysis of the network maps was undertaken by Maria Puerta Francos, an anthropologist trained in network analysis. Information was entered into an excel document, and categorized according to sources of support and length of residence. Significant sources of support and patterns were identified, as were clear gaps.

Analysis of the photographs obtained from the photovoice exercise was undertaken, for the purposes of this report, through a straightforward selection of photographs that represented common themes, or that were particularly poignant, creative or communicative in their imagery. A more detailed semiotic analysis will be undertaken in the future.

**Ethical Considerations**

Undertaking research with humanitarian entrants requires a heightened focus on ethical issues. Ethical approval for the study was received from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Murdoch University.

To obtain ethical clearance, a number of strategies were implemented to ensure the protection of the rights and safety of the participants. Prior to the commencement of the interview, participants were given an information sheet, which the bilingual worker explained in the appropriate language, outlining all aspects of the research, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions. Potential participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and if they did consent to participate, they were free to withdraw from the study or decline to answer any question without consequence. Humanitarian entrant participants gave verbal consent. Service provider agency staff provided written consent.

Confidentiality was considered key for this research. To this end, all interviewers signed a pledge of confidentiality developed for the study. Additionally, any identifying information evident in interviews was deleted. In the report, participants are only identified by their gender or as a support agency staff member.

Similarly, a number of ethical issues were considered for the photovoice project. First was the ownership of photos. As stated in the consent form, the photographer ultimately owns the photos: they were given the option to consent to the use of the photos. If they did not tick the boxes, the photos could not be used for research purposes and/or the exhibition (see Appendix F). The second issue concerned the reward for participation. Participants were offered a camera for their participation and some prints of their photos. Cameras were only given to the participants once they had finished or completed a significant portion of the project (see Appendix F). It was also reiterated that participants should not feel compelled to hand over photos that they did not want the researchers to have access to. The third issue was in regards to photographs of third persons. In the training session, as well as in the consent form, participants were informed about the need to ask people for their consent to take photos.
Limitations

As this study used a qualitative research design, and while we aimed to obtain views from a diverse range of people, the intent was not to seek a strictly representative sample of individuals from refugee backgrounds and attempt to generalize the findings broadly. Rather the methodology was designed to allow the collection of in-depth, rich information about participants’ experiences of settlement.

The study provides information about the characteristics of settlement experiences of humanitarian entrants (in their own voices), but, being a qualitative study, does not attempt to quantify the prevalence of these experiences.

As with most studies of refugees there were also challenges accessing the range of communities desired, particularly within the time constraints of the project. Nevertheless, the findings add to the knowledge that is currently available regarding understandings and experiences of settling in Western Australia, particularly the effect of recency.

Additionally, due to differences between bilingual assistants, the quality of the interviews, the social networking maps, and translated transcripts varied.

Limitations with the photovoice component centred around the differences in photography skills and creativity between different participants, together with the tendency to represent material aspects of settlement, rather than social or emotional aspects. The photographs included in the report have been selected to reflect a range of aspects.
Chapter 4 – Participants and Key Issues

As detailed in Chapter 3, participants were from a wide range of backgrounds. In order to obtain a sample somewhat representative of the population of humanitarian entrants settling in Western Australia over the past four years, a target sample of participants was calculated based on statistics obtained from DIAC (http://www.immi.gov.au/settlement/) (see Table 4.1). Participants were recruited to try to meet this target.

Table 4.1 Humanitarian Entrant Participant Sample by Community and Years in Australia (Target Sample in Brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Years in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (Democratic Republic)</td>
<td>2(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>3(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>5(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (Dinka, Bari, Zandi, Baki)</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma (Chin, Karen)</td>
<td>7(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>2(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>5(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>5(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine/Jordan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>39 (40)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were from a range of age groups. Five were aged 15-18 years; 11 aged 19-26 years; 30 aged 27-39 years; 18 aged 40-49 years; and nine aged 50-64 years (three did not disclose their age).

The majority of the participants either came to Australia on an Offshore Visa (n= 50); or a Sponsorship Visa (n = 17). Sponsorship visas are provided to people who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of their human rights in their home country, are living outside their home country; and have their application supported by a ‘proposer’ – usually a family member. Six participants had an Onshore Protection Visa (i.e. they had arrived by boat without visas), originating from Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan (three participants did not disclose their visa type).
The majority of participants identified as Muslim \((n = 32)\) or Christian \((n = 33)\); with the rest identifying as Baha’i \((n = 5)\); Sabean \((n = 2)\); Hindu \((n = 2)\); or Buddhist \((n = 1)\). Only one participant stated that they had no religion.

In view of the broad backgrounds of participants, it is important to acknowledge that each individual’s ‘refugee journey’ is different. Thus making generalizations may undermine recognition of the complexity of factors at play for any specific individual. For example, some have spent years living in refugee camps, others in urban slums. Others have come to Australia via boat and applied for asylum upon arrival, while others may have applied for asylum while in Australia on a valid visa. Pre-arrival education will vary significantly, as will access to health services, and employment history. The varying pre-arrival experiences and the diversity of backgrounds of humanitarian entrants settling in Australia adds to the complexity of understanding their settlement experiences and must be considered when developing policy solutions. One of the service providers described the situation thus:

> Many of the newer arrivals that we are seeing are coming from quite war torn, ravaged countries for over many years. So for example, the South Sudanese community - they have been ravaged for the last 30 years, plus. And Afghanistan for the last 30, you know, educational systems have been destroyed there, many of them are from regional scenarios that are regional and might not have had educational systems in the first place...So what we’re starting to look at is, as a guiding framework, the pre-arrival experience as a starter.

(Service Provider)

Despite the diversity in pre-arrival and resettlement experiences, some common themes were identified, across communities, visa types, and between those who had been in Australia for one to two years, and those who had been in Australia for two to four years. These are discussed below.

**Level of Language**

Participants were asked how well they could speak English when they arrived and currently, with the options 1 = Fluently, 2 = Fairly well, 3 = Slightly, 4 = Not at all.

On average, those who had been in Australia for a shorter amount of time rated their English language ability on arrival as fairly low, between slightly and not at all (the average was 3.58). At the time of the interview, on average, this had shifted to between ‘fairly-well’ and ‘slightly’ (2.54) indicating a clear improvement over time.

The findings were similar for those arriving in Australia two-to-four years ago suggesting that English language skill is a significant issue regardless of how long one has been settled in the country. On average, those who had been in Australia between two-to-four years rated their English speaking skill as ‘slightly’ on arrival (mean of 3.15). Even after being in Australian two-to-four years, participants on average rated their English language level as between ‘fairly-well’ and ‘slightly’ (mean of 2.24).

While correlational tests were not undertaken, it appears that those who are more educated were more likely to report higher levels of English. Iranians also tended to rate themselves better in terms of their skills.
There were some notable methodological issues with this question, including some missing data (some Burundians; Burmese; and Sudanese). Other bilingual workers filled out participants’ spoken language, rather than providing numbers. The result was that 64 responses were coded, from the 76 participants.

**Top Settlement Issues**

After identifying specific settlement experiences in relation to health, housing, employment, education, belonging and so on, as per the interview schedule, participants were encouraged to reflect on the biggest challenge they had experienced while settling in Australia. In particular, participants were asked to consider the factors that limited their integration into Australian society. These are noted here before going into the specifics within each of the settlement areas in the following chapters.

Overwhelmingly, the main challenges identified were learning English, obtaining employment and securing housing. These three issues were often discussed as being interrelated. However these problems were balanced by gratitude for the support refugees had received from individuals and agencies.

**Learning English**

The challenge of learning English was the most prevalent settlement issue for people across all communities, and this was the case for participants who had been in Australia for a shorter amount of time as well as longer. For some, lack of English was a particular issue in times of crisis, for example when dealing with crime; for others it was seen as the biggest settlement barrier as it hindered them from finding employment or undertaking further study. This issue is further explored in Chapter 5.

A number of participants spoke of the instrumental help that social networks such as friends, family and neighbours provided in helping to bridge the language gap, particularly in the initial months and years in Australia. Others spoke of the crucial help of settlement organisations.

**Employment**

While finding stable and suitable employment was a prevalent settlement challenge overall, across all groups, it was a more pressing concern for more recent arrivals. The challenge of finding employment was often linked with securing housing. For some participants the restriction of Centrelink benefits and the need to send remittances were strong motivating factors in trying to find a job. A few participants also spoke of the challenges involved with technology, including the computer, which provided a further barrier to both education and employment. Employment issues are covered in Chapter 5.

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6 Centrelink is an Australian Government agency under the Department of Human Services. It provides a large range of services, such as: Concession and Health Care Cards, multilingual and multicultural services, financial services (information and resources such as social security payments), counselling, legal aid, youth support, rent schemes and social work services. ([http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/home/index.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/home/index.htm)).
**Housing**
A significant number of participants identified finding suitable housing as their biggest challenge. As with employment, housing was of greater concern for those who had been in Australia for a shorter amount of time, although many participants raised it. For most, finding affordable housing was the most pressing issue (see Chapter 8 for a more detailed analysis of this issue).

**Intercultural challenges**
Although there were no explicit questions about intercultural challenges in the interviews, a number of participants (mostly from African and Middle Eastern communities and those who had been in Australia for longer periods of time) stated that this was the most difficult settlement issue they had faced in Australia. Some were overwhelmed by how different things were in Australia compared to their pre-arrival experiences. Others spoke of the tension between respecting the Australian way of life and maintaining the family’s cultural identity and customs.

**Driver’s licence**
A few participants identified difficulties obtaining a driver’s licence (and transport more generally) as their top settlement issue. This was the case across communities and regardless of how long they had been in Australia.

**Other challenges**
A number of other key challenges identified included the length of time waiting for family reunification, financial strains, access to education and experiences of racism and discrimination. There did not appear to be a difference in terms of the length of stay in Australia, or ethnic community.
Chapter 5 – Education and Training, Employment and Career Hopes

The humanitarian entrant participants in this study were asked about their education and employment background and their current situation in Australia. They were also asked to consider the ways in which education and training, such as English classes, affect their settlement experiences. Service providers were also asked to discuss these issues, and independently raised concerns about parental expectations of refugee background young people.

Education and Training – English Programs

Humanitarian entrant participants were asked about the free English courses provided by the AMEP. Many emphasised that the English courses gave them the confidence to speak with people outside of their own language group. Many also noted classes provided important social contact with others experiencing similar challenges settling in Australia, giving them a sense of comfort and community and confidence to interact with members of the wider community. This sentiment did not differ with length of time settled in Australia.

> The difficulty I came across was that I couldn’t say good morning or good night. Now I am able to hear what my friends are saying and I can also respond to them. I can say good morning to my neighbour, which are great achievements.

(Male, South Sudan, 4 years in Australia)

Other participants spoke of their gratitude to the Australian government for providing the English courses.

> I think these English classes are very useful. I am very grateful to the government for providing these English courses for refugees and migrants. I was very depressed at the beginning of our arrival as I was not able to express myself, communicating with people and being able to mix with them, but after attending these courses, I felt much better. I was able to communicate, make friends and integrate to some extent into Australian society.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 7 months in Australia)

Similar sentiments regarding the sense of community obtained through the English lessons were expressed by the few participants who were or had attended Intensive English Centres (IECs – special classes within schools dedicated to providing English language tuition until students are ready to enter mainstream classes).

> My Intensive English at Cyril Jackson Senior Campus has not only improved my way of speaking but has added the Aussie English way of speaking in my conversation with colleagues. I have secured a caring job that is also assisting in my every day communication with the Australian aged people.

(Female, Sierra Leone, 1 year in Australia)

Although there was an overwhelming recognition that learning English was essential to settling effectively in Australia, there were a number of criticisms of AMEP, which have been
identified by previous research. For example, some felt the content needed changing, including more focus on broadening vocabulary, particularly simple conversational skills. This issue was raised by those who had been in Australia for a longer period of time. Others noted that the manner of teaching in English made learning difficult for those with no English language at the outset.

They teach without giving us proper vocabulary according to our language which could facilitate us to catch up very quickly with the language. They teach us in their language and we can’t understand as we do not know even how to defend ourselves from it. English language is the key to life in Australia enabling non-English people to fully integrate in the society.

(Male, Burundi, 2 years in Australia)

For some of the participants who had prior knowledge of English and/or higher levels of formal education, the content of AMEP was not specialised enough. These participants wanted a more advanced understanding of English and suggested the need for a more tailored program, based on people’s capacities.

One week after my arrival to Perth, I started to go to English classes. I felt that the level of these courses has been designed for migrants in general. I believe that for graduates of universities they should plan different courses. As I have got my degree online in English from an American university, attending these courses did not help me that much, but for understanding the Australian colloquial expressions and being able to follow the everyday conversations it was good. I had difficulty in understanding people talk, now it has much improved.

(Female, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Some participants also pointed out the limitations of AMEP classes in preparing people for working in professional jobs, such as in the medical field. The participant below notes that while other States and Territories have courses available to humanitarian entrants wanting to develop professional vocabularies, Western Australia only offers general English classes. The lack of professional vocabulary was identified as a major reason why this particular participant feels he is having difficulty getting a job in his field.

In WA there is misunderstanding for the overseas professional people especially in the medical field. In previous years there were courses in occupational English language for nurses, dentists and doctors who came from overseas but these courses have been cancelled here because there is no more funding for it. Doctors who arrive in Sydney are given 510 hours to help to do the OAT course [a test necessary for overseas doctors to take]... but in WA it is general English. This is a difference in English teaching. We wish in WA to have this course.

(Male, Iraq, 2 years in Australia)

As found in previous research, many participants felt that 510 hours was simply not enough to achieve a good command of the English language. This held regardless of length of residence.
Learning the English language is very useful for every one that lives in Australia because without learning the English language you can’t even cover your essential needs. Also you can’t rely on interpretation assistance for your whole life in Australia. On the other hand I think the 510 hours is not enough to learn English, so I recommend that they should increase it to at least 1000 hours because if people can’t speak and understand English well they will make many mistakes without noticing that. This will impact negatively in their lives.

(Female, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

Very similar sentiments were echoed by the service providers. While they acknowledged that the 510 hours is a vast improvement from 10 years ago when they reported no English classes were offered to humanitarian entrants, they also stressed the need to provide more long-term English training opportunities. This was considered essential for those illiterate in their first language, without prior-education, or with significant disruptions in their educational pathway pre-arrival. Of particular concern, one service provider noted that people from some communities, such as the Twa community, were unable to identify letters in the alphabet even after two years of English classes.

While many humanitarian entrant participants noted that learning English was essential to their ability to settle in Australia, including to their feelings of belonging and ability to ‘integrate’ (see Chapter 8), not all completed the 510 hours. A number of reasons were provided. Some female participants stopped English lessons to look after children, while others (both male and female) stopped to look after sick relatives. Another common reason was the need/pressure to get employment to send remittances to family members in other countries.

At the start I went to the English class in Perth city and there were no issues and it was helpful in knowing a bit of English. But because of issues at home and also since I had to return money to Centrelink I stopped studying and started looking for work... Once my family is here then I plan to continue again [to go to AMEP].

(Male, Sri Lanka, 1 year in Australia)

Some participants on a sponsorship visa also noted that due to visa restrictions limiting their access to Centrelink benefits they stopped English classes to find work. The tension between the need to earn money and the need to learn English to secure employment is captured in the above quotes.

Access to English classes was a problem for one participant who lived in a town three hours south of Perth to be with family members. Having no formal education in her home country, and not being able to attend English classes in Australia, she highlighted this as her biggest settlement issue.

Interviewer: So you haven’t been in English classes since you arrived to Australia?
Respondent: No, actually there is English class about an hour driving from Donnybrook but the problem is my daughter-in-law doesn’t have a drivers’ licence so both of us can’t go.

Interviewer: Oh this is very sad
Respondent: Yes I am very sad and bored because there is nothing to do. My best time is when I come to Perth and stay with my other son from time to time, so I have a chance to visit people, meet some old Afghan ladies and chat together and go shopping.

(Female, Afghanistan, 2 years in Australia)
Education and Training Pathways

In terms of source of information about education and training, settlement caseworkers were important for some. Many participants expressed frustration over their lack of understanding and knowledge about the education and training systems in Australia, and many did not appear to know the appropriate places to seek formal advice and help. Participants who had been in Australia longer were more likely to express these frustrations than those who had been in Australia for a shorter time.

The frustration regarding a lack of systematic information about pathways is expressed in the following quote.

**Interviewer:** Did you get any support from friends, from DIAC, from any institution for getting relevant training?

**Respondent:** Um... no I didn’t get any assistance.... I am an accountant, I have a bachelor degree in accounting. No one came and told me that in TAFE doing lessons in accounting ‘you can enrol in it, this will help you, this will qualify you’, no one told me anything. They [Job Services Australia] asked me what kind of job are you looking for? I told them I had experience in accounting, I want to work in it, they said ‘what do you want now!’. I came here new, I didn’t know my choices. I want a guide to direct me to the right way. I heard there are MYOB lessons. I told them [JSA] I need MYOB lessons. I entered the MYOB class and they supported me with payment but no one has offered me a job because I had no Australian experience...I have no work experience and nobody told me I need to know business language.

(Female, Iraq, 2 years in Australia)

Those participants who had the skills, knowledge and confidence to approach different agencies about what they had to offer were in a better position to source information about training pathways. In a few instances, participants commended WA government services for helping them source useful information.

**With regards to finding my course of study, I approached many different organisations. Each one of them gave me different advice and different guidance which all contradicted each other. Luckily, I found the Department of Education and Training. They spent a lot of time to evaluate my case and provided several plans for my course of study. They advised me to choose one of these plans which I felt suited me better and I thought ‘I can reach my goal’. I chose one of them which suited me the most. I am very happy as it is the course of study that I wanted and had wished for.**

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 7 months in Australia)

As found in previous research, there were perceived inconsistencies in training accreditation pathways for professionals across states. This was a particularly frustrating issue for one participant wanting to work as a GP in Western Australia.

**The MCQ exam costs$3000 written and clinical $11,000. Because of this high cost it was cancelled here [in Western Australia] and it is not sponsored by state government...so the doctors who arrive here must be self-dependent and self-study to collect resources and references and books and do the test. There is no committee here or body to take care of overseas doctors and help them to pass these tests.**

(Male, Iraq, 2 years in Australia)
Education and Training Issues for Humanitarian Entrant Young People

Service providers identified a range of issues affecting successful negotiation of the education system by refugee background young people. These included issues both within the education system and outside it, specifically high expectations of parents, low expectations of teachers, and certain social problems that they saw as growing concerns.

When it comes to career issues, and again I’m a little bit afraid to say this not to be misinterpreted... there is a very strong expectation from migrant parents that their children are going to become doctors, lawyers and engineers and if they don’t that it’s a failure. And I think that’s very destructive. Because a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny proportion of us can become doctors and it doesn’t mean we failed if we don’t become doctors.... It does not mean a lowering of expectations. It means an adjustment. To accept the fact that success is not necessarily determined by your child becoming the most wonderful thing ever. And that there are many other options within the zone of a particular area of interest that the child can do very successfully. I feel really strongly if we could somehow incorporate that into the career guidance that we give, and give parents for that matter.

(Service Provider)

Concerns were raised regarding the school environment, including social pressures, particularly for those from African backgrounds. This was recognised as a source of significant fear within the community, particularly by African background service providers.

The content [of school education] is not the problem. It’s the school environment and how their children will turn out to be. So it is not the content but the fear that “my child will end up getting pregnant. My child, if it’s a boy, will end up getting into drugs and alcohol. My child will end up in jail”. These are the fears. These are the fears that actually if all African parents do have the opportunity and privilege, they would like to send their children back to Africa.

(Service Provider)

Other service providers highlighted concerns about what they perceived as institutionalised forms of discrimination, such as assumptions held by some teachers that children from refugee backgrounds cannot succeed.

I think that there are some institutionalised forms of repression. You know, when a teacher says “oh no, there’s no hope for you”, and all kinds of language is going to be used, it obviously is going to undermine the child. Whereas “yeah okay, at the moment your grades are not going to get you where you need to go, but if you do this, you do this, and you do this then you can.”

(Service Provider)

Issues surrounding the transition of humanitarian entrant students from the IEC to mainstream schooling were highlighted as a serious settlement concern. Service providers spoke about the developmental mismatch of students in IEC and mainstream schools, which they saw as leading to a host of social problems, such as a lack of engagement with school and anti-social behaviour (e.g. drug taking, drinking, and dropping out of school).
There was a heightened sense of frustration expressed throughout all three focus groups that the same issues appear to be repeating themselves, particularly with regards to dropping out of school.

Service Provider A: I’m finding it very difficult to talk about English and the transition of children because I’ve just had enough. I’ve seen too many kids, suffering too much. Kids in prostitution, running away from home, and kids that I saw in grade six and seven who were doing beautifully, And now... It’s...

Interviewer: Because of what?

Service Provider A: they get to high school, they move from the IECs where they’ve got that support, they get to high school, lots of teachers, no one is responsible, they are missing, they are going further and further and further because they haven’t got the home work support, um, parents want them to do well but they can’t necessarily help them with assignments.

Service Provider B: And that’s linked to the generational issue, that’s the next one.

While it was recognised that some of the challenges facing humanitarian entrant students are similar to those for mainstream students, it was also recognised that humanitarian entrants need additional support, particularly those whose parents do not speak English. Homework support was identified as particularly useful.

Service Provider A: So there needs to be a lot of resources inside the school to provide that support and for the family as well. And then it’s a thing that everyone can agree; it’s very hard to bring up a teenager at all, in any family.

Service Provider B: But you can see the difference. The kids that are doing well at school, the kids that have got some support within their community, or you know, their parents have got good English skills, they are just so different, they are so positive, they want to give it a go, they are ahead. But there are so many that are falling right through the cracks.

Interviewer: So what’s the solution? Is it to have something like, not an IEC but I guess the next level of IEC in the high schools

Service Provider B: They are screaming out for homework support, for individual workers. We have a program so that’s funded by the City of Stirling, a kind of youth intervention program and we’ve got a partnership with them. We’re running a homework program on Thursday in Mirrabooka High School and lots and lots of kids, they are actually bussing them in from Nollamara... But we’ve got a lot of people that are not necessarily teachers but we’ve got three people who have PhDs who are in there assisting with assignments, you know... the level, they can’t read, you know the simple things like ‘how many people’ ‘what’s a population?’...and they’re bringing that back and saying ‘oh this kid is so bright’ but they can’t do an assignment because they can’t read the instructions. And the parents can’t help them.

Service providers identified the need for increased dialogue between government departments regarding these concerns. Focus group members spoke of their frustration that government departments, both State and Federal, try to shift the burden of responsibility.

The departments, the silos, they are not talking. Department of Immigration is saying “we’re doing our bit by providing IEC, you do your bit”. The Department of Education is saying, “Well we can’t sit a 16 year old kid in with a 12 year old kid”. So they need to change their policies about whether that can or cannot happen. And if not, at least create a transition program that ensures no drop out between the IEC and mainstream curriculum. No drop out! At the moment, we chase them left right and centre. We need funding for outreach workers who go out there and work with the mum, or the parent, the kid or the school. These scenarios are serious, serious, and they have been happening for the last X amount of years that everybody knows about. And yet there’s
no departmental response to this. OMI knows about this, Department of Immigration knows about this. Through all our reports, we’ve all been reporting this. Department of Education knows about this. There is no response to this as an issue.

(Service Provider)

Employment

Participation in the economic life of Australia was seen as central to settling in Australia. Despite this, there were high rates of unemployment and under-employment amongst participants even four years post arrival. As noted above, this is partly due to the barriers to recognition of skills and qualifications gained overseas, which limit the ability of new arrivals to acquire appropriate jobs.

If I had a job I would have been able to meet my colleagues at work and among them I would be able to make friends. My English could have been improved and I could make progress socially and materially. I strongly believe that having a job could help refugees to settle better in Australia, integrate with white Australians and know people and the society much better.

(Female, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Concerns around the high rates of underemployment, particularly for skilled humanitarian entrants, were also a strong theme in all three focus groups with service providers.

Because many times you meet some of these people who drive taxis who say “Oh, I was a teacher in my home country but since I have come here I don’t have any teaching job”. And then most of the time, they cry out about shortage of skilled labour! You see, talk to people and find out there are qualified people among the Africans. And some of them are going back to university here, they have trained and retrained and trained. And yet, no jobs. And then we hear there is a shortage of skilled labour. So that is happening and it needs to be looked into. As well, if you want people to settle within one year to five years then why can’t you utilise our skills, utilise our capacities and abilities that can even help the economy? Because instead of them relying on Centrelink they can earn! And I’m sure that’s the expectation of many people who came here with qualifications, they came to work!

(Service Provider)

The underemployment of humanitarian entrants is well-documented. Also well documented is the profoundly negative effect of unemployment and underemployment on mental health, and family and community relations, particularly over the long term. For many participants this was a very real experience.

Respondent: I graduated from university, Management Administration Faculty, Baghdad University, Accounting Department

Interviewer: Did you have any work before reaching Australia?

Respondent: Yeah I worked, I had experience - more than 15 years in the field of accounting, and I was an auditor and deputy head of the internal auditor department.

Interviewer: Now, do you have work, or training or are you enrolled in education?
Respondent: Nowadays I am a uni student in Curtin University. I tried to get job experience, I failed. I applied to jobs many times, I failed (grief sound), no body accept me. I am waiting to complete this semester. I am going to look seriously for work experience and apply for a job.

(Female, Iraq, 2 years in Australia)

Regional Settlement as a Solution to Unemployment

Also highlighted in the focus groups with service providers was the mostly untapped opportunity for humanitarian entrants to work and live in rural communities. Currently DIAC does not settle humanitarian entrants in regional WA due to its own strict criteria for selection of appropriate towns, but some refugees have made secondary moves to these areas, particularly Katanning, and for some Burmese, Albany.

One service provider spoke of the problem of people from rural backgrounds from African communities who are unable to gain employment in Perth who noted, “people’s brains are dying”. This worker suggested that well thought-out rural settlement could provide the opportunity for people to use their farming skills and contribute to the WA economy.

Service providers spoke of the recent trend of humanitarian entrants moving to Katanning for cheaper rental properties and to work in the abattoir. However, some people were moving back because of feelings of social isolation.

Career and Employment Hopes

Participants were asked to reflect on their career goals and hopes in Australia and whether these had changed since their arrival. Some participants noted that while their goals had not changed, they recognised that to achieve them they need a better command of the English language and thus their career focus, for the time being, is on learning English.

Interviewer: What are your career hopes and have these changed since being in Australia?

Respondent: No my career hopes and goals haven’t changed at all. I am hoping to carry on my study in pharmacy and work as a chemist here. I am waiting for the time when my English language has improved.

(Female, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

On the other hand, other participants commented that their career hopes had changed quite dramatically because of their poor command of English. These participants were resigned to reassessing their career aspirations. This appears particularly the case for those participants who had limited formal education pre-arrival.

Interviewer: What are your career hopes and have these changed since being in Australia?

Respondent: Yes my career hopes have changed since I had been in Australia. The reason was my English skill wasn’t enough to have a job. Before I settled here in Australia I thought, if I arrive in Australia I would like to do the same job as I did before in the refugee camp. Because while I lived in refugee camp my career goal was working in community service, especially for the people who were suffering from domestic violent, because I was counsellor.

(Female, Myanmar (Karen), 2 years in Australia)
Some participants said that their career hopes had improved since in their home country they were not afforded the opportunity to work. For these participants, gratitude was expressed towards Australia and the perceived opportunities that exist, as well as a sense of hope for the future. This was regardless of whether they had been in Australia for longer or shorter periods of time.

**Interviewer:** What are your career hopes and have these changed since being in Australia?

**Respondent:** Of course my career hopes have changed since my arrival here over three years ago. It changed from having no hope at all to have a hope for my future. When I was in Iran, I did not have any hope or even think of having a better job or going to university or even the hope of changing my job. There was absolutely no hope of any progress for me in that country. From every aspect of our life we were under pressure from the government as we belonged to a minority religious group. But the Australian government gave us hope to get education to find a job and have progress in the society. I predict a bright future for my education and having a good job. Now I am studying engineering which in my country I never could do or even have a dream to do.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)

Other participants discussed how the safety that Australia offers has opened up the opportunity to consider their future, and their career hopes and aspirations. For these participants, serious threats in their home country meant that their everyday concerns were focused on saving their own and their family’s lives, rather than employment or career.

**My first hope and ambition before arriving to Australia was to save my life. I am very happy and grateful to live here as there is no Taliban, no Al-Qa’ida, no killings and no discriminations etc., therefore the first step and most important factor for me was to have a safe life; the second one was to be able to work as a journalist. But my second hope regarding finding a job as a journalist has changed and I faced a different situation and challenges. I needed to do a lot. If I wanted to achieve my goals regarding being a journalist was a long way off but I had to work as I need to send money for my family.**

(Male, Afghanistan, 1 year and 4 months in Australia)

A few participants discussed how they had to reassess their career goals because of the length of the (re)training process. This was particularly the case for people who had prior professional qualifications that were not recognised. Some had found work in related areas.

**My career goal and hope was to study teaching and be a teacher, but because it takes so long I changed to childcare.**

(Female, Iraq, 3 years in Australia)

**Barriers to Employment and Career Development**

**English proficiency**
Participants were also asked to describe the factors that made it difficult to achieve their career goals. Overwhelmingly, participants acknowledged that to gain employment a
A competent grasp of the English language is essential. A lack of English leading to poor communication was also discussed as leading to job loss.

**Interviewer: Do you have a job at the moment here in Australia?**

**Respondent:** No, but earlier I had a cleaning job for about three months and later lost the job due to poor communication between the manager and me. I couldn’t explain myself as my English was not good.

*(Female, Liberia, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)*

For some participants, their lack of English proficiency seemed an insurmountable barrier that was associated with feelings of helplessness.

**Interviewer: What factors make it difficult to achieve your career hopes (goals)?**

**Respondent:** Yes because, I can’t speak and read/writing English. If I could speak English language, I wouldn’t worry about anything ...to progress my life. Yes, the problem is my English skills.

*(Female, Myanmar (Karen), 1 year in Australia)*

**Overseas qualification recognition**

As found in previous research, gaining overseas qualification recognition was a major concern. A number of issues were raised including the fact that many typically arrived in the country with little or no documentation and therefore face particular barriers in establishing their pre-arrival qualification levels. This was sometimes due to their need to flee without time for preparation, but was also related to how documentation is recorded in countries of origin.

**Interviewer: What factors make it difficult to achieve your career hopes (goals)?**

**Respondent:** The factor that makes it difficult is that I am not under Centrelink, in the system. To get a job is very difficult; I need to work in the field of accounting. To reach there is very hard and difficult. My husband is working and all the responsibility in the house is under him. It makes it difficult for my diploma to be equated. I took it to Osborne Park; they said I should send it to Canberra. It is also very expensive - they need $800 for equating the diploma so I haven’t sent it to Canberra. These are the steps making it difficult to fulfil my goals.

*(Female, Sudan, 2 years in Australia)*

The cost of qualification recognition was also a significant barrier for participants who arrived without financial resources. A number noted that they had high expectations of being able to use the skills obtained in their pre-arrival countries. This lead to skills loss, long term unemployment, loss of self-esteem, and as noted by the participant below, depression.

**Interviewer: Do you have a job; are you undertaking education or training? Have you ever had job or taken a course in Australia?**

**Respondent:** By the time we reached Perth, they required a driver licence and they don’t offer a job apart from schooling. It’s very hard to get a job. It’s so stressful for somebody who had passed so many experiences. There was another master who helped us with mathematics, so that I can be able to do nursing. They don’t recognise other qualifications, like certificates, diploma and degree from other countries. I had high expectation that I will get a job but when we arrived
in Perth I tried to look for a job but they required a driver licence and the qualification was not recognised. That is why most people have depression.

(Female, Sudan, 3 years in Australia)

**Interviewer:** What have your experiences been with the English language classes you attended during your settlement in Australia?

**Respondent:** Other certificates are not considered here in Australia, for example like Sudan school certificate is not considered. It’s challenging. It’s very hard for us, for the government to give us a job with the certificate of Sudan and other countries. To get Certificate IV in English is giving me stress. Any qualification is not recognised in Australia. To equate degree, diploma, they lower the standard backward...I need to do nursing, a lot of changes and demand. Many people are frustrated. If I were like them if a person comes to me with certificate, let them just train them to do the course they wanted. It’s wasting time to go and study again. I am sure many people will be better off. You will have to explain what you want from them.

(Female, Sudan, 4 years in Australia)

Many participants did not know where to seek help for qualification recognition. This was the case for those who had been in Australia for shorter amounts of time, although two participants who had been in Australia for four years voiced similar concerns.

**Interviewer:** What factors make it difficult to achieve your goals?

**Respondent:** Um, the problem can be our new existence in Australia, we don’t have enough information. I think there is a lack of people who can value and appreciate our knowledge and experience which can put us in suitable jobs. I think this is the main problematic issue. In our countries we can be assessed much better than here. In Australia we started to feel that we have to start from zero and this causes us to lose experience, years of life.

(Female, Iraq, 9 months in Australia)

**Australian work experience**

A lack of Australian work experience and referees were also common barriers to employment. For some participants, the organisation that assisted their original settlement provided references. For others this was an enduring issue.

**Regarding the job that I am doing now, I faced the same difficulties like many others do. One of the difficulties which I faced for finding a job here was that I did not have any work experience in Australia. I was an optician and my résumé and my work experience was not appealing to the managers in Australia, as it was from another country. I also did not have any Australian references. My Iranian reference was not to the Australian standard and my resume did not impress them and I was not successful to find my preferred job. Finding a job here without having any Australian reference or work experience is very difficult.**

(Male, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)

**Driver’s licence**

Linked with the necessity of learning English to gain employment was the need for a driver’s licence. This was particularly the case for participants who did not have access to public transport. Past research has highlighted that lack of a driver’s licence is a major barrier to
employment for humanitarian entrants (Flanagan 2007; RCOA 2008:64). A licence is not only important for getting to and from work: certain jobs, such as employment in car yards as vehicle cleaners, require them. Increasingly rigorous and expensive requirements for obtaining a licence compound the problem for refugees.

Interviewer: What factors make it difficult to achieve your career hopes or goals?

Respondent: I am talking about myself; not having a driver’s licence makes it difficult for me to get a job. I spent $2000 in driving lessons in this country that makes it hard for me and people from my country. The first test I went for I failed. It was my mistake, it was at a roundabout. The second one was the speed limit - I was running at 61 kilometres per hour and the assessor told me I have failed. The third one was at Kelmscott. The assessor told me to park in an empty place and when I did stop he told me that I have failed. I have to leave it clear.

(Female, Sudan, 3 years in Australia)

The psychological cost of failing driving tests is demonstrated in the quote below.

I have been driving a manual for 12 years. I came as a driver from Africa to Australia. People had been calling me to go and help them. I went for the test several times. I failed as a mother - how will I drop my children to school?...I do the job of interpretation. It’s really very hard in this part of the world to get a driver’s licence. Getting driver’s licence is like going to hell. The more you fail; your people in your family will say that you are not clever. They lower you down to the lowest point.

(Female, Sudan, 2 years in Australia)

Focus group members spoke of a successful SGP funded driver’s licence program undertaken by the Edmund Rice Centre which is in high demand. Given that driving assists access and employment prospects, and thus settlement, this is an area needing urgent attention.

We need more money for driving lessons. We’ve always got people coming back and saying, “I can get a job but I need a licence”. And um, we know that that’s holding them back. But 35 lessons are just not enough. We need to be supporting them until they get their licence.

(Service Provider)

Racism and discrimination

Racism and discrimination were also identified as significant barriers to employment. One of the participants who had come to Australia as an asylum seeker and had spent nearly two years in immigration detention articulated how the general community’s prejudice towards ‘boat people’ has affected his ability to get a job.

Respondent: Unfortunately some people after hearing we are a refugee, treat you a little bit different. I don’t know why. Watching the news on TV, in parliament, the opposition leader (I’m interested in politics) is always speaking about boat people...Everyday day by plane there are 100 to 150 people coming to Australia. From New Zealand you look at how many people are coming, from Europe, anywhere, and 95% never go back to their own country and stay here and apply and these people get the visa, and never these people they say (critically) they are a refugee. Just the people coming by boat, and if we can come by plane it’s okay, Australians are happy! I came here, it took 24 days, 24 days! I changed four boats, two boats were broke. I was in the water for three days, the boat going under the water, we took a little bit of water, but we don’t have a life
jacket, nothing. We changed boat, but the navy caught my boat two hours from Darwin. Again seven days coming by plane and boat to Christmas Island, straight away all of the people in the boat were sick, I was sick to. Straight away when I got to Christmas Island I was sick and went to hospital. We are not are coming here for a good life and money. I had money, I had a house, I had a car, everything. My life is not safe in my country. I am coming here, here I am just happy because my life is safe, and that’s it.

Interviewer: So one of the main problems you see with finding a job is the negativity that Australians have about refugees?

Respondent: Some people, some people.

(Male, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Similar sentiments were highlighted by two women regarding their wearing of Islamic dress.

Interviewer: What factors make it difficult to achieve your career hopes?

Respondent: The first thing was the English language and the second thing is my age because if I study for three or four years I will be too old to start my career. On the other hand I think there is no equal opportunity, for example when I did my work experience the childcare staff were very happy for the assistance I have provided to them but, after I finished I applied to have a job with them but they did not welcome my request. I am not sure but I think my Islamic outfit and my age were the reason. I am a very flexible woman and I can work and interact with different people and with different religious backgrounds.

(Female, Iraq, 3 years in Australia)

This quote illustrates that age discrimination was also a barrier to employment. Some of the older participants expressed concern regarding their employability and felt they had lost their careers and needed to re-skill, and this transition caused considerable anxiety, with some concerned they might never gain employment as a result of their age.

None of the female participants spoke of gender discrimination. There did, however, appear to be gendering of work roles, with women employed as cleaners and personal care attendants. Female participants appeared more likely to be unemployed due to being the primary carers for their children and/or because they did not have access to affordable childcare.

Employment expectations

A number of service providers discussed the issue of humanitarian entrants having high pre-arrival expectations regarding employment and education pathways. However, these high expectations are not being directly engaged with by service providers, according to focus group participants.

Some person arrives at 45; it takes five years to complete English to the point necessary - who’s going to employ him? There are plenty of graduates. So, making people understand - if you were a social worker in your country, there’s going to be some changes here. Making people understand, that helps them settle. Never in the 23 years that I’ve been involved in this industry here, have I heard some counsellor explain these sort of things, they just say “Just go there, do your resume, update it, take it there” …The way that you handle your job in your own country is different than here.

(Service Provider)
Methods Used to Find Employment

Job Services Australia (JSA) is the organisation responsible for assisting people into the workplace, including humanitarian entrants. As other research has found, there was clear frustration with JSA, particularly with the level of assistance.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any problems in finding a [job / school / course]? Who helped you? Who did you contact to try to find a job?

**Respondent:** To be able to find my course of study or find a job I had lots of difficulties and obstacles. No one helped me or tried to help me to find my job. No job centres or any other organisations helped me to find the job that I am doing now. It took me over a year to find the job that I am doing now. I found it by looking at different websites and through the Internet.

(Male, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)

**Interviewer:** So, I understand that, you are currently working, so can you tell me the procedures that you went through to earn this job?

**Respondent:** By the time I was looking for work, it was difficult to find work. So, I registered with the Job Network and that took seven months with no work but continuous updating, which became so frustrating. So, I was running out of time and then decided to enrol in some classes. After that, I tried again to look for work, so I repaired to a friend for help. My friend suggested to me that I should take my resume to the shopping centre to stores like Woolworth, Kmart and BigW. So I did as he suggested. Luckily, I received a call one day for an interview offer. I was so excited and thrilled by the news. The shift was overnight stocking, which gave more time to continue with my studies.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 2 years in Australia)

In the above quotes, the use of friends and social contacts in getting jobs appears more valuable than JSA assistance, a common theme among participants. For some, it was the goodwill of Australian friends who had helped out initially in linking individuals up with employment opportunities.

**My caseworker helped me to find the right English course at TAFE, but for finding a job I had lots of difficulties. I looked for work in many places with no result. I did not have any family or know anybody to help me to find a job. After a few months, an Australian old man called Jack, who was a very nice and kind person, felt sorry for me. He took me with his car to many places and factories without much success. The casual job that I have found now, I found it through my Afghan friend.**

(Male, Afghanistan, 2 years in Australia)

Concerns about the quality of JSA’s services were also discussed by service providers. One issue was that JSA providers often do not use interpreters, resulting in agreements which humanitarian entrant clients do not understand. In the quote below, the service provider also discusses how Centrelink is unable or unwilling to address the problem.

**The JSA agencies...they still don’t use interpreters. It doesn’t matter how many times, I’m actually bored with ringing the JSA providers, over and over, to actually point out you cannot do the assessment with a person who knows how to speak five words of English- you can’t do this properly... and then actually, asking them to sign the participation agreements that they don’t...**
even understand. We are seeing people coming through who actually are attending English classes, either AMEP or LLMP classes afterwards, and then on top the JSA provider will put on top of that a requirement for them to look for four jobs a fortnight. They don’t even know how to write their name, let alone how to complete the forms. That’s appalling. This has been going for so long now...

And the worst part of everything that I have noticed in the last couple of cases, Centrelink can’t do anything. Would you believe that? Because if the client is agency managed, they don’t get involved. ... They have to meet the requirements to actually be paid, but they get paid by the Centrelink not the JSA... JSA is supposed to be a tool for them to be getting education, training or employment down the track.

(Service Provider)

Across all three focus groups, there was consensus that a more systematic and widespread casework approach is needed that builds the capacity of humanitarian entrants to find employment.

If you want a successful outcome, which is what clients tell you they want, they need to get quality service through real individual case management. To sit down, evaluate all the conditions of the people, relay them to the appropriate job, with that position supported. Without English, people really can’t get employment. So they end up in the schools, in the bridging courses and the universities, for years, for years.

(Service Provider)
Chapter 6 - Health

Humanitarian entrant participants were asked to reflect on their experiences accessing health services since settling in Australia, and whether these had changed over time. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on the factors that prevented them from accessing health services and to provide recommendations on how services might be improved. Service providers were also invited to discuss these issues.

In general, participants were very happy with the health services they received and this did not vary significantly according to how long they had been in Australia. Indeed, many participants expressed a genuine sense of gratitude to the Australian government for providing health services.

**Interviewer:** Since the first six months of intensive support in Australia, which ways has your access to health services changed, if at all?

**Respondent:** After six months of intensive initial support by governmental organizations for helping refugees, such as how to find the locations of hospitals, health services, local GPs, transport, shopping and many other advises, we were able to have access to all these services and facilities ourselves, without asking for help from the support organisation.

**Interviewer:** How did you get access to these services?

**Respondent:** Now we do not need anybody to help us. We get access to health services ourselves and we are able to stand on our own feet.

**Interviewer:** What were the impacts of these changes?

**Respondent:** We felt we are now independent and have confidence to find all the health services we need ourselves.

**Interviewer:** What was good about these services?

**Respondent:** Australia has the best health services for migrants and refugees. Even if a person did not have any money to pay the hospital’s fee; they still will be seen by a doctor. No patient would be refused by health services and they never refuse to cure a patient. In my own country if you do not pay the fees up front, they never see you. Here it is the opposite, they even help refugees to buy their medicine.

**Interviewer:** What could be improved?

**Respondent:** I think these health services are good enough and there is no need for any improvement.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 7 months in Australia)

Most participants spoke of services that provide care for their physical health such as GPs, hospitals, specialists and dentists when discussing their health issues and needs. This suggests that participants either did not identify mental health as a health issue, or felt that it was not appropriate to speak of it. Of the two participants that did, both commended ASeTTS for their services.

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7ASeTTS: The Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors is a not-for-profit organisation that provides referrals and services to refugees who have suffered torture and trauma. ASeTTS, like other NGOs, is supported by volunteers that assist refugees and their families. ([http://www.asetts.org.au/](http://www.asetts.org.au/)).
Interviewer: Have you used any other support instead of, or together with, these Health services?

Respondent: No. We don’t use any. But there is one organisation called ASeTTS who comforted us in the first six months in Australia. They came to us and helped us a lot in many ways.

(Female, Myanmar (Chin), 2 years and 11 months in Australia)

An important point to make here is that this participant only accessed ASeTTS’ services within the first six months of settlement. A number of services providers noted that mental health issues are more likely to surface after a few years, and thus they strongly argued for the need for longer-term access to mental health services.

We don’t really get… maybe just a few clients who arrived in the first six months. I think the reason is that people come here, they are excited they are free, they are settling in and they feel that they have achieved something. And usually after about one year and a half to two years, all the pre-arrival trauma experiences come up, emerge, and then they are looking for help.

(Service Provider)

Focus group members also discussed the importance of providing culturally appropriate services for mental health issues, such as sewing groups for women.

On torture and trauma issues, we run sewing classes for our group. And it is extraordinary the impact that these sewing classes have on mental health. It is absolutely amazing. Not only do they get an incredible sense of satisfaction and wellbeing, showing what they have made, but therapy that goes on while the hands are busy and they are actually talking is so much more conducive to dealing with torture and trauma, from a therapy perspective, than is sitting in a couch in a western perspective talking about your feelings. So my suggestion is that if there are torture and trauma services that it is really intimately linked to actual activities, where the hands are busy and the mouth can talk.

(Service Provider)

Similarly, other service providers noted that western mental health approaches, such as counselling are sometimes inappropriate, and sometimes counterproductive.

In general, the service providers did not raise any major issues regarding access to general health services but there was discussion around the need to build the capacity of humanitarian entrants so that they know how to access services after the intensive settlement service period.

Service Provider A: well I think everyone is well looked after during that first six months in terms of health. But as far as initial screening, delivery and medications, I think that’s done often very well. And then from there they usually are sent to the various clinics for further appointments, and again, in that first six months to 12 months they are supported well through HSS but often fall in a heap after that.

Service Provider B: It’s about capacity building, whether or not they are settled, in that you can show them what time and they know down the track and they are going to remember where to go and what to do. And I know we have those programs out there but a few of them do forget or don’t think that they can go to the doctor and go to the GP and get bulk bill Medicare.
Social Networks Used to Access Health Services

For many participants, it was very important that they had a GP who was either knowledgeable about refugee issues or who spoke the same language. This appeared to provide a sense of comfort, trust and familiarity. For some, this link was established early on in their settlement, either by their caseworker or by friends or family. For others, there was a clear lack of knowledge of the health system, including not knowing how and where to access services and support. Family and friends appeared to be particularly important in this regard after the six months of intensive settlement support.

**Interviewer:** Have you used any other support instead of, or together with, these health services?

**Respondent:** The thing is that my brother came to Australia a few years earlier than us and we received help from him if our case coordinator wasn’t able to help.

*(Male, Afghanistan, 2 years and 11 months in Australia)*

Religious leaders were also important for some participants in providing links to health services, as well as transport. Indeed, a number of participants from Burma (both Chin and Karen ethnic groups) highlighted the importance of the church.

**Interviewer:** Have you used any other support instead of, or together with, this health service?

**Respondent:** Yes! Because when we don’t know how to go anywhere when we wanted to go to the hospital we asked the religious leader to help us.

*(Female, Myanmar (Karen), 2 years in Australia)*

Participants were asked whether they had accessed other types of support to address health issues. Some spoke of their lack of engagement with Australia’s health care system due to their use of religious leaders and traditional healers.

**Interviewer:** Have you used any other support instead of, or together with, these health services?

**Respondent:** Church has helped me by doing prayers because I am a believer. I use the church because the believers should pray for me and put hands over my head, so their prayers are useful to me.

*(Female, Sudan, 2 years in Australia)*

Traditional healers were very important for the participant below.

**Interviewer:** Have you used any other support instead of, or together with, these health services such as religious leader, traditional healer, community elder?

**Respondent:** Actually, I used the traditional healing such as leaves or roots of certain trees back home and I brought some along with me to Australia, but unfortunately upon my arrival to this country, the trees that they have here are completely different from the one back in my home country. I also used religious services, for example the pastor from church came over and prayed for me.

*(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 1 year in Australia)*
Barriers to Accessing Health Services

In general, there were no clear differences in responses or in the types of health services being accessed depending on recency of arrival, although some issues were noted, as identified below.

**Lack of transport**

Some found accessing health services post the HSS period difficult due to a lack of transport (post HSS humanitarian entrants are expected to be able to navigate their own way around).

> **Interviewer:** Since the first six months of intensive support in Australia, which ways has your access to health services changed, if at all?
> **Respondent:** Really for the first time when I was getting assistance, I was along with people ready to help my life but when the assistance stopped, I felt it was very difficult soon after being left on my own to access some of the community services, it was not easy as I didn’t have facility to access easily the community, such as car, close friends, relatives, close communities...

(Male, Congo, 3 years and 5 months in Australia)

> Since arrival here, our caseworker brought us to hospital. There, thorough medical check-ups have been done to all our family members. I believe that it would be so helpful for us. When those medical check-ups results came up, we were so happy and relaxed that we do not have any health problems.... As a new arrival here, we really do not know the whereabouts of a good hospital and how to get there as we do not have driver’s licences yet. We think that not having a driver’s licence still is a problem for us. But it will be all right as we live.

(Female, Myanmar (Chin), 1 year and 6 months in Australia)

**Lack of English proficiency and literacy**

Some participants spoke about how a lack of English was a barrier to accessing services or obtaining quality care. For these individuals, interpreting services were paramount. The need for culturally appropriate services was also identified.

It is worth noting that TIS services are free in such instances, and it is of concern that health providers are not using them.

**Lack of culturally appropriate treatment**

Some participants spoke of their frustration in trying to get their health problems attended to in the Western context. The participant below expresses particular frustration over a prolonged health issue. This quote also demonstrates the complicated health concerns that some humanitarian entrants face as a result of their pre-settlement experiences.

> **Interviewer:** What have been the main health issues in your family since arrival?
> **Respondent:** I had been sick since I came to Australia. In three and half years ago I met four different doctors in Melbourne - no proper treatment. In Perth, I met five different doctors on many occasions - no treatment has been done to me. The doctors said that they haven’t found any disease in me. They treated me for high blood pressure and they sent me for a medical check-
up, they found nothing. The worse thing was they gave me the prescription of sleep disorder and the doctors gave me a machine to use, to prevent me from sleeping, but it makes me sleep a lot.

The brief history of my sickness is that my hometown in Meridi district is in western equatorial southern Sudan. In 1980 to 1981 I went hunting in one of the parks and came across the Tsetse fly in great numbers. Those flies bit me. After some years in Khartoum the capital of Sudan in 1994 I started falling asleep many times in a day. I couldn’t stay in Khartoum because of insecurity so I came to Egypt. In Egypt the machine was broken down when I was doing my process of coming to Australia…. The doctors don’t know the course of the sickness, only African doctors do.

(Male, Sudan, 4 years in Australia)

High cost of services
While most participants were happy with the Medicare and PBS funded nature of health services, a number discussed difficulties in paying for medication.

Medicare services for seeing doctors are very good and we are grateful for having a Health Card. But paying for my medications, as I have an ongoing problem, is hard. Even paying those five dollars for the prescription each time is a financial burden for me, as I pay nearly 70% of my Centrelink income for paying the rent. I wish the government could help more and provide free medications for people like me.

(Male, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Areas for Improvement
While the majority of participants were happy with the health services, a number provided some recommendations for improvements. The most common issue was around accessing dentists, optometrists and other specialists. For many, the fact that these services are only partially covered by Medicare or not at all, meant that they could not afford to access them. Although such problems are experienced by all Australians, they are particularly problematic for humanitarian entrants due to their complex health needs.

Interviewer: What would you suggest needs to be improved or are you happy with the way things are?
Respondent: With overall services, I’m very happy; however there are some services that are not 100% fully available to all the citizens. These services include dental and optical. You have to pay out of your pocket, and this is hard for those who don’t have money or are not working. Another example is, if someone needs an organ transplant, sometime, it takes a long time or you’re put on a waiting-list and I don’t know what the problem is. Is it the lack of doctors or lack of facilities? I don’t understand.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 1 year in Australia)

Another issue was the need to improve waiting times for seeing a specialist, although many acknowledged this was an issue also experienced by the wider community.

Interviewer: What have been the main health issues in your family since arrival?
Respondent: Not for my family as I do not have any family here, but in my case, I have a disc problem between my fifth and sixth vertebrae, lack of sleeping and also I have a small problem with one of my eyes which should be operated on. I have contacted my GP and he wrote a referral to Royal Perth Hospital a few months ago, but so far I haven’t heard from them. This waiting time for being seen by specialists and having an operation is too long. It is a most
important issue for me and I hope health authorities deal with this long waiting time for refugees to be seen by specialists sooner. This waiting time may take months even years.

(Male, Afghanistan, 1 year and 4 months in Australia)

**Interviewer: What factors need to be improved?**

Respondent: One factor was not having enough money. Another factor was I could not speak the language properly and did not know how to approach these services and the last factor was getting a reasonable appointment time for a specialist. These problems are not just for refugees but for Australians as well. I believe there may be not enough specialists here in Australia. I have a referral from my GP and it is more than two to three years that I haven’t heard anything from the specialist.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)

The final suggestion for improvement included providing additional supports for those who have limited English skills, in the form of translated fliers and information sheets, as well as interpreters (indicating that medical professionals are not using these services).

It will be nice to engage our community with issues like that like having flyers or information in our language.

(Male, Somalia, 1 year in Australia)
Chapter 7—Housing

One of the pressing settlement issues identified by the participants was difficulty in accessing suitable and affordable housing. This was a source of considerable stress, which was compounded by a range of other settlement issues. All of the participants interviewed were living in rental properties and one was in a Homeswest house — none of the 76 had bought a house, nor did any speak of aspirations to home ownership.

As part of the interview, participants were asked to complete a table detailing housing and family composition (See Appendix H, background questions). This would have provided information about the numbers of and relationships between people living together. Despite bilingual assistant training, the data obtained were too unreliable to use. For instance, there was incomplete data and information provided often did not match the content of the interviews.

There was some discussion in the service provider focus groups about factors that influence humanitarian entrants’ engagement in the rental and property markets. A number suggested that there was a clear link between pre-arrival experiences and housing aspirations and expectations.

One service provider explained the way in which humanitarian entrants interacted with the housing market, such as whether they engaged in renting, buying property etc., can be understood as a result of pre-arrival experiences, such as whether they had rented before.

In addition, inaccurate information provided by community members and service providers about the Australian housing market was discussed as a problem.
is the advice they get from the peer groups, agencies, organisation, community members, which mostly are not right. “That’s okay we’ll give you some support papers, then you may get a loan, you buy a house, in a couple of months you’ll own your own”. So that’s the perception there. And then, they look up to that expectation.

(Service Provider)

Barriers to Accessing Secure and Suitable Housing

Humanitarian entrant and service provider participants highlighted a number of barriers to accessing secure and suitable housing.

Affordable housing and short term leases

For many humanitarian entrants, the lack of housing affordability meant that they had to frequently move between properties, with some living in up to seven properties in two years. Participants on Centrelink benefits spoke of their struggle trying to make ends meet after paying their rent, particularly to cover food and electricity.

Interviewer: What were your reasons for moving?

Respondent: Reasons for moving were when I arrived from Africa my husband was sharing a house with someone so we had to move to Nollamara. In Nollamara the house was old and leaking so we had to move to Balga. The reasons I want to move house now, my agency they don’t understand us. Every six months they increase the rental fee money. I am not happy with them. They are not cooperative so we want to look for a cheaper house.

(Female, Sudan, 2 years in Australia)

Interviewer: Since settling in Australia where have you lived?

Respondent: I have moved from place to place since being in the country. I have been to a flat house, then in to lodge where my neighbours weren’t happy with me. I went to a third house that was close to the main road and I didn’t want it because of my little children and actually I’m now in the fourth house, I am renting in Cloverdale. One of my friends helped me to find this house. I hope to stay in this house as moving has a lot of problems, like transporting your house stuff.

(Male, Congo, 3 years and 5 months in Australia)

Service providers discussed the growing spread of humanitarian entrants across the Perth metropolitan region, moving to increasingly distant suburbs seeking lower rents. This has provided agencies with an additional challenge in the way they access clients.

Service Provider A: they are actually moving quite far and wide. So with the southeast metropolitan corridor... Cannington, Gosnells, a lot of newly arrived people are actually the Sri Lankans. And up north it’s the new refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq. So... they are looking at Clarkson, all the way up to Alkimos. ... And they are slowly moving out of Mirrabooka

Service Provider B: Yeah, it’s too expensive

Service Provider C: It is very important to mention that in the past 5 – 10 years where the newly arrives have been settled, the Northern Suburbs is saturated with the newly arrives. We haven’t had major settlement south of the river, especially around the Fremantle area because of the cost of housing and everything. We do have a small number around Rockingham and Mandurah but our clients do tend to, after time, migrate closer to where their communities are, as in
Mirrabooka, Balga, Nollamara. So that has also impacted in the reduction in the new arrivals in settling here, but with the new HSS they are looking to put in some new pockets around the Rockingham area and the Kwinana area where housing is available and affordable ...

Although not discussed by the humanitarian entrant participants, some of the service providers noted that there is an increasing trend of real estate agents issuing six-month leases, resulting in people having to move frequently. While recognised as a challenge for all Western Australians, the flow-on negative effect for humanitarian entrants was discussed. This included children having to move to different schools and the financial and social pressures this creates.

That would be the most difficult issue...I just think housing is so important because it reflects on everything else. Employment, education and so one of the issues we always address is the fact that people in private rentals are often only getting a six-month lease. So, they have a house in Girraween, they’ve moved to Koondoola, the children have to move schools. So that’s a cost involved in buying new uniforms, but it’s also a cost to the children’s education. And that’s something that we’re seeing when speaking to schoolteachers, as well as speaking to families. But of course because housing is such a big issue and such a financial burden, the kids’ education is secondary. Like, it doesn’t matter whether they are going to school, as long as we’ve got a house. So that is an issue that is very broad.

(Service Provider)

Lack of housing stock

The lack of appropriate housing was identified as a problem, particularly housing for single men and large families. The poor quality of many of the houses in the lower end of the market was discussed by some participants as contributing to their frequent moving between rental properties. Some participants spoke of issues such as leaking taps, insect infected rooms, and the lack of response by real estate agents. For some participants, the poor housing conditions were met with a profound sense of indignity.

Some participants relied on friends and family to house them while issues were being resolved or new rental properties sought, resulting in a sense of instability and uncertainty.

Interviewer: Could you tell me, why did you move?

Respondent: I moved because the flat was in a very bad condition. It has a very dirty old carpet; I couldn’t even sleep because I have asthma. Also the bathroom basin was broken which was very dangerous for my daughter. We couldn’t stand being there so I took my family and stayed in my uncle’s house for about 20 days until the MMRC solved the problem with the real estate agent, because my contract was for six months, and found me another house in Westminster.

(Male, Iraq, 4 years in Australia)

8MMRC: The Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre is a not-for-profit community organisation based in Mirrabooka (WA) and funded by State and Commonwealth government agencies. Its services include: general information for new arrivals, family support and counselling services, tax assistance, English classes, free migration service and liaison with other service providers and government bodies. Like most other non-profit organisations, the MMRC uses some volunteer support to deliver many of its services. (http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/). Other organisations also provide similar services, but many of our particular samples had been assisted by the MMRC.
A number of participants also spoke of their difficulty finding appropriate housing for large families. As seen in the quote below, these participants speak of their perceived discrimination by real estate agents due to their large families.

**Interviewer:** How did you find this house and who helped you?
**Respondent:** Actually we struggled a lot looking for a house. We went to different real estate agents and we filled out many application forms but we used to get refused all the time. I think it is because we have six kids that make everyone avoid renting to us. After that we went to Homeswest and asked them to help us because we were already on their waiting list but they advised us that they can’t do anything. Eventually one of our Ethiopian friends got a Homeswest house so he talked to the owner of his rented house to accept us.

**Interviewer:** How many bedrooms are there?
**Respondent:** The house consists of three bedrooms and one toilet and one bathroom.

**Interviewer:** When you moved to this house, what kind of support did you get?
**Respondent:** We went together to the real estate agent with some friends to translate and fill the forms for us. Also we appreciate what our Ethiopian friend did for us because we were very exhausted and overwhelmed.

(Male, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

**Issues with location (job/services and community, safety)**

While being close to community members, jobs and services were important factors in deciding where to live, participants often had to compromise on their location due to high rent. For some, being in a location where there is a sense of community was important. Some expressed satisfaction with where they currently lived. Being in an area that was close to culturally appropriate services, schools, TAFE, community groups and places of worship were all highlighted as being important.

**Interviewer:** Do you like living in Mirrabooka?
**Respondent:** Yes, we think Mirrabooka is a good area to live because all the services are nearby such as shopping, school, TAFE, Halal meat and Halal restaurants, the mosque and most of Muslim people live in Mirrabooka and surrounding suburbs. I think it is the most suitable area for us because we can’t drive.

(Male, Ethiopia, 4 years in Australia)

The difficulty of finding affordable housing in areas close to service providers and schools was seen as a serious issue by service providers. As rents increase, people who need services are becoming more dispersed, and without adequate transport, they are missing out on some of the basic services to which they are entitled.

*There is not enough provision for housing for the low-income families. Also transportation is a big problem. You’re quite limited really to where you can house people, because we have to be aware of where they have got to go to school. There are not enough IEC (Intensive English Centre) schools around so that we can use other areas. And we don’t want the children to be catching two trains and a bus. Sometimes they do though, to get to school. It’s a big problem.*

(Service Provider)
A number of participants spoke of their experiences with burglary and of feeling unsafe, which motivated them to move to another location.

**Interviewer: Since settling in Australia where have you lived?**

**Respondent:** We have lived in Morley after that I moved to Balga and from Balga to Mirrabooka.

**Interviewer: Why did you move from Morley to Balga and from Balga to Mirrabooka?**

**Respondent:** We moved from Morley because it was a temporary house and it consists of two bedrooms only. After that we moved to Balga in a very nice unit but I didn’t like the suburb and I felt that it is not safe for my children so we moved again to Mirrabooka.

**Interviewer: Do you like living in Mirrabooka?**

**Respondent:** It was but about two months ago we had robbers breaking in and from that time and on we were scared.

(Male, Palestine, 2 years in Australia)

**Australian references**

Another significant barrier in securing a rental property was not having an Australian reference from former landlords. As detailed in the quote below, support from family and community members is therefore often essential to being able to secure a property.

**Interviewer: What sort of help have you received when trying to find housing?**

**Respondent:** My sponsor who is my sister and some of our friends, they asked different Real Estate Agents to show us different houses.

**Interviewer: Did you ask anyone for help? Who helped you?**

**Respondent:** Well, as I mentioned above my sister’s friend who contacted real estate agents who showed us different houses. But no landlord wanted to give their house to people like us with a very low income and no reference from their former landlords. At last one Iranian felt sorry for us and gave his house with much lower rent to us.

(Female, Iran, 1 year and 1 month in Australia)

In addition, a few participants spoke of the help that settlement agencies provided in writing letters of support for their applications.

**Racial and religious discrimination**

The issue of discrimination based on race or religion was a point of considerable discussion in the focus groups with service providers. In particular, they discussed how the current complaints’ system for real estate agents is ineffective as it relies on humanitarian entrants lodging a written complaint.

Unless someone can put their name to a written complaint there was nothing that they could do about it. But what came about was that because people won’t do a formal complaint because they are frightened that they are going to lose the house, or be on the backlist, we can’t get people to say that they have a problem with [a particular real estate company] then they will take a note of that, then two weeks later, then someone else has a problem again, so if they get
Participants reported that while REIWA (the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia) offers cultural awareness training to real estate agencies, it is not mandatory and therefore ineffective.

Another service provider spoke of the direct discrimination one of their Sudanese housing support worker’s experiences when he views properties without wearing the agency name badge.

He’s [Sudanese housing support worker] been abused by other people waiting to view a house. And he’s finding he’s going in and the real estate agent will be handing out forms and just ignores him. And, he walks up and if he’s got a badge on, he’s got his Edmund Rice Centre badge on, then he said that the attitude is so different. So I’m saying to him, ‘look, document this’. So it’s really, it’s covert racism. So it’s not like someone saying “get out of here, you’re African we don’t want you here’” but it’s quite blatant as well. And he was quite upset by it.

The same service provider also spoke of the ever-increasing demand for this worker to assist clients looking for housing, and the need for a case management approach to assist the process of applying for and maintaining rental properties.

Other service providers spoke of the need to provide outreach services and more systematic case-management.

But the risk of building dependency was also acknowledged as a potential problem.
**Option fees**

Another concern raised by the service providers was the cost of ‘option fees’ to secure an application for a rental property (typically equivalent to one week’s rent). While real estate agents are moving away from this procedure, when applied, it is a significant barrier to accessing housing as it means that many humanitarian entrants do not have the capacity to apply for more than one property at once.

> What a lot of people, the Eastern States for example, don’t know, is that we’re the only state that has option fees so when we’re doing HSS transition trying to find them long term accommodation, we have to actually let our clients know that WA has option fees and stuff like that. That you do have to pay one week plus bond.

(Service Provider)

**Tenancy issues**

Although not specifically mentioned by the humanitarian entrant participants, the issue of tenancy training was discussed at length at one of the focus groups with service providers. In particular, a lack of awareness around tenancy issues such as one’s rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and how to complete applications and condition reports, were raised as important barriers for humanitarian entrants. Other tenancy issues included budgeting, and skills around viewing potential properties, completing forms and finalising lease agreements.

> ... Just practical stuff really, you know, what products to use, how to clean. Some pick it up quicker than others but even so. You know, you get a lease document and it’s difficult enough for a person whose English is their first language to understand a lease document and their rights and responsibilities, let alone someone from a CaLD background. So I think paper work is a huge thing. Even filling out an application. Even the understanding that you attend a viewing and these days you cannot delay... it’s massive what they have to face without support.

(Service Provider)

Tenancy training was offered as a solution. However, it was also recognised that this needs to be ongoing to build the capacity of the humanitarian entrants.

> ... Tenancy training is a really big thing and we have put in place a tenancy training package program. Unfortunately tenancy training is a thing that needs to be done on a constant basis. It’s okay to give somebody initial tenancy training but then it’s got to be backed up all the way. There’s not enough tenancy training done within that six-month period to enable clients to maintain their tenancy very well. I think that’s one of the biggest issues when it comes to housing, tenancy training

(Service Provider)

Service providers also discussed how a lack of English literacy was a significant barrier to understanding tenancy obligations. However, it was also recognised that service providers often provide ‘band-aids’ rather than addressing issues to help humanitarian entrants settle in the longer-term.

> Literacy is a huge issue... The majority of my clients are illiterate in their own language let alone in English. ...It’s a huge problem. I’m being honest. And if we struggle with the lease agreement
and we have a problem going through the different articles and different things, what do we expect from them? And I think that something needs to be done because the feeling I get is actually, we do provide the settlement services, and you know the orientation support for our clients but the problem is that I don’t see actual long term tangible results as in, we’re like band aids. We’re not actually having the ability to really address the issues and work on this thoroughly and actually take a holistic approach.

(Service Provider)

Social Supports Used to Access Housing

**HSS and SGP providers**

Although housing barriers did not appear to differ in terms of how long participants had been in Australia, there was an overall difference in the type of support they were accessing to find housing. In general, those who had been in Australia for a shorter amount of time received support from their HSS caseworkers to find accommodation after exiting from their transitional house, or with applying for a house. In general, participants were greatly appreciative for this assistance; with some notable exceptions (see ‘Negative experiences with transitional housing’ section below).

Overall, those who had been in Australia for longer periods of time did not appear to be accessing much formal support, particularly from SGP providers. This concern was also highlighted in the focus groups with service providers. While the HSS program was applauded for its intensive case management approach, a greater focus on building the capacity of humanitarian entrants to access housing on their own, after the intensive settlement period, was required. It was recognised that many humanitarian entrants, particularly those whose English skills are lacking, find it difficult to find suitable housing after the HSS period and it was suggested that SGP should be able to continue that ongoing case management support.

(Service Provider)

...You have a mandated caseworker in HSS whereas you have got a voluntary involvement with SGP. Many of the guys that come through in the first 12 months know typically that they have a caseworker and typically that the caseworker will go and help. Once they are exited from that, they are generally not likely, unless they are in trouble, to come back to a Settlement Grant worker. They are out there in the community, they are struggling, and they are trying to get jobs. Many of the people who have come through in the first six months who are given 500 hours of English, many of them don’t complete that because they are looking for jobs! They are on Centrelink money. Finding accommodation here is incredibly horrible for these communities because mainstream communities are already competing, you know.... Accommodation is massive problem.

(Service Provider)

It was also recognised that many families were still struggling with accessing stable and suitable housing long after the intensive settlement period has ended. Lack of knowledge of the rental market and tenancy training are central issues.

Depending on the situation that they have come from, we are looking at families who have been here up to five years that are still having the same problem. And the problem is, well, I see it as they have a house here for two years, they have to move, they don’t have enough English or
understanding to follow the process themselves. So an agency helps them to get a house, sign a lease and get on that application, do the property condition report, support them, and then six months later they lose that house, you have to go through the process again. It’s one of those things, because you’re doing it once every six months or once every two years, people that don’t know English aren’t going to understand. So they continue to come back but you can’t say, “Oh, we’ve already helped you” because it’s their capacity that is stopping them. They want to do, they’d love to do it on their own but they just haven’t got the capacity to do it.

(Service Provider)

Friends and family
While participants who had been in Australia for longer did not appear to be accessing formal support from agencies, friends and family appeared to be particularly instrumental in assisting with navigating the rental market after the HSS-provided transitional house. As demonstrated in the quote below, friends and family were also important in linking participants to appropriate services such as the settlement agencies.

Interviewer: Who helped you find this house?
Respondent: Actually my friend Jasmine who I met in Sudan before and we came here in the same aeroplane, from that time we became close friends. She has a lot of friends who have been in Australia for a long time, so when I told her about my situation she said she will ask her friend to find a house for us and offered me to live together. So I moved with Jasmine in the flat in Cannington, but it was in the third floor which was very dangerous for my daughter so I decided to move again.

Interviewer: How long have you lived in this house?
Respondent: We lived there for six months and moved to Yokine.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why you moved?
Respondent: Because I couldn’t handle it anymore because I was scared about my daughter.

Interviewer: Who helped you find this house?
Respondent: One Ethiopian friend took me to the multicultural office in Mirrabooka and asked them to find me a house. They searched on the Internet until we found this flat. After that they took me to the real estate agent, they talked to them, filled out the application form and everything. Also they arranged an appointment for me to see the flat and told my friend to bring me. After three or four days they told me their approval.

(Male, Ethiopia, 1 year in Australia)

Real estate agents
A few participants discussed how they found their housing directly through a real estate agent. For these participants, English language proficiency appeared to be paramount in their success.

Interviewer: What sort of help have you received when trying to find a house?
Respondent: No help at all after the temporary house. I have been on the waiting list for Government housing for the past three years but still no positive result. To make things easier for me, I always pair with friends for private rental. I applied directly to the rental agent.

(Male, Sierra Leone, 3 years and 9 months in Australia)
Other Housing Issues

Regional housing
One participant spoke of her experience living in a regional area of Western Australia. She was an older woman, who had moved to a town three hours south of Perth to be with her family who moved there because of work and cheaper rent. Although the participant was happy to be with her family, she also spoke of the social isolation she felt not having friends or community members to talk to.

Service providers touched on a number of related issues. In particular, it was recognised that while some humanitarian entrants were moving to regional centres in part because of the cheaper rent, the experiences of this move were mixed.

Service Provider A: I will mention that we have noticed a flight of Burundians to Katanning.
Service Provider B: Which is great because Katanning’s settlement is fantastic
Service Provider A: Yes and no. Because okay, a couple of them have come back very disillusioned saying that they were lonely and miserable. I don’t know how the others are. But Katanning has won the award for amazing settlement... The reason there is an attraction to Katanning is because they have a lot of abattoirs there and there’s a lot of work. Yeah, so that’s an industry. So we are seeing that people give up trying to keep the house here and they hear from their friends that in Katanning they can get a house in the twos [$200 a week rent], so they go.

Negative experiences with transitional housing
In general, participants reported being happy with the support for housing that they received from settlement organisations in the initial months after arrival. However, a number spoke of negative experiences, particularly the poor quality of transitional house, saying this compounded the alienation and anxiety they felt being in a foreign country. The quote below demonstrates how a combination of stressors, including being set up in a low quality house, communication issues with real estate agents, and problem in applications to Homeswest, can compound the challenge of finding appropriate housing.

Interviewer: Since settling in Australia where have you lived?
Respondent: When we arrived the [service provider] put us in a temporary government house in Balcatta. We stayed there for about three months. It was a very nice house. After that they advised us that we have to move to another house. They didn’t even show us the house they just asked me to sign the contract. When we saw the house we got surprised because the house was in a very bad condition. I was so angry, I told them that we come to Australia after a lot of suffering and we would like to live in a healthy environment, but they told me that I already signed the contract and they can’t do anything.

Interviewer: Do you like living here?
Respondent: Of course not! I think no one would like to live with insects, rats, rodents and an unhealthy house.

Interviewer: So did you talk to the real estate agency or anyone to help you find another suitable house?
Respondent: Yes I asked them to do some maintenance to the house or find me another house but they keep ignoring my request.

Interviewer: Did you approach other real estate agencies?
Respondent: Yes I approached many Real Estate Agencies but when they knew that I have five children they drew back.

(Female, Iraq, 4 years in Australia)

The poor condition of the transitional house that was offered to the participant below is described as the worst experience of settling in Australia, being undignified and terrifying. Her comment reflects the cultural expectation of better treatment of strangers.

The shock we faced at the moment we arrived here - the accommodation was the worst. Unhealthy and filthy above expectation and smelly...The accommodation was very bad and had a bad psychological impact on us. And until today we have a vivid memory about those days. Whatever shocking events we had been exposed to in Iraq this is the worst one. The stranger when he comes he expects to have respect and more concern. The refugee does not mean he is a poor person, the refugee mean he has a difficulty in his country and he is forced to leave so I think the organisation dealing with refugee accommodation should pay attention to this matter.

(Female, Iraq, 9 months in Australia)

Similarly, another participant speaks of the negative social conditions they were exposed to in their transitionary house.

Interviewer: Since coming to Australia where have you lived? You already told me you lived in the two detention centres. Did you then come straight to this house?

Respondent: No, no we lived in Holland Street Fremantle. But that apartment is the government house, and unfortunately some people are drunk, use drugs, hang around outside from midnight till morning, talking very bad words, there is broken glass, fighting, people take a knife, something like that. Just two weeks we stayed there, then we came here, now the end of this month we have to leave and find another place.

(Iran, Male, 1 year in Australia)

Lack of inter-department cooperation, burden shifting, and short-term funding

A number of service providers argued that there needs to be better dialogue between government departments with regards to housing (see also Chapter 5). Some noted a culture of ‘buck passing’ between departments, and suggested the need for a “coalition of relevant departments and REIWA”. Additionally the short-term funding cycle and changing of funded providers was seen as undermining quality service provision, with “people running from here to here” and unable to get the assistance they need.
Chapter 8 – Belonging, Identity, Citizenship, and Integration

Belonging

Most participants expressed a sense of belonging in their relationship to Australia and Australians. Those who had been here for a number of years, and even some who had been in Australia only a short period of time, stated that they ‘hundred per cent’ belong. Many participants told stories of a sense of acceptance and inclusion from mainstream or white Australians. This was often tied to descriptions of kindness. However, for many their sense of belonging was somewhat ambivalent.

Belonging was related to a number of settlement factors, including sense of safety; gratitude, government acceptance, free speech, opportunity, equality and democracy; and the provision of services. Even for those who felt they did not really belong in other senses, their right to receive services, like other Australians, was seen as evidence of belonging – providing a form of ‘civic’ identity. These rights were often contrasted with their experiences in other countries, and it produced a strong sense of appreciation. Such sentiments were expressed equally by those who had been here less than two years and up to four years.

The following quote illustrates the ways in which, despite the lack of ability to communicate, some participants still felt they belonged due to their right to services.

**Interviewer:** Do you think you belong here in Australia?

**Respondent:** Not really because I do not understand Australian people ... in terms of communication as I can’t express in front of them and let myself be understood.

**Interviewer:** Where do you belong/do not belong?

**Respondent:** I know that I belong to Australia, because I receive all assistance as a citizen.

(Male, Congo, 3 years and 5 months in Australia)

Among those who had been in Australia for a short period there was more of a sense of hopefulness that they might one day feel that they belonged – a sort of ‘aspirational belonging’.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel you belong here in Australia?

**Respondent:** I don’t feel welcome here sometimes, even though I wanted to be one of the Australians. But I’m hoping one day, I will feel Australia is my home too.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 1 year in Australia)

The same participant went on to say that the services were actually what can provide for a future, more complete sense of belonging.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that there is anything that could make you feel more like you belong here? If yes, what?

**Respondent:** I belong here because the security here is good, I don’t have to worry about anything. I’m getting the services that are normally needed to have progress, such as education, health. I can grow to what I wanted, and my dreams can be true.
However, some participants who had been in Australia for longer periods did not believe they would ever feel like they really belonged.

**Interviewer:** Where do you feel you belong to Australia, your local area, somewhere else or a combination of places or nowhere?

**Respondent:** I feel like I’m still belonging to south Sudan. I wanted to belong here, but sometime; I don’t feel welcome in the society.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me what you mean by not feeling welcome here?

**Respondent:** Yeah, I was perceived not in a welcoming way. Sometime, you don’t get what you need.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that there is anything that could make you feel more like you belong here? If yes, what?

**Respondent:** Things such as education and health make me feel like I belong here. I can achieve what I want, and my dreams can be true here as well. However, the society won’t accept me.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that white Australian people feel you belong here?

**Respondent:** No not all.

**Interviewer:** Can you talk little about that, why you think you’re not being considered by white Australian as one of them?

**Respondent:** Ok, yeah, the first thing most of the white Australians ask of me is “where are you from”? To me, this suggests that, I don’t feel welcome here. Sometimes, if I answered that, “I’m from here”, they further asked “where are you from originally”. To me, that doesn’t matter; I’m Australian and I live here. No need to asked further where I came from.

*(Female, Sudan (Dinka), 4 years in Australia)*

There was a reciprocal sense expressed by refugees that as well as receiving services, they are also contributing to the society and economy, which also indicates belonging.

**Interviewer:** Okay, Next let us discuss about identity and sense of belonging.

**You have come to Australia. Do you feel that you belong to this place that you are part of this society?”**

**Respondent:** Yes, I do. We have come here now and don’t want to give any trouble to the government, we are working, earning our living, paying tax and also paying to Centrelink. I don’t want to take money from Centrelink. We have come here and they are taking good care of us - we have no complaint.

*(Male, Sri Lanka, 1 year in Australia)*

This reciprocal relationship was sometimes framed in terms of loyalty.

Most participants expressed a sense of gratitude at being able to live in Australia. This was particularly so for Burmese refugees. Some expressed appreciation for personal acts of kindness by Australians and linked this to feeling they belonged in Australia. These descriptions are in contrast to the often negative publicity about exclusionary practices against refugees.
Participants were asked directly whether they perceive mainstream Australians as accepting them. Many agreed, with some suggesting that they would not have been allowed to stay had this not been the case.

For some, citizenship is what signals belonging, and for many it was a goal.

Overall there was no clear difference between the sense of belonging of those who had been here for shorter compared to longer periods of time.

**Exclusion – Racism, cultural difference and language**

For those who expressed some sense of not belonging, this was generally, but not always, related to racism. The lingering effects of the White Australia Policy were specifically identified by participants as producing an environment where they felt excluded. This was particularly notable among the African-origin participants, and some from the Middle East.

When asked ‘do white Australians feel you belong here’ a disturbingly large proportion of the African sample responded with statements such as ‘no, not at all’.

For some the sense of exclusion was subtle – while Australians were friendly in a distant manner, some participants still felt that they were not truly accepted as Australians, feeling there was a degree of segregation in the way the population interacted.

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9 This question was adapted from a study of refugee integration in the UK. It was decided to use the term ‘white’ rather than ‘Australian’ (which would imply refugees are not Australian) and to recognise that mainstream Australians are generally ‘white’ (Hage, 1998).
Interviewer: Do you feel you belong here in Australia?
Respondent: No, I do not feel that sense of belonging to Australia at present.

Interviewer: Do you think that white Australian people feel you belong here?
Respondent: Yes. Of course all Australians treat us very friendly but I think they do not accept us as real Australians. They try hard not to show it. But I believe this segregation exists.

(Female, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Interviewer: Do you think that white Australian people feel you belong here?
Respondent: Australian never treats us badly but they rarely accept us as their own people.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 7 months in Australia)

For several African refugees recent incidents of violence, and particularly the murder of a young African man and the perception that his white killer was allowed to go free, rankled, producing a sense of injustice about differential treatment based on race. Such experiences built up into a sense of discrimination across the board.

Interviewer: Can you talk little about that, why you think you’re not being considered by white Australian as one of them?
Respondent: Actually, like most cases, the white people make me feel like I don’t belong here. In term of insecurity, what happened lately to non-white communities such as people are being killed and in most cases, the killer is free, not guilty. This makes me feel not accepted by the white society. The injustice is so outrageous to a point you definitely feel the segregation. For example, most people who were murdered in the last few years are of my race and none of my race ever murdered the white. Secondly, the opportunities are limited for my race and not for whites. I can’t afford to treat some diseases and that is due to my race.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 1 year in Australia)

Among those young Africans who had lived in Australia for longer (3-4 years), an expectation that they would have difficulty finding jobs because of their race was common. Young people mentioned that they did not experience racism in the first months of living in Australia while at Intensive English Centres, but as soon as they were moved into mainstream classes, they were confronted by racism among teachers and other students.

Institutional racism was also experienced in interactions with the police.

Interviewer: Do you think that white Australian people feel you belong here?
Respondent: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. I remember one day the police officer stopped me while I was driving. When he asked me about my details he asked me “where do you come from?” I told him that “I am Australian”; he looked at me and said “You are not Australian, you are a citizen”.

(Male, Iraq, 4 years in Australia)

Occasionally racism was linked to a sense that refugees were not welcomed by Indigenous people.
Some related the lack of a sense of belonging and acceptance to cultural differences, such as different perspectives on alcohol and familial relationships, and different rules of courtesy.

Those who had been here longer were less likely to express a sense of belonging – experiences of various forms of exclusion had tempered the optimistic outlook of those who had arrived more recently.

The language barrier was identified as a key issue leading to a sense of exclusion.

While the 510 hours of English language tuition was appreciated, one participant suggested that using peers to assist in English language classes would be helpful.
**Exclusion – Social and Material Concerns**

As has been found in many studies, family reunification remains a major concern for humanitarian entrants. While many of the participants had successfully managed to bring some members of their families to live in Australia, for some this was an ongoing challenge that was explicitly related to their sense of belonging. This issue was raised more often by those who had been here some years.

**Interviewer:** Do you think you belong here in Australia?

**Respondent:** Mmm, not really because I always think about back home, missing my mum and living far away from her.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there is anything that could make you feel more like you belong here?

**Respondent:** Yes, the language (English) and my mum is living far away with me.

*(Female, Burundi, 2 years in Australia)*

**Interviewer:** Do you feel that you are belonging to Australia and the area you live in?

**Respondent:** Despite the fact that Australia is a good place for everyone to live and resettle, I don’t feel that I belong to Australia because I feel lonely, I miss my husband ...

**Interviewer:** Do you think that there is anything that could make you feel more like you belong here?

**Respondent:** Yes when the migration acknowledges that this is their mistake, not my mistake, and support me to bring my husband.

*(Female, Ethiopia, 1 year in Australia)*

Lack of belonging was also related to material concerns such as employment, housing, access to citizenship, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, and a sense of inequality. Just as some participants identified their access to services as a key component of their sense of belonging, some identified lack of services as a facet of their sense of exclusion.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that there is anything that could make you feel more like you belong here? If yes, what?

**Respondent:** I think yes. I believe Centrelink could increase its support and help towards refugees and asylum seekers. For example I think they should extend the duration of English courses for those in need of more improvement in English language after they finished their 510 hours. If we gain a good knowledge of English language, we feel we are more accepted in the society and we feel we are useful people to serve Australia.

Another example is that I need to get my driver’s licence but I cannot afford to pay for driving lessons. Perhaps if I had a car and a driver’s licence that could help me to find a job. Refugee governmental organisations can prepare a booklet in our own language to guide us how to have access to medical services and other services. As an example in my country we could directly see a specialist and I did not know that I should get a referral from a GP to be able to see a specialist in Australia. Another kind of help that the government can give is in the area of finding cheaper accommodation. We hope that Centrelink could help us to have houses from Homeswest now and not to wait for six or seven years which is too late.

*(Female, Iran, 1 year in Australia)*
For some participants, there was a sense of being either torn between or connected to two places, of being tied to one’s country of origin while making efforts to belong in the new country.

**A: Do you feel you belong here in Australia?**

**B:** I am appreciative to Australia for having us, but as for belonging, we are new here and even the people who have lived here for a long time and the Australians themselves, when they meet each other they ask, “What is your background?” The human cannot forsake its native country. We will stay Iraqi even if we spend the rest of our life here and our identity will be Iraqi, but we feel that we are part of this society and we must socialise with this community. Australia gave me her hand while I am in very hard situation. I cannot live anymore in the host country or my country.

*(Female, Iraq, 9 months in Australia)*

For others there was recognition that a sense of belonging was related to regaining the status they had enjoyed back home, and that this would necessarily take time.

**Interviewer:** What issues can make you feel you are belonging here?

**Respondent:** When I feel the similar status like I did in my native country, which means I must have work and income and be active with society and have a clear goal and approach to my future. At that time I will feel I reached Australia.

*(Male, Iraq, 1 year and 8 months in Australia)*

As indicated in the above quotes, the tendency for Australians to ask ‘where are you from’ is seen as exclusionary by some, indicating that they were not accepted as ‘belonging’ in Australia. Some suggested that Australians needed to be educated about why the government accepts refugees and the value they bring to the country. Others suggested more broadly that anti-racism education for students, teachers and potential employers was necessary.

**Identity**

Participants were somewhat reticent to respond to the question about their sense of identity, thinking there was a ‘correct’ response that was expected. For most the sense of identity was linked to belonging. However this was not uniform. When asked their ‘race/ethnicity’ participants noted a range of identities including Australian, their country of origin (this was particularly the case for southern Sudanese, even those who had been here four years or more), and mixed or joint identities (such as ‘Iraqi Baptist living in Australia’; ‘Sri Lankan but now an Australian’; ‘Australian Liberian citizen’; ‘African Australian citizen’; ‘Sudanese Australian’). A few referred to their ethnic minority community, for example two Afghans identified as ‘Tajik’. Some were uncertain how to identify, assuming they needed to have citizenship to identify as Australian.

Others used identities completely unrelated to nations such as a man of Iraqi origin who identified as a ‘humanitarian activist’ or a young woman of Burundi origin who identified as a ‘single parent student’, or several Iranian Baha’is who identified as ‘world citizens’.
Several, particularly those who had lived longer in Australia, used aspects of their personality to describe their strongest identity:

**Interviewer:** What is your strongest identity?

**Respondent:** My strongest identity is being tolerant and open to all culture that makes me an easy person to speak to...

(Male, Somalia, 6 years in Australia)

**Interviewer:** What is your strong identity?

**Respondent:** I am very sociable, honest and a responsible person.

(Female, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

For some, being a refugee was their most significant identity (although the way this bilingual assistant worded the question may have influenced the response):

**Interviewer:** So, how would you describe yourself in Australia, as a refugee, or a citizen of Australia, or Myanmar citizen?

**Respondent:** I am purely a refugee. How can I be any other thing than a refugee? I came here as a refugee so I am a refugee.

(Female, Myanmar (Chin), 3 years and 10 months in Australia)

One couple were concerned to differentiate themselves from asylum seekers, ultimately describing themselves as ‘Australian with refugee backgrounds’. This reflects recognition of the negativity surrounding asylum seekers in Australia currently.

For six participants from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, religion was their most important identity. This included Baha’i, Mandean, Shi’a and Baptist.

For some participants there was a tension between the different aspects of their sense of themselves. A key factor in identity was the way they felt they were seen by other Australians.

There were no clear differences in identification between those who had been here for only a short period and those who had been in Australia for several years. However several participants noted that they felt their identity would change to become ‘more Australian’ over time.

**Citizenship**

Participants understood citizenship to be tied to a sense of belonging and identity. Most had begun the process of becoming citizens or planned to. Participants saw citizenship in two ways: as providing access to a number of advantages, such as the ability to sponsor relatives, the right to vote and other pragmatic things (see below); and as a way of expressing their sense of belonging (or a way of achieving it) and love for the country, with one saying: ‘This country is like our mother’. Sometimes this was framed around a desire to
support the country, a country that provides peace and freedom and values its citizens. Terms used by participants to describe the feeling associated with citizenship were that it makes them ‘relaxed’, ‘confident’, ‘without fear’, and gives them ‘freedom’, ‘protection’ and ‘participation’.

A large number of participants offered pragmatic reasons for wanting to become citizens – over 30 responses were coded. These were sometimes framed in terms of rights, though participants frequently also acknowledged the related responsibilities. Many simply saw it as an appropriate thing to do, with little explication about why.

One key reason for considering citizenship was the freedom it provided to move around the world, together with the security and respect that an Australian passport provided.

Respondent: Having Australian citizenship made enormous changes in my life, I feel more happy, secure and safe.

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: Because being an Australian citizen means that I have autonomy and the ability to go everywhere, also to feel there is a strong country behind me.

(Female, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

Another reason was access to certain jobs, such as employment within the public service or in international organisations. One valued it for providing the right to vote. Some saw citizenship as a natural part of the settlement process, and as assisting with integration.

There were no differences between those who had been here for two years or less compared to those who had been here longer.

Integration

Integration was understood by participants in a variety of ways that included material and affective (emotional) aspects. Most found it difficult to provide a clear definition of integration.

Interviewer: What would you say it means to be “integrated”?
Respondent: It is hard to say.

Interviewer: Do you personally feel integrated into Australia society?
Respondent: Yes, I feel it.

Interviewer: Does it matter to you to feel integrated?
Respondent: It is necessary.

Interviewer: What would make you feel more integrated?
Respondent: If I can get support and advice from my community, it would make me feel more integrated.

Interviewer: Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?
Definitions of integration were broad-ranging but generally acknowledged a two way process of adaptation and inclusion in all sectors including the economic. One Iraqi participant used the term ‘merged’ to explain what integration meant to him and a Tamil man talked about it as ‘living in unity’. Participants indicated that they were trying hard to integrate and that there also needed to be an equivalent effort made by mainstream Australians.

**Interviewer: Do you think that white Australian people feel you belong here?**

**Respondent:** Well, to a certain extent, yeah. There are certain things that we would like... Australians need to support and accept refugee-background people in their midst, despite our cultural differences. Given the fact that we are doing our best to adapt to the Australian culture, they too need to learn ours. Ethnic background shouldn’t be an obstacle in the field of employment.

(Male, Sierra Leone, 1 year and 3 months in Australia)

**Interviewer: What would you say it means to be “integrated”?**

**Respondent:** At the beginning of my arrival everything was very strange to me, how to learn the culture, the food, talking, their behaviour, but now I have learnt from them. I have learnt their culture and I am mixing with them very comfortably. I eat with them; go out with them and am trying to know them more.

**Interviewer: What would you make you to feel more integrated?**

**Respondent:** The first thing is we are all human beings, we have a of lot connection with each other, we all are the same. We can love each other. If they connect with us and we connect with them and share our culture and when we do these things, then we feel we are more integrated. Sharing our cultures and learning from each other’s cultures.

(Male, Afghanistan, 1 year and 4 months in Australia)

Integration, like belonging, implied being relaxed and confident.

**Interviewer: What would you say it means to be integrated?**

**Respondent:** Integration means to me to feel confident, relaxed and for people to acknowledge and evaluate me as a human being.

(Female, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

**Interviewer: What would you say it means to be integrated?**

**Respondent:** Integrated means when you feel happy, secure and feel that you belong to the place you live in.

(Female, Ethiopia, 1 year in Australia)
Indeed the majority of participants spoke of integration as being vitally important for their successful settlement, and saw it as a combination of acceptance and mixing. They noted the various ways in which they tried to adapt, and also wished that Australians could ‘know our struggle and accept us so that we can fit in’.

**Interviewer: Is there anything the Government should do to help refugees integrate into Australian society?**

**Respondent:** Many, many things. The government needs to review its plan how refugees are being assisted during the early stages of integration into the Australian society. Also government has to organise workshops or sessions involving all refugees new and old without exceptions to teach them how to integrate easily. It is very important for all of us. Further, inform Australians not to ignore us.

*(Female, Liberia, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)*

Some saw integration in a technical sense, similar to the way some saw belonging—it was about access to services.

**Interviewer: What would you say it means to be “integrated”?**

**Respondent:** It means being part of any community.

**Interviewer: Do you personally feel integrated into Australian society?**

**Respondent:** Yes, because I get all assistance as a citizen without distinction.

*(Male, Congo, 3 years and 5 months in Australia)*

Some saw it as a combination of becoming ‘like’ Australians and access to services.

**Interviewer: What would you say it means to be “integrated” to Australian society?**

**Respondent:** Actually to be integrated mean to be part of something. When I integrate with Australian society, I share with them lots of things such as religion, education, work and many other things. Basically, I become one of them in many ways. I mixed with them socially and many other things that we encounter almost every day.

**Interviewer: So, do you feel personally integrated in to Australian society?**

**Respondent:** Yes

**Interviewer: How?**

**Respondent:** I totally consider myself as been integrated because I do share with them one resource such as Centrelink, hospitals and school. We share public facilities such as trains, buses, and shopping centres.

*(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 3 years in Australia)*

As well as access to services, having equal rights was important for many as part of their identity, regardless of length of residence. Once again this was interpreted as being part of a reciprocal relationship.

**Interviewer: What would you say it mean to be integrated?**

**Respondent:** Integration includes taking the values of democracy and equal rights which not only is clearly demonstrated in the Australian constitution, but also in my faith Islam.

*(Male, Somali, 6 years in Australia)*
**Interviewer:** What would you say it means to be “integrated”?

**Respondent:** Integration or to be integrated means that a community, which is made of different nationalities and different cultures, they merge to become a solid and stronger community. For example when you are making an alloy from different elements, the alloy is much stronger than each element.

**Interviewer:** Do you personally feel integrated into Australian society?

**Respondent:** I think I am integrated into the Australian society in my work and at university, but I have not completely assimilated.

**Interviewer:** Does it matter to you to feel integrated?

**Respondent:** No. Australia is a multicultural society and the beauty of this society is that it allows people to live and keep their own language and culture. At the same time, and in parallel to this, they can speak English and be an Australian.

*(Female, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)*

A few felt that more cultural education was needed.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?

**Respondent:** Yes. My suggestion to the government to help the refugees to feel more integrated in the society is to find a method of teaching the Australian culture, Australian history and language, which is more in depth than what is taught at present. The refugees need more time to learn these things.

*(Female, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)*

Many saw integration as a process that would take time. A number of participants noted that their children would be more integrated, or experience integration earlier than they would. There were no clear differences between those who had been in Australia for shorter periods and those who had been here longer in terms of a sense of integration. Integration was seen as something that the future would bring. One Tamil participant noted that, apart from assisting the government by being a good citizen, when his wife came to Australia and they had children, they would be integrated. He concluded that Australia was all about the future.

The complexities in achieving integration were discussed at length in the focus groups with service providers. One service provider in particular, challenged the assumption that the longer one is in Australia, the more integrated one will feel.

*What we are observing in the community, ...the first six months is a honeymoon whereby you’ve come to the place you’ve been praying to come...So three to six months you are so happy, elated with everything. But we observe that by the time you are one year here, when those children start going to school, they learn new things, maybe they’ve come with language advancement, and then the family, they start to see cracks within the family.... Then the challenges start to emerge. So regardless of how long you have been here, this does not determine your delight or happiness...Most times settlement issues are social issues that are dynamic. So as they continue to have different forms of experiences, so they continue to see how to overcome those challenges and settle progressively.*

*(Service Provider)*
Improving integration
Participants had many suggestions for ways in which the government could improve integration. These involved the provision of more, or better, services to refugees, and the provision of cultural awareness and anti-racism training to the general population to improve attitudes towards refugees and cultural difference. Responses were generally framed within statements of gratitude for what is currently provided but went on to encompass a range of areas where improvement could be made, as the examples below indicate.

These include the provision of more or better education and health services; income support for large families; information provision; programs to encourage mutual trust and friendship; improved access to cheap housing; supporting communities to deal with policing/justice issues; creative approaches to recognising skills/qualifications and assist in the transition to work; assistance with obtaining drivers’ licences; language skills development, and more. While these issues were raised elsewhere in the interviews, and appear elsewhere in this report, the suggestions quoted below were provided in response to a question about integration – as the final quote illustrates, such services are seen as providing greater opportunities for refugees to connect with all sectors of society and lead a normal life.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything the Government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?

**Respondent:** The Australian Government has always done well to assist people with refugee backgrounds although internationally Australia ranks the lowest. As far as I am concerned, I would like the Government to assist more in education and health services particularly for people with no English background. Further, large families need to be supported, especially where only one or two persons are working in the family. Also, Government could organise sessions involving refugees and the wider Australian community so that mutual trust and relationships can be reached among community members. This can reduce some of the existing barriers between people from refugee background and the wider Australian community.

(Male, Liberia, 3 years and 6 months in Australia)

**Interviewer:** Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?

**Respondent:** Yes, a government should give chances or priorities to refugees such as opportunities should be shared equally among those who are skilful regardless of their nationality background. There are qualified individuals who are more than qualified to hold any jobs, but their background acts as barriers to stop them from getting the jobs.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 3 years in Australia)

**Interviewer:** Is there anything the government could do to help you feel that you are part of the Australian society.

**Respondent:** The government has to increase people’s knowledge about how to deal with people from different cultures and different backgrounds by running some multicultural workshops.

(Female, Iraq, 4 years in Australia)
Some saw the problem as being in the coordination of services, rather than the need for more services:

**Interviewer: Is there anything can be offered by government to help refugees to integrate?**

**Respondent:** Yes the government must seriously try to understand the multicultural communities. When they understand their background, their prospect and have a clear idea about them, they can integrate more quickly. The services in Australia are huge but really no integration between them to offer these services directly to refugees, billions of dollars are spend yearly on this matter but the problem is each one is separated from others.

*(Male, Iraq, 1 year and 8 months in Australia)*

There was a perception among some that certain services that had been available to them were now unavailable to new refugees. There was also a perception among some communities, particularly Africans, that that were excluded from some employment sectors:

**Interviewer:** Are there things that you do or would like to do in Australia that you would consider part of integration but that might not fit with how the term integration is commonly used?

**Respondent:** For us, the Zande tribe who came to Australia, we are not given work in police, parliament, and army forces. They don’t want to give us the chance to work in those areas. We feel unhappy because of those reasons. Let the government try to do something for us so that our standard can rise up other people.

*(Female, Sudan, 3 years in Australia)*

More broadly there appeared to be a sense that access to other areas of work and training such as accounting, medicine, law and some trades was not available to Africans which led to feelings of exclusion and was seen as a barrier to integration.

**Address family reunion barriers.** Sri Lankan Tamils considered family separation to be a significant barrier to integration, perhaps because the participants had mostly come as asylum seekers (with the men coming without their spouses) making such reunions more difficult. However, African and Middle Eastern origin refugees, both shorter and longer-term residents, also identified family reunion as an important aspect of integration.

The most serious example of problems with family unification was from a young Ethiopian woman who told the following story, which has been quoted extensively below to illustrate some of the difficulties, faced.

**Interviewer: Could you tell me how you came to Australia?**

**Respondent:** Actually I was included in my father’s case in the UN. We had been waiting for about three years to come to Australia. I got married during that time. After one year from my marriage they told us that we are going to Australia. I told my Dad that I can’t go because I can’t leave my husband behind and I was also eight months pregnant. I tried to convince my Dad to leave me there but he refused and he went to my husband and asked for his permission to let me come with him. My Dad insisted because he was looking for a better future for us. So my husband asked me to go with my Dad because as you know the life in Sudan is very difficult. I left my husband with promises to sponsor him as soon as I arrived to Australia with my little daughter, my brother, my Dad, step Mum and her daughter.
Interviewer: Could you explain for me how they included you with your father after you had got married and had a daughter?

Respondent: Everyone and I were confused about that. I really don’t know why because when I did the interview in the Australian Embassy office in Khartoum they knew that I am married even the Australian lady there asked me to bring my husband’s permission slip for our daughter to go with me.

Interviewer: This is an extraordinary situation

Respondent: I know and guess what? When I came here and went to the migration office to apply for my husband they advised me that they couldn’t do anything regarding that because my marital status in the visa is unmarried. I showed them the marriage certificates, my daughter’s birth certificate, a copy of my husband’s permissions slip to let our daughter come with me but unfortunately they didn’t consider any one of them. I was and still am so sad and disappointed. How can they ignore all this evidence and if the visa was issued with ‘unmarried’ this is not my mistake because I disclosed everything when I had the interview?

(Female, Ethiopia, 1 year in Australia)

Improve English language ability. A major barrier to integration identified by many participants was language ability. Even after four years some saw this as a barrier.

Interviewer: Do you personally feel integrated into Australian society?

Respondent: In fact not yet because I still struggle with English and I can’t communicate with Australian people. But I think in the future I will make a good friendship with them.

(Male, Ethiopia, 4 years in Australia)

Social activities for youth. Some participants made practical suggestions for improving inclusion, such as the provision of more social activities for youth and more opportunities to meet people generally, such as through clubs.

Facilitate social and emotional connection. Social and emotional connection to the wider Australian society was identified as an important aspect of integration. Several Iranians suggested a family mentoring program would be helpful.

Interviewer: Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?

Respondent: Yes, I believe the government should allocate one or two Australian families to be like mentors for a few refugees, to invite them to their houses and teach them Australian culture. That makes refugees not feel isolated and feel that they are a part of Australian community.

(Female, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Interviewer: Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?

Respondent: When refugees arrive for settlement here in Australia, I think governmental agencies could introduce them to one Australian family to act as their friends. This would open the door for these people to meet other white Australians and it builds their confidence to look for other Australian friends.
Another participant suggested more opportunities for all refugees to come together. This would help people to feel part of Australian society and acknowledge their achievements in the face of adversity.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?

**Respondent:** Of course, I remember two years ago one governmental organisation organised a gathering of all refugees who were residing in Perth for one year. It was a moving gathering as you could see many different nationalities, African, Arabs, and Iranians and Afghan ... that was wonderful as you felt you are not the only person in this world who had sufferings and challenges in your life. I think the Minister of Immigration also was present which was very good support and showed respect for refugees. I hope this kind of gathering continues and could be held more often.

(Service Provider)

Service providers also highlighted the importance of community activities designed to bring families of different backgrounds together. For example, excursions to places around Perth were seen as a positive way to develop links between communities (from refugee backgrounds).

**Service Provider A:** But we’ve found that with our Darlington trips and in a lot of our programs people will, when they are brought together, there are no problems. You have three or four different ethnic communities, they really stick together. And when they are out together they seem to all get together.

Other programs that were seen to be effective in facilitating integration were sporting activities which engage the mainstream community with the integration process.

**We have the football team...** We had an award night and they were bringing some mates, and it’s really making the local clubs and footy commission is now going out for those kids. But it is translating into integration as well. Because you’re getting people talking, and the attitudes are just amazing and that just shows us the power of education. When it’s ‘the Other’, and they don’t know them, but as soon as they get to know them, well then the attitude changes phenomenally.

(Service Provider)

Activities run by the service providers that placed an emphasis on engaging the mainstream community with people from refugee backgrounds was also seen as essential.

**We have, our class that we have been running for about three years,** guided by the philosophy of not having just migrants and refugees but mainstream. It works really well and I think that the approach to have certain say, an Afghan group of people, or Iraq, is a little counterproductive. The mixed group allows them to see how it works, and how they can actually start working and belonging to the Australian community.

(Service Provider)
Service Provider A: It’s not only just with sport but with the programs that you guys have, with group information sessions not just the youth but getting the parents together because Mirrabooka is such a big hub and when they go shopping and they say “hey it’s you from the finance class that we’re doing”. And they start to talk. So that’s integration, bringing in their own support mechanism.

Service Provider B: Yeah those programs that are ethnic specific make it much easier to deliver services but it’s not encouraging people to integrate with the Australian community.

Address racial and cultural tensions in the wider Australian community. A few participants noted that integration was impossible while they were seen as different and inferior by the mainstream population – they were essentially not allowed to integrate, no matter how hard they tried. This was particularly so for the African sample.

**Interviewer: Do you personally feel integrated into Australian society?**

**Respondent:** We wanted to be with them but they don’t want to be with us. They don’t want to greet us; they see us like we are not people they see us like animals.

**Interviewer: Does it matter to you to feel integrated?**

**Respondent:** Yes it matters to me to be integrated, if we are not integrated we shall not know their culture and they will not know our culture. It is very important to be integrated. What bothers me much is the treatment by Australian people is not good. We need our rights. They don’t give us jobs. We need equal rights. They cover corruption with other reasons.

**Interviewer: What would make you feel more integrated?**

**Respondent:** Community life, secure life

**Interviewer: Is there anything that the government should do to help refugees feels integrated into Australian society?**

**Respondent:** Secure refugee life, and no racism.

(Female, Sudan, 3 years in Australia)

**Interviewer: Do you have any thing you would like to add that hasn’t already been discussed, related to experience of integration?**

**Respondent:** Here they say there is no discrimination but ...seeing your colour they disqualify you as if we are useless, they compare us to Aboriginals. I wanted to assure you that we are not Aboriginal.

(Female, Sudan, 3 years in Australia)

**Interviewer: Do you have any relationships with white Australians? Have you found difficulties to meet Australian people?**

**Respondent:** Actually not strong relationship only “hi”, “bye” and “see you!” Because Australian people don’t want to create any deep relationships with migrants and they just consider us as guests in Australia.

(Female, Iraq, 3 years in Australia)
For the Iranians and Afghans it was not outright racism but a more subtle sense that
different cultural norms meant that real connection with mainstream Australians was
difficult.

**Interviewer:** Are there things that you do or would like to do in Australia that you would
consider part of integration but that may not fit with how the term 'integration' is commonly
used?

**Respondent:** It is the problem of connection with Australians. I personally have this problem of
connecting with them. Maybe this has to do with me, but in reality I do not think that is just me.
For example in our culture we just go and visit people anytime and find reason to talk when we
want to, but I have found it very difficult to do this with Australians. They get very tired being
with us after half an hour and they cannot bear it anymore. I think it is a cultural problem
which should be solved, maybe with the passing of time.

(Male, Afghanistan, 1 year and 4 months in Australia)

Service providers also discussed the issue of negative mainstream community attitudes
towards people from refugee backgrounds in hindering the integration process. Community
education strategies were proposed as a way of addressing this wide-reaching problem.

I think education of the mainstream... I think it's really interesting how people react...I think that
children here at home and how the parents communicate, they actually project it - the education
of the general population is really important. I don’t know how to solve the problem of the media
because it’s absolutely shocking... I think that education of the general population would really
improve things.

(Service Provider)

For some participants integration was linked with religion. While some saw it as a reflection
of positive integration that they were not isolated due to their religion, others felt they had
been.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the veil affects your integration?

**Respondent:** Before settlement I heard a lot of Islamic suffering in western countries but I am
very happy that I haven’t seen such a thing here in Australia. I haven’t seen any boundaries
between people in school or workplace based on religion. I haven’t seen any person reject or
refuse to talk to me because of the veil.

(Female, Iraq, 9 months in Australia)

**Interviewer:** What would you say it means to be integrated?

**Respondent:** When I feel from inside and outside that this is my country.

**Interviewer:** Do you personally feel integrated into the Australian society?

**Respondent:** No not yet because still Australian people have a negative feeling about Muslim
people. On the other hand, the different culture and different ways of life increase the barrier.

(Female, Iraq, 4 years in Australia)
The importance of religion in facilitating integration was also discussed by some of the service providers.

I think the church plays a large role for our Burundi families and mosques to a smaller extent, but certainly for our east African families there seems to be a very strong commitment to going to church.... I think the churches are a very strong place of refuge and solace and community and in a sense they are an untapped resource in terms of communicating a sense of belonging to society.

(Service Provider)
Chapter 9 – Social Networks

Social Networks

Two methods were used to identify participants’ social networks. One was the network map exercise, discussed in the following chapter. The other was from responses to several questions asked as part of the interviews and the service provider focus groups.

When discussing social networks participants identified a number of issues. These included the importance of community groups, family and friends generally and the difficulty of making mainstream friends; the ways networks changed over time and issues around the mixing of friends from migrant, refugee and mainstream backgrounds. For some participants no ethnic community groups existed and for others they felt they had no family, friends generally or mainstream friends. Religion surfaced as a very important source of social interaction, with sport also important for many (particularly men and young people). Refugees’ resilience and desire to extend their networks was also clear. To this end, non-government organisations were identified as being important, with participants expressing sincere gratitude for the assistance received and a recognition that workers and volunteers often go beyond what is required of their jobs to assist with settlement.

It is significant that the number of entries coded for the theme ‘no mainstream friends’ was 17; and for ‘refugee and migrant friends’, 24. This indicates that large proportions of participants identified not having mainstream friends as an issue, and also recognised that most of their friends were from refugee or migrant backgrounds. Additionally for the theme ‘religion important’ there were 30 entries, clearly indicating that this is an important source of social networks for humanitarian migrants (see also Hugo, 2011). These numerical values indicate the significance and widespread relevance of these themes among the sample.

Hugo’s report indicates strong social networks among humanitarian entrants. Analysis of the themes of identity and belonging (see Chapter 8) suggests that to some extent this may be ‘aspirational belonging’—a desire to be included, or that it may be based on a very broad definition of inclusion. It may be that humanitarian entrants feel they need to appear to be connected and integrated in order to resist the stereotype that they are not integrating.

Friendships – Significance and Sources

Participants felt friendship was very important to them, in terms of providing both emotional and material support. This is evident in the quotes throughout this chapter. The source of people’s friends varied – for some it was shared religious communities (see below), for others neighbours, members of ethnic communities or for some on-shore entrants (but not all), people they had met while in detention. The Sri Lankan community seemed particularly likely to have strong friendship and support networks within their own

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10 As part of the interview, respondents were asked to complete a table detailing who among their family lived with them in Perth and in Australia (See Appendix H, background questions). This would have provided information about immediate relatives and their proximity. Despite training, the data obtained were too unreliable to use. The main issues were incomplete data and data not matching the content of the interviews.
Participants generally mixed with a combination of members of their ethnic and religious communities, other migrants, and with mainstream Australians. People met their friends through the usual methods – proximity was important, and through existing friends or organisations of which they were a part. Some provided support in tangible ways, but others were simply friends. As would be expected those who had been here for three or four years tended to have larger (but not necessarily more diverse) social networks than those who had been in Australia for less than two years. For those who had been here less than two years, social connections were with those living close by, family and service providers. For those who had been here longer, friendships were more wide ranging.

(Male, Sri Lanka, 1 year in Australia)

(Male, Afghanistan, 11 months in Australia)
Respondent: The first people I knew in Perth at my arrival were my neighbours. They showed us a friendly welcome and from there we lived peacefully.

Interviewer: have you met new people since settling here?
Respondent: Yes, I met a few.

Interviewer: How did you meet them?
Respondent: I meet them in the church and the park where they held communities gathering.

Interviewer: Was it hard for you to make friends?
Respondent: Yes, it was hard, because I didn’t know them and they didn’t know me. I didn’t know where to begin.

Interviewer: So, would you describe them as friends, or acquaintances?
Respondent: I would describe them as acquaintances.

Interviewer: Are they refugees or Australian?
Respondent: No, they’re Australians and some are refugees from all over the world.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 3 years in Australia)

I know many people in Perth and I have many strong relationships. Of course I have strong relationship with Eritrean families. I also have many friends from different countries such as Sudan, Egypt, Iraq, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

(Female, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

Types of Assistance from Social Networks

As discussed in Chapter 4 participants were asked about the biggest challenge they faced in settling in Australia and were also asked who had been most helpful in resolving it. Many identified friends and family rather than formal service providers as the main sources of assistance, regardless of whether the challenge had been material or otherwise. Most had provided generalised support, including emotional support, assistance in engaging with local systems, and material support in some instances such as being guarantor for rentals, loaning money, providing childcare and so on.

Interviewer: Think about the biggest challenge that you have faced while being in Australia. Could you tell me about it?
Respondent: We faced two big challenges while in Australia. The first one was finding a house to rent. For more than two months we were looking to find a place to live. It was a very difficult time. The second biggest challenge was for my husband to find a job.

Interviewer: What people and services were most important in helping to address these issues?
Respondent: People who were important to tackle our challenges were my husband’s family members. They helped us a lot to find our accommodation. For finding a job, almost no organisation helped us for finding a job. My husband himself found his job after 10 months of hard work of searching for a job.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 7 months in Australia)
Respondent: My biggest challenge was learning the English language. It was like a mountain in front of me. Thank God that I climbed that mountain after more than three years. But still I need more improvement. From the first day I arrived in Perth, learning the English language was my biggest challenge. When I came to Perth I knew just a little amount of English, which I had learnt in my country, but because of the different accent and using different expressions, I could not even use that little English that I knew. For this reason I could not further my study or get a job when I arrived.

Interviewer: What people and services were most important in helping to address these issues?

Respondent: I think it was TAFE who taught English with collaboration of the Immigration Department for teaching English for 510 hour and Centrelink. My religious group also helped me to mix with Australian Baha’is and other refugees, preventing me from feeling very lonely and gave me moral support.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)

Interviewer: Have any of these people we have just talked about given you any support in your day-to-day life?

Respondent: Yeah, a few have advised me on finding jobs and how to enrol in school. These people are very helpful and I do appreciate their efforts and commitment. Without them, adjustment would have not been possible. They were helpful too in advising me on how to live here in terms of paying your bills, getting around using public transport and how to make friends and network. However, I am still learning more, but their help was very helpful.

(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 2 years in Australia)

Those providing assistance were not necessarily from humanitarian entrants’ own ethnic communities. Some mentioned instances of settlement support provided by neighbours and other mainstream Australians.

Interviewer: What was the big challenge you faced while you live in Australia?

Respondent: I think the main challenge for me was the English language and to adjust myself with new country, the important challenge for me is how to bring my husband here.

Interviewer: What people and services were most important in helping to address these issues?

Respondent: I think my neighbours helped us a lot when we arrived to Australia. We had very kind neighbours who supported us a lot with everything such as forms, take us to shopping, and tried to explain for us even with sign language. They helped us with all daily needs and normalised everything which was new for us; I will never forget what they did for us and are still doing.

Regarding my husband I am still waiting for the result.

(Female, Eritrea, 4 years in Australia)

Change Over Time

Many participants expected that over time their connections with the wider community, and informal interactions, rather than formal ‘service’ oriented ones, would develop. Some could track this from their own experiences, for others it was an expectation.
The longer I stay in this country, the less I become dependent on government agencies and other support groups. I become independent and I can do things by myself.  
(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 1 year in Australia)

Respondent: I know a few white Australians for the short period I have resided in this country. However, I’m assuming that, by the time I live here long enough, I will definitely know more white Australians. I’m very friendly and easy to get along with.  
**Interviewer: Have you made friends outside your community since you have been here in Australia?**  
Respondent: Yeah, friends that I meet are not that many because here in Australia, it is hard to meet people. Everyone is so caught up with their own life and that makes it difficult to meet people. The few that I have met are good for now but I’m hoping to meet more as the time goes.  
(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 2 years in Australia)

**Membership of Formal Organisations**

In terms of formal organisations, some participants were very active in their community or religious associations.

**Interviewer: Tell me about the people you know in Perth?**  
**Respondent:** Yep, on my arrival, my social worker was a man from Congolese community who introduced me straight away into the CoCoWa.  
**Interviewer: Are you involved in any group or organizations?**  
**Respondent:** Of course yes, I am a member of my ethnicity community known by M’mbemembondo Community of W.A. Inc. who are both loyal communities and open to everyone without distinction. I am also a religious man (Christian).  
(Male, Congo, 3 years and 5 months in Australia)

However, others were unaware of such groups or uninterested in participating. This is noteworthy, as it is often assumed that humanitarian entrants have access to and will choose to engage with ethno-specific organisations.

**Interviewer: Are you involved in any group or organisation religion, group, or community?**  
**Respondent:** No, I have not in either community  
**Interviewer: Why?**  
**Respondent:** Because with respect to Iraqi people, we have no community centre. When you want to be involved you search for people of the same culture and language that I haven’t found in Perth. Second I think to be involved in other groups you need effort and time and you need to focus on building yourself at first.  
(Male, Iraq, 1 year and 8 months in Australia)

**Interviewer: There are many community organizations like temple community, Tamil association etc. Have you joined any such organization?**  
**Respondent:** No.
Interviewer: So are you associated with any other cultural group or joined any sports club?

Respondent: I don’t know about any such club or organization neither has they come and met us also.

(Male, Sri Lanka, 1 year in Australia)

In fact there is no Jordanian or Palestinian community in Perth and we don’t have a relationship with any religious leader.

(Male, Palestine, 2 years in Australia)

**Difficulty of Meeting People and Making Friends**

When asked about how easy it was to make friends or simply to meet people, participants noted that it was difficult. There was a perception that mainstream Australians were busy or not interested in making friends. Some participants attributed this to their own inability to communicate, or a lack of having things in common, or simply differences in norms of meeting and befriending people. Several transcripts are quoted at length here, to illustrate the widespread shared perception and experiences of the participants, who came from a range of backgrounds. This perception was more pronounced among those who had been in Australia longer.

**Interviewer: Have you met new people since settling here?**

Respondent: Yes, I met few.

**Interviewer: Was it hard for you to make friends?**

Respondent: Yes, it was hard.

**Interviewer: Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people?**

Respondent: Yes, I found so difficult. Everyone is so busy and there is not a common place where people meet up.

**Interviewer: Comparing meeting white Australians with other Africans migrants, have you found difficult?**

Respondent: Yeah, meeting other Africans migrants is a lot easier in comparison to meeting white Australians. This is because, we are from the same background and the fact that, many came as refugees which make us behave in a unique way and much easier to interact among ourselves due to our cultural affiliations.

(Female, Sudan (Dinka), 4 years in Australia)

**Interviewer: Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people?**

Respondent: At the beginning of our arrival until our English was improved, it was very difficult to meet Australian people, but now it has become much easier. Now we are able to relate with them as we can communicate with them much better. We want to be with Australians, but it is up to them whether they want or accept us to be their friends or not. Anyway having contact with Australians is difficult, but with refugees, as we have a lot of common things, it is much easier.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 8 months in Australia)
Interviewer: Tell me about the people you know in Perth.

Respondent: ... I have known many people in Perth, particularly at work and in the community. I have made lot of friends with both Australians and migrant background Australians. It was not easy at the beginning to make friendship with ordinary Aussies simply because they always keep to themselves. Migrant background people carry the same notion due to their integration into the Australian society. I am happy most of them gave me some support in one way or the other

(Male, Liberia, 3 years and 6 months in Australia)

For many the issue was one of communication – with little language it was difficult to develop anything more than cursory relationships. This was more common for those who had been in Australia shorter amounts of time.

Interviewer: Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people?

Respondent: It’s hard for us to communicate.

Interviewer: Why was that?

Respondent: Because they speak different language and we only can say hi and Bye to them. We can’t easily become friend with them.

Interviewer: Are they kind to you?

Respondent: Yes they are kind and respectful to us.

Interviewer: So your only issue to communicate with other people is the language?

Respondent: Yes.

(Male, Afghanistan, 11 months in Australia)

For others the issue was one of time and work commitments – those working felt that it was simply impossible to find the time to develop friendships with others.

Interviewer: So was it easy to meet local Australian people?

Respondent: We go to work in the morning at 8 and come back 4.30 during the weekdays. We go to markets on weekends then back to work from Monday.

(Male, Sri Lanka, 1 year in Australia)

Isolation

While most participants were able to identify a number of friends and sources of assistance, a few felt they had few or no friends.

Interviewer: Social network - we are going to talk about friends, neighbour, who have you met until now, do you consider them friend or acquaintance.

Respondent: ...I have only one Indian girlfriend here in Australia only...This is the main thing that I miss here in Australia, because I have a lot of friends in Iraq, my nature is I am social...Friends come either from study or work environment - work I don’t have; the study environment - we are all in TAFE, most of them refugees. It’s difficult to make relations, besides the difference in culture and educational background, also difference of age. But because this girl is the same age we became friends. For neighbours we have a relationship with this neighbour, but not very strong. She is just a girl from Greek origin. You feel they are closer in culture to me because she came also from the East, and also the Indian girl.

(Female, Iraq, 2 years in Australia)
Isolation was exacerbated for the participant who lived in a regional area – without friends and family she only had mainstream Australians as a source for social networks, but due to her lack of English she found communication difficult.

**Interviewer:** So you don’t any neighbours in Donnybrook?

**Respondent:** No, we have and they are very nice people but I don’t know how to communicate with them in English but sometimes we use sign language in order to explain something to me.

(Female, Afghanistan, 2 years in Australia)

### Lack of Mainstream Friends

As noted, a sizeable proportion of participants commented on their lack of mainstream Australian friends. Participants met friends initially through their language classes at TAFE, and through their own ethnic group networks. For some, religious organisations were also important, and these organisations tended also to be relatively ethnically homogenous. Thus opportunities for meeting and getting to know mainstream Australians were seen by participants as somewhat limited. The corollary is that key networks providing assistance were overwhelmingly family based, and secondarily members of ethnic or religious communities.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about the people you know in Perth. Are they family, friends, neighbours etc.?

**Respondent:** I have known lots of people from different backgrounds including Australians, from school, neighbours and at church. Large numbers of friends are from my home country who speaks our common language called Krio. In the early stage of my settlement it was indeed difficult to communicate with anyone out of my country of origin.

**Interviewer:** Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people and other people from different background including your country of origin?

**Respondent:** Yes it was very hard for me to come closer to other people who don’t speak Krio. Without an interpreter it was just not possible. For service providers, it was not that difficult considering their professionalism in dealing with people of different background.

(Female, Sierra Leone, 2 years in Australia)

**Interviewer:** Do you have any relationships with white Australians? Have you found difficulties to meet Australian people?

**Respondent:** I have a good relationship with my Australian neighbours if they meet me they chat with me and ask me how I am going but there is no visit exchange between each other.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about the people you know in Perth?

**Respondent:** I know many people in Perth from different countries but I can’t consider them as friends. I know people from Sudan, Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Europe.

(Female, Iraq, 4 years in Australia)

As outlined above, descriptions of friends were dominated by statements about the ease or difficulty of getting to know people. Those who shared language, culture or experiences were seen as much easier to mix with, and this held for all refugee groups interviewed –
Burmese, Iraqi, Ethiopian, Afghan, Iranian, and Sudanese. Those who didn’t share a language were seen as being more difficult to engage with, particularly where there seemed to be a lack of interest. This theme of effort was significant in the descriptions of most participants.

**Interviewer: Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people?**

**Respondent:** It was very difficult particularly at the beginning of our arrival. Now after living more than three years in the same neighbourhood, we are just able to some extent to meet our Australian neighbours. Unfortunately starting friendship with Australian youth is extremely difficult as we are young too and we want to be friends with them. The older generation accepts us much better but even among them, to be able to meet them is also difficult. We mainly meet with refugees as we have the same understanding and appreciation of each other and they are willing to become our friends.

(Female, Iran, 3 years and 7 months in Australia)

**Respondent:** The people that I know in Perth are my neighbours, and some people they are my friends who came from the same refugee camp. Some people, we didn’t know them, who came from other countries.

**Interviewer:** What made it easy or difficult to meet other people from {country of origin} or other refugees or migrants?

**Respondent:** Yes sometimes easy, sometime difficult. If I meet people who were the same ethnic/language as me it is easy for me. But if I met people who were different ethnic/language, it was very hard to communicate with them. However, even though we couldn’t communicate with each other, we could understand how to participate and work together.

**Interviewer:** Are they refugee people from Myanmar or Australia?

**Respondent:** Yes the people who I met, they are not here in Australia and not the same ethnicity as me. They are the same refugee people as me, who came from many countries. Some people I do know them well; they are refugees like me.

(Female, Myanmar (Karen), 2 years in Australia)

**Religion**

As noted above, religion was a strong unifying factor bringing people together and providing an important structural source for friendship development and support networks. This held for members of different faiths, most commonly Muslims and Christians. Religion appeared to serve an important function in providing a site for socialising and information sharing, and also a source of moral education for children (for the Burmese this extended to language-of-origin education). Participants went to services and other activities regularly – for many this was at least a weekly activity. Religious organisations also provided material support to different degrees – for instance a Burmese Karen man talked about his church helping to pay water and electricity bills. Others noted how important their religion had been in the settlement process, by providing an instant community within which they felt welcome and where others could offer useful information and tips on settling well. Muslim participants were somewhat apologetic when speaking of their involvement, perhaps reflecting the general suspicion in which Islam has come to be held in the last decade in Australia. For example one Afghan said by way of explanation for why his religious community was important, that “it is in our culture to do this”, and in a quote below a Liberian is quick to identify as a “moderate Muslim”. This tendency was not noted among other faith groups.
Interviewer: Are you involved in faith-based activities? Is faith important to you? Did you need support from your mosque to settle here?

Respondent: Of course, yes, I am a devoted but moderate Muslim. This is very important to my family and me. We go to the mosque for all Friday prayers, except for sickness or work related issues. However, the mosque does not support us individually.

(Female, Liberia, 3 years and 6 months in Australia)

The importance of religion cannot be over-stated, (particularly Christianity, Islam and Baha’i) for most of the humanitarian entrants interviewed.

Interviewer: Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people and other people from different background including your country of origin?

... Respondent B: It was more difficult in school as they continue to make remarks like, what did you say? Sorry? Pardon? etc. At the church we were welcome by its members and congregation. They were more flexible than all the people I have ever met.

...

Interviewer: Are you involved in any groups or organisations? Tell me about it.

Respondent B: At present my family is full member of the Salvation Army Church Morley branch. We participate in most religious activities.

Interviewer: What is the background of the other people involved? Are they refugees, from your country of origin or Australians etc.?

Respondent B: well Australians dominate the church but there are many other people from different background including my home country.

Interviewer: What would you say are the benefits of being involved in this church?

Respondent B: Look, the benefits are enormous because of preaching the word of God. Coming from the war torn country of ours, the church encourages moral healing for our wounds in our hearts. Being part of the choir, I personally feel back at home with lots of songs from my country of origin.

Interviewer: Do you feel that there are any drawbacks to being part of that church (e.g. things you are expected to do)?

Respondent A: No I don’t think about that because all groups are represented in choir. Equally, songs from Africa and Australia are always practiced one after the other. It is just amazing to witness such a wonderful multiculturalism in the church.

(Female (A) and Male (B), Sierra Leone, 1 year and 3 months in Australia)

Both the Karen and the Chin Burmese emphasised their Christian church as a focal point around which social activity and friendship and support networks revolved.
**Sport**

As well as religious groups, ethnic and sporting groups were the most common organisations with which people were involved. Participants saw the benefits of sporting groups as being both health-related and social. Soccer groups were particularly important for African background participants. While some played in teams with members of their own ethnic communities, others played in mixed teams. Such activities were popular among more recent and longer term humanitarian entrants.

**Interviewer:** What would you say are the benefits of being involved with the group?  
**Respondent:** The benefits are to exercise ... and encourage ourselves to develop the interest of pursuing sports as a career. Some of these youths are very talented and I know they can contribute lots to the sport as an individual and part of the nation’s sport building. These activities actually encourage our interaction skills and build our social interaction. This also keeps us bonded to our cultures such as our language.... Retaining our language and culture is vital part of your identity.

*(Male, Sudan (Dinka), 3 years in Australia)*

**Service Providers**

Assistance from government departments, NGOs and service providers was felt to be of great benefit and, as noted, participants expressed significant levels of gratitude for this support. While participants often were unclear about the names and nature of the specific organisations helping them, they were aware that these services were government funded and appreciated the assistance. These connections were an important aspect of their social networks. There was sometimes overlap between those employed to assist with settlement and those perceived as friends, indicating a merging of the formal institutional and informal friendship relationships. They saw the assistance of individuals, whether paid employees or volunteers, as evidence of ‘kindness’. Many noted that they themselves were also doing voluntary work as a form of reciprocity.

**Interviewer:** Thinking about the people that you know, and the groups and organisations you are involved in, and about your settlement in Australia, who provides support and what sort of support?  
**Respondent:** As far as I can recall, the Migrant Centre (MMRC) is the first in this role. This organisation received us from the airport and gave us temporary lodging followed by permanent
for the first six months. They also made connections to other service providers like Centrelink, Medicare, banks, schools, health checks etc. who in turn assisted us greatly. ASeTTS also did very good counselling for the trauma and torture that I personally received during the rebel war in my country.

(Female, Sierra Leone, 2 years in Australia)

**Interviewer:** What people and services were most important in helping to address these settlement issues?

**Respondent:** I think they are Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, religious leaders, Centrelink, some family, friends, close friends and ‘good Samaritans’.

(Male, Congo, 1 year in Australia)

**Resilience**

A theme that came through in a number of the interviews was the self-reliance of some humanitarian entrants who felt they had been able to negotiate the settlement process relying predominantly on their own resources. These people tended to have come from urban environments and educated backgrounds.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any problems in finding a [job / school / course]? Who helped you? Who did you contact to try to find a job?

**Respondent:** No, I did not have any major problems to find my job or my course. It was actually easy for me to find my course of study, my school and my job, as I used to live in a big city like Kabul and was capable to find out about these things; therefore it was not that difficult. I have found my job through my friends. I had to work as I had no choice but to earn and send money for my wife and my four children. It is not an ideal job that I like, but when my English has improved, definitely I will look for another kind of job.

(Male, Afghanistan, 1 year and 4 months in Australia)

**Interviewer:** Did you get any other assistance apart from the MMRC for example friends, family, community leader?

**Respondent:** Actually the only help we have got is from MMRC, other than that we tried to rely on ourselves. We have got lost many times but we tried our best to be independent. We were familiar with everything; nothing shocked us because we came from educated families. For example we searched for a house to rent and we talked to the real state agency and filled out the form after that.

(Male, Palestine, 2 years in Australia)
Chapter 10 – Photovoice

Background

Photovoice is a community-based research tool that balances research and action, in which people represent and enhance their community. It offers an opportunity for research subjects to have a say in how their experiences are represented, with the eventual aim of not only empowering the research participants, but also enabling them to influence the outcomes of policy decisions (Wang and Burris, 1997; Palibroda, Krieg and Havelock, 2009).

A full photovoice methodology involves the research participants taking photographs and then taking part in interviews, answering questions derived from the photographs. For the current project a modified version was undertaken with short interviews following the photo-taking activity.

Photovoice nurtures self-advocacy, providing people with the opportunity to present their story, and mitigating researcher bias (Molloy, 2007). The method highlights the participant’s emic view (insider perspective). This is opposed to the etic view (outsider perspective) where the researcher interprets the social phenomenon as an external observer (Wilkin and Liamputtong, 2010).

The photovoice method is often a culturally appropriate tool for research, and carries a commitment to building theories and applications from within cultures of community. It does this by shifting control over narratives, representations, identification of issues, and respective solutions to local community members, and by resisting the dominant structures (Dutta, 2007).

Significant photovoice projects have been undertaken with various marginalised groups, including refugees and young people.

Refugees

Photovoice has been used in research with refugees both in the developing and developed worlds. It has been found to be particularly useful with this group as it offers dignity, justice and visibility to people who are often struggling to rebuild their lives after a period of conflict and upheaval, using a culturally-sensitive and community-based approach. It can also be associated with resilience and giving back, as in the creation of a multimedia exhibit with Liberian elderly refugees (Garcia del Soto, 2008).

In societies where refugees are often viewed negatively, either being seen as passive recipients of assistance, or as potential terrorist threats, photovoice provides a way not only to validate people’s lived experiences, but also to demonstrate their lives to the broader community in order to deconstruct stereotypes. For example, refugee parents living in Canada used photovoice to share their views of parenting and experiences of Canadian welfare services with child welfare workers and policy-makers, who were often unaware of their specific concerns (Dumbrill, 2009). In Nepal, researchers used photovoice to raise awareness about the importance of understanding and promoting resilience and recognition among urban refugees of Somali and Pakistani backgrounds (Thomas et al. 2011).

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**Children and Youth**

Photovoice works as a participatory action research strategy which acknowledges the views of children and young people, recognising them as competent citizens and active participants in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives (Wang, 2006). It is an excellent tool to use with this cohort as youth are often marginalised due to their age, and may not have the means to express themselves verbally as well as they can visually (Green and Kloos, 2009). In addition, photography provides an element of fun, encouraging young people’s participation.

**Results**

As noted, a subsample of participants took part in the photovoice segment of the research. Over a two-week period ten participants from a range of countries, namely Sudan (Sarah), Iraq (Malik, Leyla, Sabeen), Burma (Peter, Po Lat, Than Thun), Afghanistan (Farhan), Palestine (Kasim), and Sierra Leone (the Jallomy Family)\(^{12}\), took photographs to represent their settlement experiences. Participants were asked to respond to six themes; my life in Australia, my learning experiences, my employment experiences, my friendships, my home and where I feel I belong. During a half-day training session, they were asked to consider the best ways in which they could capture, both literally and figuratively, these aspects of their settlement.

Responses to the task were mixed, with some participants taking many photos and able to articulate their reasons for taking them while others took limited or no photographs in some categories. There were also varying levels of creativity in the responses, and of photographic skill. What came through strongly was a sense of fun and shared experience.

There were a few recurring themes from all participants: a strong connection to family; a connection to nature; the importance of finding meaningful employment; the difficulty of straddling two cultures; the longing for friends and family back home; and also hope and optimism for the future. There were no clear differences between refugees who had been here longer and those who had been in Australia for less than two years. Of note methodologically, is that overall a more positive story was told through photovoice compared with the oral interviews.

A selection of photographs is included in this report. The captions are mostly in the wording provided by participants during the debrief interviews.

**My Life in Australia**

For many of the participants, life in Australia is, at times, difficult, juggling language barriers, new surroundings and other settlement issues. There is a period of adjustment especially on arrival when there is support in the initial settlement period, and sometimes people felt overwhelmed with information. There is also a sense of optimism for the future, which comes with the ability to make plans and see a better future for themselves and their children.

As the Jallomy family said, “All you could think about before was your fight for survival. Now I can make plans.” There is a desire to seek out the “beautiful life” as Sabeen puts it seeking beauty and peace often in nature. Farhan says, “I’ve made a new life, I enjoy my life”. Each

\(^{12}\) The participants’ names have been changed.
of these aspects of settlement, hope for the future and the beauty felt at living in Australia, are illustrated in the images below.

Image 1.

The Jallomy family spoke of finally being able to make plans for their future. Here, the mother of the family is shown working towards her enrolled nursing degree.

Image 2.

Sabeen spoke of the “beautiful life” in Australia, as represented by a flower.
Farhan loves the creative arts, such as playing the guitar, piano and acting, all of which he has started since coming to Australia.

However life is also fundamentally different from that experienced back home for many humanitarian entrants.

For Sarah life in Australia is very difficult and different from what she is used to. She said: “You struggle to come here but it is not easy.” Her expression in this image illustrates the stress of settlement. She noted that there is always work to be done with no-one to help, and the children add to the stress: “Living here is worse than a refugee camp.”
For many families culture shock is both cultural and material. For Po Lat, coming from the jungle in Burma to unfamiliar surroundings in Perth was a shock: “In our country we have never seen buildings like this. We are proud to see them.” He said, “I told my daughter to stand in a big building and she was scared as it might break.”

The differences in home life between Burma and Australia are represented here with Than Thun’s family posing proudly with cleaning tools, none of which they had owned, or would have dreamed of owning, before coming to Australia. They expressed a great deal of pride in their home, and illustrate this by showing the objects they use to clean it.
For many, the thread connecting their past life with their new life in Australia is family, and the ability to share traditions with them.

Image 7.

For Malik life is not significantly different from that in Iraq. Here he shares a meal with his family: “We have similar traditions here to Iraq, though men and women are equal here. We are finding a way to enjoy our life.” While he is adapting socially, his biggest problem in Australia has been finding appropriate and long-term housing: “This is the biggest problem for refugees.”

Image 8.

Life in Australia for the Jallomy family has enabled them to spend more time with each other. They said, “before we were always working to get money and the children couldn’t
settle down.” They are “excited” to be together as a family: “All you could think about before was your fight for survival. Now I can make plans.”

My Learning Experiences

For many of the photovoice participants learning and study play a key role in their hopes for the future. Education and training are seen as providing opportunities for successful settlement.

However, for many, previous qualifications are not recognised, forcing them to either take lower level employment or to re-qualify. This can provide some frustration, especially in Sarah’s case, who was “a midwife and nurse but now it means nothing.” Her training and skills are not recognized in Australia and she feels a sense of frustration at not being able to do a practical assessment to show her ability: “Why can’t they let me try and see what I can do. At home they need people with these skills and I am here doing nothing.”

Image 9.

In this photograph Sarah expresses her frustration at not having her overseas qualifications recognised in Australia – she compared her certificate to a piece of rubbish.

For others, such as Malik, the inability to work in his area of expertise has meant adaptation. He has taken on the role of teaching in his community: “I have to teach my family, friends and community English. This helped me to learn the culture.”
Malik teaching his daughter.

For the younger photovoice participants learning experiences were generally positive. Photos showed a clear love of learning and going to school: “In class we can say and believe anything we want. In my home country we could not. We have a lot more freedom.” (Peter). Many also simply enjoyed the social aspect of school, with photovoice participants taking dozens of photographs of school friends (as shown in the next section).

The possibilities of an open learning classroom are reflected in this image, which Peter spoke of as showing how students are “free to learn.”
Po Lat says he “was very happy to get training, it helped me to settle”. He also noted that it was “a good experience seeing others learn. It encouraged me when I was working with others, when I settled in Australia.”

The number of images provided by participants showing children at school or with achievement certificates indicates a sense of pride in their children’s achievements, and also that schooling is quite different in Australia compared to countries of origin. For example,
Leyla commented on this photograph of her daughter at school saying that the teachers are “really good and speak with her and take care of her.”

All participants appeared to be involved in learning in one way or other, regardless of age. Mixed with the sense of hope noted earlier was a desire for self-improvement, often pursued informally, as this photo of Sabeen attending the State Library demonstrates.

Image 14.

Sabeen said: “My goal is to learn. We need to learn more.”

My Employment Experiences

As with the interviews, the photovoice activity indicated high levels of dissatisfaction surrounding employment experiences. Many participants were struggling to find meaningful work. For example, Usutu, a carer at MercyCare who is currently undertaking her enrolled nursing assessment has found parts of it difficult and sometimes feels she has been unfairly judged compared to the non-refugee students. She was unable to go on her work placement due to a small mistake, and now has to redo this unit. Such frustrations are echoed by others who go to government contracted job agencies looking for work, but find a lack of support and useful assistance. Malik, a former teacher whose qualification is not recognized in Australia, emphasised the importance of finding meaningful and fulfilling work when describing a sense of being resurrected when he had an opportunity to teach.
Here Malik gives a lecture on asylum seekers to ASeTTS. Since his lecture he feels “There is now more integration for refugees. When doing this I came back to life, something dead in me came back to life. I became included in the community and was able to give something back. I realised that I could still be a teacher and help others.”

Another aspect of employment experiences lies in the fact that many of the participants have come from stressful or traumatic situations. As Kasim said: “I was very tired when I came to Australia. I just wanted to relax. I did one term of English lessons but I lost my job, my country, my family, and my parents. I was too tired.”

Participants expressed their frustration with the current employment service providers.

Kasim in front of a Job Services Australia office: “I am looking for a job, I go there every month. I don’t like the job network. They are not organised, they forget my appointment...”
and they are always telling us to go somewhere else. I want to teach chemistry but you need good language. My language is not very good.”

Image 17.

Sabeen expressed a similar frustration with this image of herself at an employment agency. She reported: “They just advise, they don’t help me get a job. They are just meetings without meaning, nothing more.”

**My Friendships**

As noted from the interviews, language ability is seen as serious barrier to finding friends. However this does not mean people are friendless, rather participants spoke of having friends who are in similar situations to themselves. Some found that friends in their classes and courses were only friends within the confines of the classroom and did not catch up outside of class time: “We don’t see them outside class. We are all new arrivals so we are all very busy settling in with appointments and other things.” (Leyla and Husband).

Most participants represented visually the importance of friendship and support, in assisting the settlement process. This was true across all age groups. For the older participants friendship and support was derived mainly from members of their ethnic community. For the younger participants friendships crossed ethnic divides, but still appeared to cluster with other refugees or migrants.
Farhan said: “It’s not easy to make friends at first. If you don’t know English you can’t talk to them, you can’t say anything. This is a picture of one of my best friends.”

Peter photographed himself at school with a friend. He said: “We are different colors and different cultures but we are still the same.”
Kasim explained how important sitting and talking with his friends about shared experiences is: “When I arrived in Australia I was very tired, I did not sleep for more than three hours a night. When I’m with my friends I change. I lost my life, I lost everything. My friends, they understand me, they have gone through the same things. I choose my friends. We talk about everything, we smoke and talk.”

Leyla’s son has friends from Burma, Afghanistan and other countries, who are all refugees. He says his son likes it because they are “the same. They can all talk well with each other because they can understand.”
Sabeen’s daughter, Amira, is pictured here with her new friends at school. However friends and family back home remain important. Sabeen noted her family stays connected with friends in Iraq through the Internet: “Without the internet, we could not continue without mental diseases.”

Than Thun’s children going off to school with their friends, carrying the hopes of their parents: “This is my daughter (8) and son (12). I feel happy my children go to school, one day I hope they have good skills to become teacher and leader.”
My Home

Participants were able to represent quite graphically through visual images the challenges they faced around housing. Lack of stability and problems with maintenance were key themes. Malik noted that housing was the source of many refugees’ problems: “All refugees have dark, cold homes when they come. This was my only suffering here in Australia”. The Jallomy family explained that despite being good tenants the real estate agent did not maintain the property to an adequate level: “We always pay our rent on time but the rental company does not fulfil its maintenance obligations. Whenever we need something fixed they say they have to wait for a government rebate. It takes weeks before they come out and get anything fixed. It took four months for repairs to our broken stovetop. As they did not come out and fix it, we were forced to buy an outdoor gas burner to use just so we could cook our food. We’ve stopped complaining now – nothing changed when we tried. We will hopefully move by next year.”

Image 24.

One of the Jallomy family members cooking outside on their temporary gas cooker, due to the broken stove not being repaired.
Another problem was the generally run-down character of the houses. Here Sarah has photographed broken linoleum.

The insecurity of housing was identified in interviews. This was represented visually in this photograph of a notice of termination: “This is the biggest problem for many refugees. Home is not stable as there is always the possibility that you may have to move on. Housing is also a problem as they are often dark and run down”.

For others their new homes in Australia were greatly appreciated and seen as providing a safe haven both physically and emotionally.
For Peter his home provides him with safety and security. It gives him privacy and the ability to work and study. He “likes the strength of the house. This is a good community, it is safe, silent at night.” However, he also says, “I still miss my home.”

Home is a sanctuary for many refugees, with most images of home also including family.

Po Lat and his family at home together.
Leyla portrays her family in their home, returning to a normal life: “I am very happy to be with my family. I waited one and a half years before the whole family came to Australia. This was our first Ramadan together”.

Image 30.
The Jallomy family noted they are so busy during the week working long hours that they may not see each other much. However, they still try to spend time together. One of the daughters explained that sometimes she likes to take a mattress outside to read and study: “We sit and talk out there too. Being busy is just the life in Australia. If you work, you can make progress.”

Where I Feel I Belong

For many of the photovoice participants, ‘sense of belonging’ is deeply entwined with finding a voice within the community through work and being an active member of the community. Family also played a central role. For many, nature also played a part, providing contentment, peace and time to reflect on where they had come from and where they are going, but also a sense of continuity with the past.

Image 31.

Sabeen creatively represented her sense of her place in the world through this image of trees: “I imagine it’s the world – many countries, and we are here in this point in Australia – on this tree”.

Once again, rather than place, people, or in some cases, books and ideas, represented belonging.
“I love to read, this is where I find myself. It helped me to fit in, as I learnt colloquial language and jokes that most refugees don’t know.”

For Kasim cooking and being with his family bring him a sense of belonging: “I belong with my family.” He also finds a sense of belonging from nature: “I love nature and the sunshine in Australia. It makes me feel like I belong.”

For some participants, belonging came from being part of a collective, such as a religious or ethnic community.
As noted in the interview data, for many humanitarian entrants, religion plays an important part in developing a sense of belonging. In Image 34 Po Lat represents how the church gives him a sense of belonging: “When I attend, we have good things in our heart.”

However, such collectives sometimes made people feel the opposite, as though they did not belong.

Image 35.

In this photograph of a social gathering for Muslims and Arabs, Sabeen represents this sense of isolation by posing her daughter slightly apart from the group: “I learnt here that being together is not enough to feel like we belong.”
In a similar image that on the surface appears to be about one thing, but is in fact about another, Sabeen’s son, Ibrahim, represents not a typical ‘Aussie beach scene’ but a sense of isolation. Ibrahim says that when he looks at the ocean he feels like a “small point in this huge world... searching” and thinking about his new life.

Belonging somewhere else was also a theme in the photographs. In these two photos Sabeen’s daughter represents her sense of ongoing connection and loss associated with her country of origin, Iraq.

As Sabeen states: “Iraq is always in our heart. It is inside of us.”
Here her daughter is shown lying next to a drawing in the sand of an old friend being missed or a new friend yet to be made, demonstrating a link between the past and the future, there and here.

On the other hand many participants also represented their joy at living in Australia. Here Hannah says: “I feel happy, I have many friends.”

**Conclusion**

The photovoice program enabled participants to creatively represent and convey the various aspects of their settlement experience. Most participants engaged enthusiastically
with the exercise. Overall the narrative told through these visual images was more positive than the narrative told through the interviews. Through the use of the camera participants were able to represent their own story, putting space between themselves and their experiences, in order to represent these to others. The result is a sense of connection to the past, a sense of loss associated with it, but also of gratitude for the benefits they have experienced as a result of their resettlement, and hope for the possibilities that lie ahead.

This result warrants more research – is it a methodological artifact, resulting from visual images having to be about material things, and thus producing a narrative of material success, or is the slightly greater negativity of the interview data a result of the interview method which invites respondents to focus on challenges rather than successes? This has implications for future research.
Chapter 11- Support networks\textsuperscript{14}

As described in the methodology section, participants were invited to identify their sources of support on a large piece of paper using sticky labels, which they posted on a personal support map containing a series of concentric circles indicating degree of closeness. Participants identified a network of institutions and individuals (government agencies, NGOs, sponsors\textsuperscript{15}, family members, friends, acquaintances, religious and community leaders and others) that provide a range of assistance. Analysis of the maps indicated that ethnic background, gender and time living in Australia did not appear to affect the patterns of support networks, despite the researchers’ expectations that the longer participants had been in Australia the more important informal connections with family and friends would become, and the less important formal service providers would be.

Main Areas of Support and Services

The main areas of support identified from the data were as follows:

- Financial support.
- Health services.
- Education.
- Housing.
- Employment.
- Emotional and social support.

Levels of Support

Participants were asked to map support providers by level of closeness. Participants could thus consider a source of support “very close, close, not close” based on how often that support is offered (opportunity/availability/readiness) and/or how much they rely on that support and/or the emotional closeness felt, which may be independent of frequency.

The data\textsuperscript{16} clearly distinguishes the type of support provided by government and NGOs and from relatives, friends, acquaintances, religious organisations/leaders and community leaders.

\textsuperscript{14} We would like to acknowledge the assistance, for this part of the research project, of Maria Puerta Francos.

\textsuperscript{15} The data do not specify who the sponsors are. They may have been individual friends or family members, or religious or other organisations who have committed to assisting with settlement for those who come under the Special Humanitarian Program, rather than as refugees.

\textsuperscript{16} The total sum of columns or rows will not add to 100% as there were no exclusive categories, i.e. respondents’ views are represented in several categories.
Table 11.1 indicates that participants rely predominantly on government, NGOs, and family and friends to provide support, mainly to obtain information, services and resources. In the following discussion we focus on each level of support identified.

**Very Close Support**

*Government agencies, NGOs and volunteers*

Government agencies (particularly Centrelink) and NGOs offer very close support to humanitarian immigrants through formal, structured services (32% of participants claimed receiving very close support in the form of regular payments and other types of financial assistance such as loans; 13% in regard to education, 18% with health cover/assistance). Overall, 56 participants (74% of those interviewed) mentioned receiving very close support from government agencies, NGOs and/or sponsors. One interpretation is that humanitarian entrants receive most services and resources from institutions. Of this group, NGOs offered very close support to 41% of the participants in the study, government to 38% and sponsors 14.5%.

The support identified was in the form of intensive planned and professionally managed government-funded services, including information provision and resources. Participants identified receiving significant assistance/services from the following government agencies, NGOs and sponsors, in the form of:

- General assistance with settlement (MMCR, ASeTTS, sponsors)
- Documentation, legal and migration assistance (DIAC, Centrelink, MMRC, Centrecare\(^{18}\))
- Finance: payment of benefits and loans (Centrelink); assistance with banking (Centrecare, ASeTTs, MMRC, FMC\(^{19}\), sponsors)

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\(^{17}\) Some respondents have recorded NGOs as government agencies, indicating that differentiation may not be clear or is not relevant.

\(^{18}\) Several respondents have associated Centrecare with a government agency, but Centrecare is a not-for-profit organisation that provides a wide range of social services. Centrecare has support from volunteers for their Humanitarian Migration Program (Centrecare Migrant Services was previously the Catholic Migrant Services). ([http://www.centrecare.com.au/](http://www.centrecare.com.au/)).

\(^{19}\) FMC: The Fremantle Multicultural Centre is a not-for-profit organisation that supports migrants and refugees, liaising with government agencies and other community organisations to assist those in need with
• Housing: public housing and allowances towards rent (Centrelink, Homeswest20); assistance with housing providers (Centrecare, FMC, MMRC, ASeTTs, sponsors), temporary accommodation (sponsors)
• Education: English language and access to mainstream education and training (Centrelink, TAFE21, Centrecare)
• Public health services, including hospitalisation, ambulance and counselling (Centrelink, Medicare22, ASeTTs, Centrecare)
• Liaison with government agencies and community organisations (MMRC, Centrecare, ASeTTs, FMC)
• Employment (Centrelink, PVS Job Network23): employment advice
• Interpreters (case workers and volunteers from NGOs and interpreters paid by government agencies)
• Assistance with transport (including driving lessons) and day-to-day tasks, such as shopping and appointments (volunteers from NGOs such as Centrecare, MMRC, ASeTTs).

The specific organisations identified reflect the particular sample recruited for this project. The predominance of NGOs in support provision is not surprising since they are often the first port of call refugees. Depending on funding, NGOs offer humanitarian entrants information, professional services and regular contact with social workers, case workers, counsellors and volunteers, providing qualified support and advocacy. Bureaucracy, particularly filling in forms and managing appointments, is an obstacle for refugees. NGOs assist with these processes. They are familiar with government migration policies and services and are able to provide referrals and assist with bureaucratic processes and dealing with documents, such as applications for public housing, school enrolment etc.

Volunteers offer a “community coaching” service, assisting humanitarian migrants in the settlement process. They often assist clients in a variety of ways such as taking them to crisis accommodation, mental health services, settlement support, employment and training programs and aged care. (http://www.fmcwa.com.au/).

20 The Department of Housing, Government of Western Australia, provides a number of services, from public housing to rental housing assistance. (www.housing.wa.gov.au/)

21 Centrelink refers temporary and provisional humanitarian visa holders who have been granted Special Benefit or migrants subjected to the 2 year waiting period to “a contracted service provider for an initial assessment to determine their needs and suitability for assistance under the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program. A wide range of organisations have been contracted to provide assessment and training services, including private training providers and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions” (http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/services/literacy_numeracy.htm). The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) manage the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP)(http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/LitandNum/LLNP/Pages/Overview.aspx).

22 Medicare is a government organisation under the Department of Human Services. It is responsible for the provision of public health services. (http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/index.jsp)

23 PVS Workfind (participants identified this as Jobnetwork, the old name for the network of employment assistance service providers) is an employment services provider that has specific programs for “highly disadvantaged” job seekers. (http://www.pvs.com.au/).
appointments, shopping, or showing them how to use public transport. Data reflect the following roles of volunteers working for NGOs:

- Socialisation and community contact
- Teaching new arrivals how to make phone calls
- Living skills: assisting new arrivals with shopping, cooking, cleaning, health and hygiene and use of equipment available at their residence
- Financial arrangements: assisting clients with banking and use of ATM’s, filling in various banking forms, bill payments etc.
- Assistance with travel and transport (public and private) training
- Assistance with medical appointments
- Assistance with schooling (mainly English classes for adults)
- Introducing clients to appropriate services and assistance dealing with Centrelink and other government agencies, such as Homeswest.

**Family and Friends**

Twenty one (28%) participants did not mention government agencies/NGOs/sponsors as sources of very close support. Instead, very close support fell to family members and/or friends. Overall, 37 participants (49%) reported very close support from family members and 26 (34%) claimed receiving very close support from friends. The nature of that support is distinctly different from that received from government, NGOs and sponsors as outlined above. Refugees rely on family and friends when government, NGOs and sponsors are not available or for specific needs (such as emotional support, company and friendship).

Informal networks (family, friends and acquaintances) offer assistance informally and in an unorganised manner, that is, as the need/request arises and may fill the vacuum left by government agencies and NGOs. Informal assistance may come at no cost or at low cost and may come from those who may not have much in the way or resources themselves. It may be that those who do not report family/friends within their ‘very close’ support network do so because they do not have any family/friends in Australia.

The data indicates that family members are the main source of emotional support (words used in the network maps to identify this support include “love”, “hope”, “peace”, “happiness”, “family life”, “comfort” and “sense of belonging”) and social support (visits). They also help with some day-to-day tasks (shopping, driving, childcare, etc.) and provide advice on settlement (particularly family members that have been living longer in Australia). Very few participants reported receiving material support from family members. Those who did had received mainly financial assistance and accommodation.

Friends and acquaintances (teachers, family doctors, neighbours) provided support in the form of information and advice (particularly about services such as employment and housing opportunities, and shopping), assistance with forms and appointments, providing company (visits, going out, comfort), help with transport and finding places, English teaching (from teachers) and interest in participants’ health (GPs).
Others
Twenty per cent of participants reported receiving very close support from either religious organisations (mosque/church) or religious leaders. The type of support they received was mostly related to worshiping and socialising.

Five per cent of participants received ‘very close’ support from a community leader, in the form of friendship, advice, help with forms and dealing with paying bills, changing schools and banking.

Close Support

Government agencies, NGOs and volunteers
As noted in Table 11.1, 81% (17 out of 21) of those who did not report receiving very close support from a government agency or NGO, did identify those institutions as sources of ‘close support’. Overall, 46% of participants said they received close support from government and 39% from NGOs, in the form of:

- Donations of furniture (MMRC)
- Settlement issues (Centrecare, MMRC)
- Finance: payment of benefits and loans (Centrelink)
- Public health services, including counselling (Centrecare, Centrelink, MMRC, ASeTTs)
- Liaison with government agencies and community organisations (MMRC, ASeTTs)
- Legal assistance (Crime Commission)
- Employment (Centrelink)
- Assistance with transport, medical appointments, housing and day-to-day tasks, such as food shopping, completing forms and withdrawing money from ATMs (volunteers from NGOs).
- Interpreters (volunteers from NGOs)
- Documentation, legal and migration assistance (DIAC, Centrelink, IOM24)
- Education and training: English language and access to mainstream education and training (Centrelink, TAFE, MMRC), sewing classes (Ishar25)
- Housing: assistance with housing providers (Centrecare, MMRC) and rent (Communicare)
- Introductions to community organisations.

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24 IOM (International Organisation for Migration): intergovernmental organisation offering migration management assistance to governments and migrants. Services include Immigration Information and Counselling Services (IIC), no-interest travel loans, concessional fares for immigrants to travel to Australia, sponsoring pre-paid movements to Australia, travel assistance and medical services. ([http://www.iom.int/jahia/isp/index.jsp](http://www.iom.int/jahia/isp/index.jsp))

25 Ishar is a multicultural women’s health centre that encourages the health and wellbeing of women of all ages and cultural backgrounds ([http://www.ishar.org.au/](http://www.ishar.org.au/)).
Family and friends

Only 8% of participants declared receiving close support from family members, in the form of advice, assistance with food shopping, help finding housing, socialising and help with children.

On the other hand, 30% of participants received close support from friends and acquaintances. In some ways, the assistance received from friends and acquaintances matched the kind of help offered by NGO volunteers: general assistance with shopping, transport, appointments, form filling, translation, house and job hunting. They also provide a source of emotional and social support, offering company and “kindness”. While many of the participants’ friends belonged to the same ethnic group, several participants emphasised assistance from mainstream Australian friends and acquaintances (neighbours, teachers and GPs).

Others

Sixteen per cent of participants noted receiving close support from either a religious organisation (Christian charity - no details, or Islamic Society26) or a religious leader. The support they received ranged from assistance with personal issues, transport and appointments, to more general spiritual support.

Thirteen per cent of participants received close support from a community leader within their ethnic community. Community inclusion and socialisation, settling of disputes and material support (computer) were the services received.

Not close Support

Participants interpreted the ‘not close support’ category in three ways – either to refer to organisations and people who provided some minimal support, or to refer to those they wanted to identify as being generally unhelpful, or simply as those they had not received any support from. This makes interpretation of the data difficult.

Six and a half per cent of participants recorded ‘not close support’ from government agencies. They refer to:

- Financial (Centrelink), documentation (DIAC) and physical (Medicare) support. It is unclear whether this means participants received these services minimally or never received them.
- Translation services (ibid).
- Disappointment with delay in receiving services
- ‘Not receiving any assistance’.

Eighteen per cent of participants recorded ‘not close support’ from NGOs. As in the previous case, the information is vague and difficult to interpret. Participants refer to:

- Jobs and rent (Communicare27)

26 Muslim organisations in WA which were mentioned include the Islamic Council of WA, Islamic Centre of WA and a NoorulIslam Society.
27 Communicare is a Christian, non-for profit organisation that provides community care services, supported by staff and volunteers. Family, education and training, counselling, employment and accommodation are among the services it provides. Communicare also has an accommodation program.
• ‘Not much support’
• Moral support and religious practice
• Community involvement
• Team building and interaction through sport
• Company and socialisation (ASeTTs)
• Advice and referrals
• Assistance with appointments, forms, housing and transport
• Advice on children’s schooling
• ‘Nothing’.

Ten and a half per cent of participants recorded ‘not close support’ from sponsors. As in the previous case, the information is vague and difficult to interpret. They refer to:

• Providing information and socialising
• Introduction to other families
• Assistance with appointments.

The above finding is concerning, given that sponsors commit to providing extensive assistance, both financial and social, as part of the sponsorship process.

Four per cent of participants recorded ‘not close support’ from family members.

Friends and acquaintances appear to be the largest provider of ‘not close support’ (31%). Participants referred to similar services outlined above such as shopping, transport, showing places, assistance with appointments (medical), assistance with translation, financial assistance, help finding a job, socialising, studying together, friendliness (such as greetings from neighbours), and childcare.

Fourteen per cent of participants mentioned not close support from religious leaders or religious organisations, including superficial contact (e.g. Seeing them at the Church/Mosque), religious practice, spiritual support, and ‘NA’; ‘Nothing’.

Finally, 4% of participants recorded not close support from community leaders with the following commentary: ‘Have not met them yet’; ‘No support’; ‘No relationship’; or by noting that they have attended events the leaders have organised, or received assistance with shopping and referral to other organisations.

Patterns by Time Living in Australia

Caution is needed in interpretation of the network data based on time living in Australia. Participants can be broken into four groups as follows.

• Living in Australia 1 year or less (N= 14)
• Living in Australia 1-2 years (N=35)
• Living in Australia 2-4 years (N= 26)
• Living in Australia + 4 years (N=2).
The main pattern identifiable was that those living in Australia for a shorter period of time (1 year or less) show relatively larger ‘close’ and ‘not close’ support from friends and relatives than the other groups.

All groups show a large amount of support from government and NGOs, including those whom it would be expected are no longer eligible (+2 years) for intensive support. Many participants reported still accessing SGP funded support programs, or mainstream services. The largest concentration of ‘very close’ support from government and NGOs occurs among those who have been in Australia 1-2 years.

**Conclusion**

Humanitarian refugees have a high demand for services. Source and levels of support vary, based on:

- Financial needs: support is provided mainly by government until humanitarian entrants find paid work.
- Health issues: large demand on public health services (Medicare).
- Educational needs: English lessons for adults (TAFE).
- Housing needs: community housing and private renting with some financial assistance from government (Centrelink and Homes West) and NGOs.
- Employment needs.
- Emotional and social needs: support comes mainly from family and friends.
- Day-to-day needs: support comes mainly from volunteers, NGO caseworkers, family and friends.
Chapter 12 – Other Settlement Issues

Participants were invited to comment on settlement issues that did not fall within the categories of health, housing, employment, education and belonging. They identified the following.

Intergenerational and Intercultural Challenges

*Cultural differences in child discipline*

Challenges around child discipline were discussed in the focus groups as a particular challenge for some African communities. Legal and social systems were seen to impact negatively by providing ‘too much’ freedom for the child. Similarly, these systems were seen as limiting parents’ ability to discipline their children, which was seen to lead to a lack of respect for and loss of parental authority. Two issues were highlighted as resulting from this: child prostitution; and parents sending their children back to Africa to escape the risks here.

In one of the focus groups, service providers discussed the small but developing trend of some parents wanting to send their children back to Africa for their education. This trend was seen to be the result of two factors: first, a fear that teachers are unable to provide the type of discipline their children require; and second, a perception that many teachers had low expectations of African students’ academic ability which negatively affects their educational aspirations.

The problem and the challenges that African parents are faced with is how their children will turn out to be. Will their children become successful? ... How will their children fair? Will their children end up in jail? These are the fears and insecurities... Our fear is the outcome of our children. Will they be law-abiding citizens? Will they be productive citizens? ...That is the fear...Housing, we can cope with. But now, mental illness, all the mental health issues, you hear them, within the African family, comes from our children - The fear for our children.

(Service Provider)

Among African background humanitarian entrant participants, changing family roles in Australia, particularly around the ability to enforce discipline, were highlighted as a central challenge. Tensions between understanding the system in Australia, and the need for authorities to respect African culture and traditional male roles were discussed at some length.

*Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions for improving support for refugees to integrate into Australian society? What do you think the important issues are?*

*Respondent: Teach refugees especially those who are back in Africa, “when you go to Australia you have to do this”. The Australian government has taken the right from parents and given it to children....We came here we wanted to contribute to the development of this nation. We want our children to do their best and to do the job....Police should respect our culture because when our children are taken away from us we are not happy. The right of men has been taken away also, when you do something[in disciplining the children], they call the police. I need the government to look into those problems; they know how to reduce them.*

(Female, Sudan, 2 years in Australia)
Similarly, the problem of African girls running away from home and becoming involved in prostitution was seen to be the result of loss of authority and control by parents and community leaders, and the freedoms afforded to children by Australian social and legal systems. However, the perception that there was a focus by authorities on African child prostitution was felt to be a source of considerable stigmatisation, with one service provider emphasising that prostitution occurs within other community groups.

In terms of recommendations, the same service provider strongly recommended reconsideration of government policy with regards to child protection. However, exactly how it should be changed to address issues related to negotiating discipline in Australia was not detailed.

*I think departments need to revisit their policies, especially the Department of Child Protection, and the justice system... those are policies that were made for a certain group of people. But now, Africans have come here, so to many Africans they think that they have been targeted, singled out, without even observing that these laws were instituted before we even came here. Maybe 40, 50 or 60 years ago. So, I feel that always African leaders as well as service providers could ask the government to revisit its policies of child protection and the legislation, the laws, the policies that are governing child protection matters.....people are caught between a system that they do not understand, the physical language as well as the implied language...*  

(Service Provider)

Another service provider discussed the challenges faced by young humanitarian entrants, particularly with regards to negotiating differences between their cultures of origin and ‘Australian culture’. He suggested that for some, the pressures of negotiating two cultures leads to their involvement in drugs and alcohol. Youth focused services were discussed as being very important in dealing with this complex issue.

*Another big issue that we’ve noticed in our services, usually children are trying to fit in but at the same time to please their parents. Trying to fit in means to change their approach to life, their approach to education and many other things. Some of them get into drugs and at the same time are trying to please the family and trying to keep their cultural values, which is very difficult because they are so confused. The big issue, I think, across the board is services available for young people. Mental health and other services. They really need it during school holidays.*  

(Service Provider)

**Intra-community Challenges**

A small number of participants discussed how challenges and tensions within their own communities affected their settlement experiences. Such divisions were raised by one Somali and two Iraqi participants.

The Somali participant reported that there is no Somali community organisation in Perth, suggesting that division within the community is the reason for its non-existence.

*Sure, I would like to say that African community leaders are not contributing enough to provide the link between their community and the government and NGO’S. There is major gap. When I*
came here from Somalia, going to my local community organisation was useless, and the reason is there is a major division and confusions.

(Female, Somalia, 5 years in Australia)

Similarly, two Iraqi participants from Southern Iraq noted that there are factions between those who identify themselves as Iraqi. The participant below frames Iraqi refugees who want to keep ‘their culture’ as being unwilling to adapt to Australian society.

Interviewer: Is it easy or difficult to meet people from your country of origin or Australian or from other communities.

Respondent: If you mean friendship, it’s not easy at all. There are three different categories of the Iraqis here that are far away from my culture.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Respondent: These Iraqi’s have either lived in Iran for the last 30 years ... Some of them are Iranian but speak Arabic very well. Others are from the south part of Iraq. I love south Iraqi culture but these people are far away from this culture. Anyway, the Iraqi people are not of interest to me here because I noticed here they have more of a tendency to somehow put Islamic culture first, and I don’t like their behaviours. If you want trouble, you live with them. Also other communities are closed, like the Iraqi community. Have you seen an Arabic man working in a Chinese restaurant? Everyone who arrives here notices clearly that each people keep their own culture; these subcultures can have harmful effects in future on Australia. So if you ask me yes I can meet anyone of them, but there are culture boundaries.

(Male, Iraq, 1 year and 8 months in Australia)

Legal Issues

A number of participants identified problems in dealing with legal and bureaucratic issues. While for most these were relatively mild, one participant discussed a particularly stressful situation regarding her son being arrested and put in jail. While it is beyond the scope of the report to discuss the details of the case, her lack of English proficiency and knowledge of the Australian legal system compounded her negative experience, which has caused her ongoing and continuous stress. On the positive side, she noted the importance of a number of agencies in helping her (although the situation is not resolved).

Interviewer: What people and services were most important in helping to address these issues?

Respondent: I really got much help from a lot of Australian organisations, which really helped me and supported me with my son’s problem such as the Corruption and Crime Commission, Centrecare workers, Islamic Society, and many different organisations. I don’t really know their names but they supported me.

(Female, Iraq, 1 year in Australia)

Financial Issues/Remittances

While participants were grateful for the economic support available through Australia’s welfare system, financial strains for those dependent on Centrelink benefits were specifically discussed by a number of participants as a source of significant stress.
For the Centrelink money, everything is very expensive. Hopefully I will start working and after that it doesn’t matter. Every week I get $300, but now $300 is not enough money. For example, the electricity bill came, more than $400 because we don’t know about electricity here, only 2 months $400! I went to Communicare, but the caseworker can’t help. Yesterday I went to Centrelink I talked to the lady and she helped us, and thanks a lot for her help, and she said we will give to Synergy money every fortnight, paying the bill out of your Centrelink money.

(Male, Iran, 1 year in Australia)

Interviewer: Do you think that work has an influence on your resettlement in Australia?

Respondent: Sure, it is one of many factors that has a direct impact on our settlement here. We depend now on the financial assistance from Centrelink and it is not adequate and sufficient. For all the daily life requirements we cannot proceed in our life depending on this simple income and we cannot accept this way of life. We have all these qualifications and experience and high language standard, that should enable us to work!

(Female, Iraq, 9 months in Australia)

The financial stress of the general cost of living was also highlighted in the focus groups. This was seen as compounded by the obligation to send money back to their families (remittances). For some families, remittances were their number one priority, after rent and before food.

Service Provider A: The cost of living has gone up enormously. So maybe, that does reflect the huge rise in the cost of living and I’m sure that the family stuff, the DV[domestic violence] and all of that, they must still be huge issues but the cost of living... Someone from the office met with people at Sussex Street [Community Legal Centre] recently and they were talking about the impact of the cost of living on the clients that they see from ethnic minorities...they were seeing that the money that they sent back to their families was the number one priority. And they were, actually to their own detriment, sending money back to their families. And they were having real problems even coping with the basic cost of living, whereas that didn’t seem to be a problem for the Asian or some of the other clients that they’ve got.

Service Provider B: they tend to say “paid the rent, send the money home and then food”.

The combination of commitment to sending remittances and the general cost of living was also discussed as being a significant barrier to humanitarian entrants’ ability to financially sponsor family members to migrate to Australia.

I’ve just had a situation where a couple, a 32 year old daughter and a 61 year old mother, wanted their only remaining person back in Khartoum from her family, they are all dead. They are sending money over. She’s a diabetic on mounts of pills and you can imagine the extra costs that they have, and wanting to see how can I help them. Well, I’m already flat out doing the diabetes, organising things at Royal Perth. So that seems to be an area that is incredibly stressful. Because, “Oh mum’s ringing the nephew back in Khartoum”. Phone bills going up like this and they’re crying because he’s left alone, all his family are dead. She said “They have no one else”. They want to bring him out. So you just know that there is no way they are going to have the money, so ...mental health issues are going to be worse as an anxiety about the whole business. So that’s another thing from in that period of time, you know two-to-four years... you know that they are never going to be able to get their family out...

(Service Provider)
Policy - Settlement Support Periods

Service providers discussed how the current structure of Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and Special Grants Program (SGP) was a source of significant stress and frustration – particularly with regards to SGP not providing adequately for sufficient outreach capacities, or the ability to undertake intensive casework. Additionally, because of the funding arrangements, a number of service providers expressed frustration that they could only offer short-term solutions. This meant that their ability to utilise capacity developed through long term engagement in settlement support was reduced. Organisations regularly were defunded for particular programs or activities, leading to loss of experienced staff, and lack of continuity for refugees. One used the metaphor of ‘breathing through a straw’ to illustrate the difficulty of providing an adequate service with limited and short term funding.

As you know, we work with the newly arrived migrants, refugees, under the humanitarian program for up to five years. So we deal with a range of settlement issues... We had two full time positions, and one part-time position. We were able to have two generalist service or SGP workers, and one youth worker. Unfortunately, due to the funding we lost some good staff. And we actually tried to combine the new system of the SGP but pulling in the generalist service with the inclusion of the youth service. ...We do casework, advocacy, referrals, information, and some cross cultural training for the mainstream. ...You know the limitations of the SGP. We actually can only breathe through a straw.

(Service Provider)

A number of service providers also recommended that the period of time humanitarian entrants are eligible to access both HSS and SGP be reviewed. In particular, it was suggested that basing the length of time on a client’s contact hours with the service provider, rather than years of settlement, would produce far better settlement outcomes. Women who are child rearing were seen as being particularly disadvantaged by the current system because they are often busy during the first five years bringing up their children and thus not accessing the available settlement services.

Interviewer: ...Can I go back to your comment earlier about how you feel that there are people who need services up to 12 years down the track. Are there differences in the communities that you’re seeing? So people who have been here for that long, are they from different communities?

Respondent A: Yes, ... because it’s all about settlement periods. And obviously in the 80s it was the Vietnamese people coming in and now we don’t find a Vietnamese person from a refugee background. So obviously what we’re saying, we have people, women in our program who are of Somali background who had not left the house without their husband in eight years until they started coming to our program. ...it has to be a case of hours of service rather than years.

Interviewer: okay

Respondent B: I’d certainly support that. We’ve had this discussion for English, as far as a whole variety of programs. Particularly with young families coming in. They establish a relationship with an agency, do some work, have another baby, so they are out of it for a while. So by the time they come back it’s been five years and they don’t qualify. But in actual service time, if you counted up the service hours, it would be way less than someone who has had five good, solid years of support services. So, it’s a big issue.
Another service provider likened being an SGP caseworker to being a traffic light monitoring people to ‘stop’ and ‘go’, but not guide and build the capacity of her clients.

With the SGP services it’s like you’re traffic lights, at each stage. SGP services are a traffic light but not one that actually can take the client by the hand and assist them. Because I think that style is definitely missing in SGP. To be more a continuation of the HSS services but with the caseworker being able to support them over the next five years, that would be better.
Chapter 13 – Differences Between Communities and Over Time

Before concluding, it is necessary to identify those aspects of settlement that differed between groups. Differences were noted based on length of residence in Australia, visa category and ethnic community.

Differences between Communities

Although the experiences of individual participants varied, there were a few notable differences between community groups in regards to some aspects of settlement. These are outlined below.

Education

The majority of the Burmese participants interviewed (both Karen and Chin) did not have any formal qualifications, as they had been working as farmers or in jobs inside refugee camps that did not require qualifications. The education level of participants from other communities was more varied, ranging from no formal education to masters level. It also appeared that women were less likely to have formal education, as they were often looking after children and families, or came from countries that did not provide women with the right to education.

Actually I haven’t had any education, I am an illiterate woman. I didn’t go to school because school was prohibited for girls at that time, girls are just for marriage and to produce children and serve their husbands, so I got married when I was 13 or 14 years old.

(Woman, Afghanistan, 2 years in Australia)

Belonging and racism

There were general differences in the ways in which participants from different countries conceptualised their belonging, or lack there-of, in Australia. Many of the Burmese participants, both those from Chin and Karen ethnic groups, reported that they felt they belonged in Australian society regardless of whether they had mainstream friends or not. The responses of these participants centred on how grateful they were to the Australian government and community for accepting them into the country and providing assistance. There was also no mention of racism or discrimination. It is possible that this may be because mainstream Australians have become somewhat accustomed to ‘Asian’ faces.

On the other hand, many participants from African countries, such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan, as well as women wearing various forms of Islamic attire, explicitly stated that they felt they did not belong because of their experiences of racism in the community.

Differences Between Visa Types

Although only five participants had been granted a visa via the Onshore Program and had been detained in Australia’s Immigration Detention Network, there were some clear differences as a result. In particular, the networks and the friendships developed while in detention appeared particularly important in helping them settle in Australia society. Many of the other participants who had come via different visas drew support from family or
friends already in the community, while those who had come via the detention system did not.

Initially our case worker was trying to help us then there was another person who also came in the boat and could speak good English. He assisted me in looking in the newspaper for houses.

(Male, Sri Lanka, 1 year in Australia)

The issue of family separation was a significant barrier to integration for those who had come as asylum seekers. This was also a problem for other African and Middle Eastern origin refugees, both shorter and longer term residents, who identified family reunion as an important aspect of integration.

My main issue is being away from my family. The Governmental Health Agencies cannot do much to relieve my worry and stress, as I am worried for the life of my wife and children. Every day 52 innocent civilians, many of them women and children are being killed in Afghanistan. If they were here with me, there would be no reason for me to be so much stressed and not being able to sleep. The only way the government and refugee agencies can help me and people like my case is to accelerate the process of the reunion of the families with trauma.

(Male, Afghanistan, 2 years in Australia)

In view of the accumulating research that highlights the psychological effect of long-term mandatory detention on asylum seekers, it is likely that the settlement needs of these individuals will be different from other humanitarian entrants. Indeed, one service provider noted that many of their clients who had come as asylum seekers found it difficult to adjust to ‘normal’ day time activities such as attending English classes, due to spending long periods of time in detention where there is little routine. He said “They become nocturnal”.

Similarly, it was noted that those who had come as asylum seekers and had been granted a Permanent Protection Visa (866) are more transient and mobile compared to other humanitarian entrant visa holders, moving from state to state more regularly.

Service Provider A: The 866ers are very transient and very mobile. So they... I’ve seen clients that have moved from Sydney, to Brisbane, to Albany, to Perth within three years...

Interviewer: Why are they moving that much?

Service Provider A: There are a few factors... One of them is employment. They go to different areas thinking that there’s more employment. The other thing is they hear rumours that there are better benefits in certain places.

Service Provider B: Yeah, I heard a story .... going back 12 months ago now, we had a whole lot of clients that wanted to move to Sydney. Why? “Oh the, the government will give us $3000 if we go to Sydney”. (Laughs) ... because the house information packs, each service provider works it out differently. And I thought, “wow” which is totally not true but this was a rumour that had been filtered back.

It is important to note the way in which some of the service providers talked about clients on 866 visas. There were a few occasions where differences were drawn between different categories of humanitarian entrants. For example, one service provider differentiated between “real” refugees and migrants. “Real” refugees are seen as people who, given the circumstances from which they are fleeing, should be grateful for the services provided in Australia and therefore not complain.
...are they real refugees or migrants or not? Because if you are a refugee you are in trouble, you wouldn’t choose, you just need somewhere to shelter. “Oh no I don’t want this house, I don’t want that one, I want something next to the ocean” (laughs). This is happening. The experience I see, or with the rent “No I’ll just pay $200 per week”. You don’t get it.

(Service Provider)

Similarly, those with the on shore Permanent Protection Visas (866) were constructed by one service provider as trying to ‘work the system’ or as “economic asylum seekers”, whereas those who have come via the Offshore Program (the “202s and the 200s”) are seen as more “genuine”.

Differences based on length of residence
As noted there was less variation based on length of residence than might have been expected. The main differences were in terms of level of language proficiency, which had flow on effects for negotiating the system and work opportunities. Of concern was the greater sense of disillusionment about someday belonging, with those having arrived more recently being more likely to expect that someday they would be feel part of Australian society and be accepted by the broader community.
Chapter 14 – Conclusions and Recommendations

The research provides a comprehensive picture of settlement and integration for humanitarian entrants to Western Australia in the first four years after arrival.

The research confirms much of what has been found in earlier research. Key implications and recommendations are outlined here. These should be read within a context that acknowledges humanitarian entrants are generally satisfied and grateful with their lives in Western Australia, that they find Australians generally kind and helpful, and that they appreciate the services provided, particularly those from dedicated settlement service providers.

A focus on empowerment and harnessing and fostering the building of social networks and capacity would assist integration. One concrete method by which this could be achieved is through better linking the Humanitarian Settlement Support program, and the Settlement Grants Program, which provides more structured but less individualised assistance. Another would be to introduce programs to encourage mutual trust and friendship, and to support social and emotional connection, such as a ‘family mentoring program’ that links Australian families with humanitarian entrants for ongoing social support. The use of community based volunteers may also assist with the development of more ‘natural’ social networks between refugees and the wider community, obviating the need for extensions of formal service provision.

The lack of coordination between service providers (government and NGOs), partly because of the competitive funding model, works against coordination of service provision, encouraging a fragmented rather than holistic approach. It also does not encourage long term investment in the sector nor the development of institutional knowledge that would ensure capacity building and consolidation of knowledge and experience in the area.

Service providers identified the limited resourcing and fragmented nature of their support as like “breathing through a straw”. As well as greater and more secure resourcing, consideration should be given to linking access to the number of contact hours an individual has used rather than a set time period.

While unemployment is a difficult issue to solve, the challenges of recognising prior skills and training continue to loom large. Improved access to skills assessment and bridging programs or alternate pathways would allow the Australian economy to make better use of its human resources, and also address settlement issues including poverty, mental health issues and social inclusion. A clear explanation to applicants about why their qualifications have not been accepted would also improve their confidence in the system.

More opportunities for local work experience, through short term internships, for example, would assist integration into the workforce.
The current Job Services Australia model is seen as unsatisfactory by humanitarian entrants and service providers. Dedicated case-managed services offered through settlement service providers may be more effective.

Obtaining a driver’s licence remains a barrier for humanitarian entrants, which re a range of other aspects of settlement, particularly employment options. More resourcing for driver training programs is required.

The need to develop adequate English language skills impacts employment, educational opportunities, access to housing, and social connection. It may be that an increase in the number of hours of free English classes is necessary to ensure refugees have adequate levels of English to undertake the work and study they desire, and to engage with other Australians. The need for work-related English was also identified. To improve uptake and retention in the existing program, solutions to barriers such as the need for income from employment (a bonus incentive as part of the current welfare payment may be appropriate) and issues around childcare for women also need to be found.

For young people from refugee backgrounds, given their specific mental health, physical health, psychosocial and educational needs, a specific focus is required. While many do very well, some are falling through the cracks. One concern voiced by service providers was drugs and prostitution. This is a sensitive issue, and publicity around it could have a negative impact on the communities. It is therefore important to get policy and practice right. Improving the interface between the communities and the policing and justice systems was seen as one aspect in solving the problem. The need for cultural support for African young people in particular was noted. Homework support groups and sports were seen as other ways of engaging young people.

The cost of living in Western Australia was identified as a problem, particularly for those on welfare. It is not suggested that humanitarian entrants should be entitled to a higher level of benefits, but that the level of welfare more broadly may need to be reviewed.

Housing was identified as a significant concern. Issues included the high cost of rentals, poor quality, discrimination, frequent relocation, and exclusion from the ownership market due to high prices. Once again, this is not a ‘refugee specific’ issue. The lack of stock of private and public housing in Western Australia appears to be part of the problem, and there is urgent need of an increase.

A major challenge is to change community attitudes to humanitarian entrants. Given that the SONA study found that “being treated well by the local community” was among the factors that best predicted humanitarian entrants’ effective settlement, the finding that many entrants have experienced racism (at worst) or feel as though they do not quite belong in Australia (at best) is a problem. There is a need for community education at all levels, including education and cultural awareness training for employers, real estate agents, and the wider community, and the need for political leadership to reduce stigmatising discourses. While funding for such campaigns exists, the general negativity of the media and political discourse tends to override the positive effect such piecemeal campaigns might have. A holistic approach is therefore needed, starting at the political level.
and integrated into the education system generally, including media training. While useful resources exist to improve media coverage of diversity issues (see, for example, the Reporting Diversity Project, 2007) these appear to have had little impact on media practice. Employer training is also overdue.

Finally consideration of the effects of immigration policy on refugee families is needed. As noted, the Australian immigration system penalises refugees seeking family re-union by reducing the number of places available by the number of visas granted for those seeking asylum onshore. Given the link between family reunion and positive humanitarian settlement, this is problematic – the programs should be de-linked.

In terms of recommendations for future research, there is a clear need for longitudinal research into all aspects of refugee settlement (particularly employment, housing, health, gender differences, and social connections). Of particular interest, given that social connection is central to positive re-settlement, would be the nature and degree of support that humanitarian entrants receive from, and return to, the local community. Future studies may also benefit from using mixed modes of data collection – although quantitative data is extremely difficult to generate, it is important in order to provide a clear picture of the extent of the various phenomena identified in qualitative research.
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Appendix A - Information Sheet – Humanitarian Entrant Participants

Associate Professor Farida Fozdar from Murdoch University and her colleagues Mr Michael O’Hara and Dr Lisa Hartley from the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre are investigating the experiences of humanitarian entrants settling in Western Australia after 12 months and 24-48 months. The project looks at education, health, employment, housing, identity and social support.

This project is being funded by Lotterywest and guided by a steering committee, chaired by the Director of the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and with representation MMRC, Centrecare, Fremantle Multicultural Centre, Edmund Rice Centre, ASeTTS, OMI and DIAC.

You can help in this study by agreeing to be involved in an interview, which should take over one hour. You will be asked questions about your experiences of settling in Australia after 12 months and beyond.

Before you decide whether you would like to be involved in this research, it is important that you know a few things:

- All information provided during the interview is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researchers unless required to do so by law. No names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research.
- You will be offered $20 for participating
- However, you may change your mind and stop the interview at any time if you do not want to go ahead.
- With your permission the interview will be audio recorded so that what you say can be transcribed into English later on. Myself, <Insert name of bilingual worker>, will be involved in the interviewing and transcribing of the interview.
- A short summary of the final report will be provided to all participants in the study. This will be posted to your address.
- Interviews will be conducted from April to July, 2011
- We are also trying to find people to take photos of their settlement experience.

If you are interested in participating, please let me, <Insert name of bilingual worker>, know. Alternatively, you can contact the Research Coordinator on the below details.

Dr Lisa Hartley
Research Coordinator
Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc
T: + 61 8 9345 5755
E: lisa.hartley@mmrcwa.org.au
Appendix B - Information Sheet – Service Delivery Agency Staff

Information Sheet for Focus Groups
Refugees in Western Australia: Settlement and Integration

We would like to invite you to share your knowledge with researchers exploring the experiences of refugees settling in Western Australia 12 months and 24-48 months after arrival. Our key task is to establish how the settlement experience changes over this period of time, particularly with regard to service provision. Findings will be fed back to the government, policy makers and service providers in the hope of enhancing settlement experiences.

The project is funded by LotteryWest and guided by a steering committee, chaired by the Director of the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and with representation from MMRC, Centrecare, Fremantle Multicultural Centre, Edmund Rice Centre, ASeTTS, OMI and DIAC. The Research Manager is Professor Farida Fozdar (The University of Western Australia) and the Research Coordinator is Dr Lisa Hartley.

Interviews have already been conducted with humanitarian entrants about their experiences after the initial intensive government-funded settlement support period. A Photovoice project has also been undertaken by a small sub-sample. In the next part of the research, we are interested in getting your expert opinion about the issues affecting humanitarian entrants.

All information provided during the focus group will be treated as confidential and will not be released by the researchers unless required to do so by law. No names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research.

If you have any questions about the study, you can contact the research coordinator Dr Lisa Hartley, on the details below. If you have concerns or complaints regarding the study, you can contact the Research Ethics Officer (9360 6677).

Thank you for considering participating in this research project.

Dr Lisa Hartley, Research Coordinator, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
T: + 61 8 9345 5755
M: 0457 794 243
E: lisa.hartley@mmrcwa.org.au
Appendix C - Humanitarian Entrant Participants for Photovoice

Exploring Settlement Experiences through Photography

What is the research about?

- It is being run by Professor Farida Fozdar from the University of Western Australia, Dr Lisa Hartley from Murdoch University and Mr Michael O’Hara and from the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre.
- It explores the experiences of humanitarian entrants settling in Western Australia after 1 year and between 2 – 4 years through photography.

Why are you being invited to participate?

- During the research interview process you took part in earlier in 2011, you were identified as someone who might be interested in sharing your settlement experiences through photography.

If you consent (agree), what will you be asked to do?

- Attend a 2 hour training session on Sunday 28th August 2-4pm at MMRC in Mirrabooka that will provide guidance on how to take photographs of your settlement experiences. Afternoon tea will be provided.
- Take a series of photographs over a period of two week that reflects your or your family’s settlement experiences in Australia.
- An MMRC worker will meet and help you upload the photos to a computer. You will be given the opportunity to explain the story of each of your photographs – e.g., why did you take it of that place or person or thing?
- We will seek your permission with how we might use the photos – for example, the photographs taken may be selected to be part of a public photo exhibition in early 2012 so others can learn about your experiences.

What other things should you know?

- Once you have finished the project you may keep the digital camera for your own use and will also be given a copy of the photographs you take in the project.
- You may change your mind and stop the storytelling or photography process at any time.
- The photographs will be taken between the training date and the storytelling session, which will be conducted approximately two weeks afterwards.

This is an opportunity for you and your family to tell the story of your settlement in Perth to a wide audience of the public, researchers and policy makers.

If you are interested in participating, please let me know. Alternatively, you can contact the Research Coordinator on the below details.

Dr Lisa Hartley, Research Coordinator, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
T: + 61 8 9345 5755
E: lisa.hartley@mmrcwa.org.au
Appendix D - Verbal Consent Form Humanitarian Entrant Participants

“Associate Professor Farida Fozdar from Murdoch University and her colleagues Mr Michael O'Hara and Dr Lisa Hartley from the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre are investigating the experiences of refugees settling in Western Australia after 12 months and 24-48 months. The project looks at education, health, employment, housing, identity and social support.

You can help in this study by agreeing to be involved in an interview, which should take over one hour. You will be asked questions about your experiences of settling in Australia after 12 months and beyond. Before you decide whether you would like to be involved in this research, it is important that you know a few things:

First, all information provided during the interview is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researchers unless required to do so by law. No names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research.

Second, you may change your mind and stop the interview at any time if you do not want to go ahead.

Third, with your permission the interview will be audio recorded so that what you say can be transcribed into English later on. I will be involved in the transcribing of this interview. Please be assured that the recording of this interview will be kept strictly confidential.

Fourth, a short summary of the final report will be provided to all participants in the study. This will be posted to your address.

And last, as part of this project we are also trying to find people to take photos of their settlement experience. If you are interested in participating, please let me know and I will inform the Research Coordinator. Are you interested in finding more out about this part of the project (Record Yes or No)?

Do you have any questions about what I have just told you?
Do you agree to the interview being audio-taped?
Are you willing to go ahead with the interview?…”
I acknowledge that I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter explaining the research study. I have read the information, have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions I may have had, have been answered to my satisfaction. I am confident that I understand the information provided. I understand the possible advantages and risks involved in taking part in the study.

I further understand that I will be participating in a one-off focus group which, with my consent, will be audio taped and later transcribed.

I freely agree to participate and understand that I do not need to answer any question I do not feel confident discussing and that I may change my mind and withdraw my consent at any time without consequence. Upon withdrawal, all information I provide to the study will, likewise, be withdrawn.

I understand that all information I provide will be treated as confidential. I further understand that audio recordings and written information will be stored in a locked cabinet during the conduct of the research and for a period of 5 years after completion of the study. After this time records will be destroyed.

I understand that the information provided will only be used for the purposes of this research project but do agree that research data gathered for this study may be published or used at conferences for educational purposes, provided names and other information, which might identify me are not used.

I, __________________________ consent to participate in this research project.

Participant’s signature: __________________________ Date: ______________

Researcher’s signature: __________________________ Date: ______________
Appendix F - Consent Form Humanitarian Entrant Participants for Photovoice

Exploring Settlement Experiences through Photography

I agree that the information about this study has been given to me and I have received satisfactory answers to all questions I have asked. I agree to be involved in this study and I know that I can choose not to be part of the project at any time.

I understand that the photographs will only be used in ways that I consent to. If there are photographs that I do not want to be used for public presentation/exhibition and/or research purposes, I understand that I have a right to not have them included or handed over to the researchers.

I consent to the use of my photographs for (tick):

☐ Public presentation/exhibition
☐ Research purposes (e.g., analysis, use in academic journal articles)

I understand that it is my responsibility to obtain the consent of the people who are in the photographs that I take and that once I have finished the project (or completed a significant amount of the project), I will be able to keep the camera as a token of appreciation for participating. I understand I will also be offered printed versions of my photographs to keep.

Participant: ___________________________ Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Investigator ___________________________ Date: _____ / _____ / _____
Appendix G - Pledge of Confidentiality- Bilingual workers

Pledge of Confidentiality

In order to ensure that the researchers of Murdoch University fulfil their obligations to the study participants under the approval of the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee, anyone with access to confidential information of third parties must make this Pledge of Confidentiality.

1. I____________________ recognize and acknowledge that in the course of my work as [INSERT AS APPROPRIATE – Community Researcher; Transcriber; Translator] in the “Refugees in Western Australia: Settlement and Integration” (research study), I may gain access to certain “Confidential Information” (as defined below). I shall not use any Confidential Information at any time except for purposes of performing my duties with respect to the research study. I shall not disclose any Confidential Information in any manner at any time to any individual or entity who is not bound to confidentiality provisions with Murdoch University. I shall continue to observe strict confidentiality on this information when I cease to be involved in the research study.

2. “Confidential Information” means information you gain access to in the course of your participation in the research study. This information is private information of an individual or organisation or which is of a confidential or secret nature and that may be related to participant information.

3. I acknowledge that I have reviewed this Agreement and fully understand its contents and its effect on me.

_________________________________    ___________________________
Name                                                    Witness name

_________________________________
Signature                                                    Signature of Witness

_________________________________
Date                                                    Date
Appendix H - Interview Protocol – Bilingual workers

1. Background Questions (5 mins): WRITE THE ANSWER, DO NOT RECORD

   a. Place: Suburb of residence ________________

   b. Gender: Male [ ]
               Female [ ]

   c. Age: 15-18 [ ]
            19-26 [ ]
            27-39 [ ]
            40-49 [ ]
            50-64 [ ]
            65 and over [ ]

   d. Length of time in Australia: _______ years and _______ months

   e. Country of origin: ____________________________

   f. Race/ethnicity: ________________________________

   g. Religion/Belief: Muslim [ ]
                  Christian [ ]
                  Hindu [ ]
                  Sikh [ ]
                  Jewish [ ]
                  Buddhist [ ]
                  None [ ]
                  Other……………….
                  [ ]

   Visa
      Offshore [ ]
      Onshore [ ]
      Sponsorship [ ]
      Women at risk [ ]

   Where obtained visa __________________________
## Family composition, household composition

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### h. Language

When you arrived in Australia, how well could you speak, read, write and understand English? How well can you do those things now?

1 = Fluently, 2 = Fairly well, 3 = Slightly, 4 = Not at all

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PLEASE RETURN THESE TWO PAGES TO LISA HARTLEY WHEN YOU GIVE BACK THE INTERVIEW PACK.
2. Education and Employment Networks (10 mins) TURN ON THE RECORDER

a. Can you tell me your educational background prior to your arrival in Australia?

b. What was your employment in your home country before arrival?
   i. What type of work did you do? (prompt: unskilled, semi-skilled/trade, para-professional, professional?)

c. Do you have a job? Are you undertaking education or training? Have you ever had a job / taken a course in Australia?
   i. What sort of [job/ education or training / course]?
   ii. If you have a job, is it the same type and level as your job in your home country?
   iii. If you received a qualification before you arrived in Australia, has that been recognised in Australia?

   (If no)
   i. Why do you think you have not or not yet found a job/course etc?
   ii. Do you think that this has had any impact in terms of you settling in your area and getting to know people?

   (Skip to e)

d. How did you find your [job / school / course]?
   i. Did you have any problems in finding a [job / school / course]? Who helped you? Who did you contact to try and find a job? (prompt: friends, settlement service, employment service, newspaper, online, door knocking).
   ii. Do you think that [having a job / going to school / taking a course] has helped you to settle in Perth and get to know people?

e. What have your experiences been with the English language classes you attended during your settlement in Australia?
   i. How useful do you think it was for you learning the language?

   ii. Are you currently attending any classes?

f. What are your career hopes (goals) and have these changed since being in Australia?

g. What factors make it difficult to achieve your career hopes (goals)?

   Prompts: Problems getting qualifications recognized; Requirement to have Australian work experience; Requirement to have referees in Australia; Lack of opportunities for work experience in refugee camps;
Breaks in working life; Necessity of having a car; Lack of childcare; Lack of skills; Lack of language

3. Health (5 mins)

a. What have been the main health issues in your family since arrival?

b. Since the first 6 months of intensive support in Australia, which ways has your access to health services changed, if at all?

Prompts: Medical practitioners (Doctors - GP’s, specialists), Hospital clinics, Psychologist/psychiatrist/counsellor, Welfare/social worker
i. Why have these changes occurred?
ii. How did you get access to these services?
iii. Impact of these changes
iv. What was good about these services?
v. What could be improved?

c. Have you used any other support instead of, or together with, these Health services?

Prompts: Family or friends, Religious leader, Traditional healer, Community elder?

i. Why have you used these other supports?

ii. Were they useful?

d. What factors prevent you from accessing Health services?

Prompts: no time, not enough money, don’t know who to go to, travel, fear of treatment, thinking that no one could help

4. Settlement, Locality and Community (Housing) (10 mins)

a. Since settling in Australia, where have you lived?

i. What were your reasons for moving?

ii. Did you like where you were living?

b. Can you tell me about where you currently live?

i. What kind of housing is it? (Own house, public housing, community housing, private rental, staying with friends)

ii. What kind of dwelling is it? (detached, flat, boarding house, motel/hotel)

iii. What size is it? (e.g., 3x1; 4x2)

iv. Do you like living here? Why/why not?

v. Do you hope to stay in this area? Why/why not?

vi. Is there somewhere else that you would rather live? Why/why not?
c. What sort of help have you received when trying to find housing?
   
i. Did you ask anyone for help? Who helped you?
   Prompts: Family Member, Friend, Sponsor, Refugee Organisation, Community Group, Ethnic Organisation, Religious Group, Government Department, Real estate agent, No One Assisted, No Movement

5. Identity and sense of belonging (10 mins)
   
a. Do you feel you belong here in Australia?
   
b. Where do you feel you belong /do not belong? Australia, your local area, somewhere else or a combination of places or nowhere?
   
c. Do you think that there is anything that could make you feel more like you belong here? If yes, what?
   
d. Do you think that white Australian people feel you belong here?
   
e. How would you describe yourself? (e.g. as an asylum seeker/refugee, as part of Australia’s minority ethnic communities, as [your national origin], as Australian, as a world citizen, or as something else?)
   
f. Would you consider taking Australian citizenship? Why/why not?
   
g. What ongoing relationship do you have to your country of origin?
   Prompt: family still there, send remittances, phone, write, visit, websites, politics etc
   
h. What is your strongest identity?

6. Perceptions of integration (5 mins)
   
a. What would you say it means to be “integrated”?
   
b. Do you personally feel integrated into Australian society?
   
c. Does it matter to you to feel integrated?
   
d. What would make you feel more integrated?
   
e. Is there anything the government should do to help refugees feel integrated into Australian society?
   
f. Are there things that you do or would like to do in Australia that you would consider part of integration but that might not fit with how the term 'integration' is commonly used?
7. **Case example - Settlement issue (10 mins)**

a. **Think about the biggest challenge that you have faced while being in Australia. Could you tell me about it?**
   
   **Prompt:** finding housing, intergenerational conflict, finding employment, adjusting to Australian culture. When did it occur?

b. **What people and services were most important in helping to address this issue?**
   
   **Probe:** Family Member; Close Friend (identify whether from community or mainstream); Sponsor; Acquaintance; Community elder; Religious leader; Ethnic community; Settlement Organisation; Community Group; Ethnic Organisation; Religious Group; Government Agency.

8. **Social Networks (10 mins)**

**Individuals (friends, family, etc)**

a. **Tell me about the people you know in Perth**
   
   **Prompt:** Are they family, friends, acquaintances, neighbours etc?

   i. Have you met new people since settling here? How did you meet them? Would you describe them as friends, acquaintances,?

   ii. Are they refugees, people from [country of origin], Australian people etc?

   iii. Have you found it easy or difficult to meet Australian people? Why was that? Have you found it easy or difficult to meet other people from [country of origin], or other refugees or migrants? Why was that?

   iv. Have any of the people we have just talked about given you support in your day-to-day life? Can you give me an example of who helped you with what? (e.g. help with things associated with integration like employment, childcare, information, etc.)

**Groups and Organisations**

b. **Are you involved in any groups or organisations? Tell me about these. (If no, prompt: refugee group, sports or youth club, religious group, political group, community centre etc. If still no:) Is there any particular reason why not?**
i. How did you become involved with them and why?

ii. What is the background of the other people involved? Are they refugees, from [your country of origin], Australian, etc.? Do your friends/family go there, too?

iii. How long have you been involved with the organisation? How frequently do you participate in activities?

iv. What would you say are the benefits of being involved with [the group]?

v. Do you feel that there are any drawbacks to being part of that group (e.g. things you are expected to do)?

vi. Are there any other activities you are involved in? Political, sports, culture, etc.? Tell me about the people you meet on those occasions.

vii. Are you involved in faith-based activities? Is faith important to you? Did you need support from your mosque/church to settle here?

9. Social Network Mapping Exercise (10 mins) – GET OUT THE MAP AND CARDS

   a. Thinking about the people that you know, and the groups and organisations you are involved in, and about your settlement in Australia, who provides support and what sort of support?

      Types of Support:
      talking, visiting,
      help with childcare/schooling, getting kids to school,
      driving lessons,
      assistance with shopping/finding right foods,
      using public transport, technology
      negotiating bureaucracies, filling in forms, phoning

      Other types of support?

   c. Please map on the circles how close these people and organisations are to you

   d. Has this changed over time?

**NOTE:**
- When the participant points to a card to explain something, please say the word on the card, so it gets audio-recorded.
• Record underneath each card, what type of support that person/group gives (e.g., family member gives support for childcare)
• If the participant tells you the name of the organisation, please write it on the card.

CARDS:
Family Member
Close Friend (identify whether from community or mainstream)
Sponsor
Acquaintance
Volunteer
Community elder
Religious leader
Organisation (e.g., refugee, community, ethnic, religious, political, sporting))
Government Agency (e.g., Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC, PBS, OMI, Centrelink))
10. Concluding questions *to be used at the end of the interview, even if it is cut short* (5 mins)

   a) Do you have any suggestions for improving support for refugees to integrate into Australian society? What do you think the important issues are?

   b) Do you have anything you would like to add that hasn’t already been discussed? i.e. related to experiences of integration.
Appendix I – Focus Group Protocol Service Delivery Agency Staff

Who are the main communities you are seeing?
What are the main services provided?
What are the major differences in needs in the first year of arrival versus two to four years after arrival?

- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Health
- Family issues (generations, gender)
- Belonging/networks/integration

Are there differences depending on which community you are dealing with?
What are the major service delivery differences in these periods?

- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Health
- Family issues (generations, gender)
- Belonging/networks/integration

Any comments about recent changes to settlement services (HSS, AMEP, SGP, Torture and trauma services)?

Issues for onshore processed refugees?

What could be done to improve the situation –
  by govt,
  by agencies,
  by wider community,
  by refugee communities?
Appendix J – Outline of Interviewer Training

9am – 10.30am

1. Welcome, Introduction, Ice-breaker, Purpose of Workshop
2. Background to the Project and Project Outline
3. Qualitative Research – what is it?
4. Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research
5. Interviewing and transcribing

Break and refreshments

10.45am – 12pm

6. Working with the interview guide (include practice)

Toilet break

12.05 – 1pm

7. Reflections on interview guide and questions
8. Review of the research interview procedure
9. Final Questions
Appendix K – Outline of Photovoice Training

Aims of the session:
- To teach research participants how to use a camera
  - Zoom, flash, deleting etc.
- To guide the participants how to take meaningful photographs about their experiences
- To get consent forms understood and signed
- To ensure the follow-up procedures of the project are known and understood by the participants
  - 2 weeks to take photos
  - Will meet up to upload, choose and explain photos to be used

Session agenda:
Introduction –
- Introduce members of the team
- Introduce the project
- Explain the purpose of the photographs within the research and where they will be used
- Explain the themes/research questions
  - My home
  - My learning experience
  - My employment experiences
  - My friendships
  - My life in Australia
  - Where I feel I belong
- Discuss the importance of information and consent forms

Photovoice card activity
- Participants pick a card and identify what the photographs are depicting
- Share opinions with the group/a partner

Photo expression activity
- Participants are given the research questions
- Then asked to pick a photovoice card that for them reflects an aspect of one of the questions
- Share with the group/a partner why that photo was chosen

Camera training
- Zoom, flash, night shots, viewing menu, deleting
- Questions
Conclusion – Overview of Procedures

1. Over a period of two weeks starting from the training day, take 5 photos of each of the following themes:
   - My home
   - My learning experience
   - My employment experiences
   - My friendships
   - My life in Australia
   - Where I feel I belong

2. Consent and information forms. Seek the consent of those you are taking photos of.

3. We will call you during the two weeks to see how you are going

4. Uploading photos and storytelling. Research assistant will you in two weeks to upload the photos to a computer and record the story about the photographs – e.g., why did you take it of that place or person?

   o Sign consent forms.
   o Fill-out photo upload availabilities – get people’s details (mobile, home phone)