



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Maximising the positive economic, social and cultural impacts of migration

Submission to the Inquiry into
Multiculturalism in Australia

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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1 The Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Ecumenical Migration Centre

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) is an independent non-government welfare organisation with strong community links that has been working to reduce poverty in Australia since the 1930s. Based in Melbourne, but with a national profile on matters of disadvantage, the BSL continues to pursue its vision of an Australia free of poverty. The BSL's service activity, research capability, policy development and principles of advocacy are geared to influence social policy and support social change in ways that genuinely achieve the full social and economic inclusion of all in the broader community. It is this perspective that the BSL brings to its work with refugees, immigration and multiculturalism (RIM).

The BSL has developed a broad portfolio of work that falls across four life transitions: children and families in the early years, youth moving through school to work, adults moving in and out of work and older people facing the challenges of retirement and ageing. Within this framework, the BSL also has expertise in themes that are integrated across these life transitions such as RIM and financial inclusion.

As part of its philosophy of inclusion, the BSL has a specialist refugee and settlement centre, the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC), which since 1962 has been at the forefront of work with recently arrived communities as well as longer-settled disadvantaged groups to ensure their full access and participation in Australian society.

In 1999, the EMC and its core area of RIM were integrated into the BSL to reflect the belief that refugees, settlement and the principles of multiculturalism should be part of mainstream thinking, welfare and social policy responses. This union sought to bring together EMC's history of specialisation in the areas of refugees and humanitarian entrants and the BSL's 80 years of experience in service delivery, research capacity and social policy thinking. The benefits of this union are twofold: the BSL has incorporated settlement issues within its life transitions framework to ensure that social justice, equity and recognition concerns for recent humanitarian entrants are integrated with the broader mainstream effort, and has simultaneously strengthened the EMC's capacity to contribute to a deeper understanding of exclusion and disadvantage experienced by migrants and refugees through 'forced migration'.

2 Economic, social and cultural impacts of migration

Australia is a country that has largely been built on migration. Postwar immigration saw large numbers of southern and eastern Europeans coming into a buoyant economy, with its protected industries and a wage system designed to remunerate breadwinners adequately to support their families. Consequently these immigrants were generally able to quickly find a place for themselves in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in industry, agriculture, fishing and mining. A high level of home ownership also embedded migrants in local communities and fast-tracked their integration and settlement. To this material security was added the cultural recognition of multiculturalism after the failure of the assimilation approach.

As the BSL has extensively documented, this social policy context has changed fundamentally over the last three decades. With the end of full employment and the deregulation of the labour market, we can no longer assume that paid work will offer access to economic security in the same way. In

addition, the policy framework of multiculturalism was brought into question and it no longer has the cross-party support it once enjoyed. For these reasons, we believe this inquiry is critical for a much needed renewal of multicultural policy in Australia.

To succeed, we believe that the renewal of multiculturalism needs to inform and be informed by the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda.

Firstly, this is about the reform of policies to support the economic participation of all Australians. The economic reforms of the past three decades have indeed generated an extended period of prosperity, but have brought with them significant new risks for people who do not have the personal capacities or material resources needed to participate successfully in the modern economy. As a consequence of the premium now placed on education and skills, priority is given to migrants who have the skills sought by employers. On the one hand, the changing economic context means that migration should not be promoted in any way which is to the detriment of Australians unable to find paid work. On the other, there will be some migrant groups who will need assistance to achieve economic participation.

Many refugees and humanitarian entrants have few marketable skills and have low levels of education. They have fled persecution in countries where labour is largely unskilled and their education has been disrupted. This poses particular challenges as they seek employment in Australia's modern economy.

Secondly, in situating the renewal of multiculturalism alongside the social inclusion agenda, we have to be aware of ways in which economic participation is linked to the broader dynamics of social integration. The changed political environment in Australia has compounded the difficulty especially for refugees and humanitarian entrants; and the postwar bipartisan approach to immigration associated with multiculturalism (including sympathy for asylum seekers and refugees) has been eroded over the last decade. The plight of refugees and asylum seekers has become highly politicised and vilification in public debate and punitive policy responses have become commonplace.

The effect of this environment on the settlement outcomes of the refugee population in Australia is illustrated in the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA), which revealed that outcomes for humanitarian entrants are generally poorer than for other migrant groups (DIMIA 2003). The deterioration of outcomes for this group over the past 10–15 years appears to be largely a consequence of their complex pre-arrival experiences including gross human rights violations, secondary movement, and longer periods of deprivation in refugee camps. This changing political, social and economic landscape has made the settlement for refugees more complex than in the past.

The BSL's work is targeted at reversing the decline in settlement outcomes and fast-tracking transition into universal systems, while recognising that the complex needs of these groups also require tailored responses and specialised support over time to achieve successful settlement.

The BSL continues to focus its work on newly arrived refugees and highly disadvantaged migrants. Through the EMC's specialist expertise and ability to draw on relationships with new communities, we seek to understand the distinctive needs of groups that the service system has not worked with before. Drawing on the EMC's long history and strong reputation, the BSL is uniquely placed to bring innovation, best practice and influence for change to tackle the exclusion experienced by refugees and other disadvantaged migrants. Additional benefits can be gained by connecting the specialist knowledge in the EMC with the research and practice expertise and knowledge across the

BSL relating to critical life transitions (the early years, through school to work, in an out of work, and retirement and ageing).

This submission focuses on three of the points outlined in the terms of reference (TOR), namely the role of multiculturalism in the government's social inclusion agenda (Point 1); the effectiveness of innovative settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees (Point 3); and initiatives to assist establish business enterprises (Point 7).

3 Multiculturalism in the federal government's social inclusion agenda (TOR point 1)

The Social Inclusion Agenda was launched by the Labor Party in the 2007 federal election campaign and, to date, has not included any specific mention of multiculturalism, migrants or refugees. Many have viewed this as a continuation of the explicit avoidance of the term (Galligan & Roberts 2003) and 'attacks' on multiculturalism (Clyne 2008) during the years of the Howard government. For some, the absence of multiculturalism from the social inclusion agenda has even spelt the 'death-knell of multiculturalism' in Australia (see Boese & Phillips 2011).

The BSL sees multiculturalism as a critical body of thinking to shape social inclusion and its future agenda. Multicultural policy and practices demonstrate 'applied' social inclusion and this submission will show how specific responses to challenges of cultural diversity contribute to the government's social inclusion vision.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (UN 2010) has recommended that 'the race and cultural dimensions of the Social Inclusion Agenda [are] strengthened, particularly in relation to ensuring adequate resources for the development of strategies that respond to the specific needs of diverse communities'. CERD specifically refers to ongoing issues of discrimination and inequity in access to and delivery of services experienced by members of certain minority communities including people of African, Asian, Middle Eastern and/or Muslim background, and in particular Muslim women. Also of relevance are the high poverty rates experienced by people of non-English speaking background in Australia (ASIB 2010), and difficulties with transport, poorer health outcomes, and not having attended a community event, as acknowledged by the Social Inclusion Board itself (Faulkner 2010). Their experience of deeply felt racism, with its many ramifications, is an additional reason to consider the role of multiculturalism within Australia's social inclusion agenda.

The BSL believes that Australian social inclusion must now be strengthened and deepened through integration with Australian multiculturalism. This involves broadening existing understandings of social inclusion by encompassing refugees, asylum seekers and disadvantaged migrants.

Social inclusion as a concept and policy paradigm originated in Europe in the 1970s, became a 'commonplace' term in the European Union by the 1990s (Radcliffe 1999), and was launched in 1997 in the UK following the election of the Labour government, to which Australia's model of social inclusion is closely linked. Social inclusion is differentiated from traditional concepts of poverty and disadvantage through its multidimensional approach that promises to recognise the social, cultural and economic aspects of disadvantage. It is 'about income ... but about more', as Blair (1997) indicated, and aims to create 'joined up solutions to joined up problems' (SEU 1997). Or, as Gillard (2008) put it, 'national economic and social policies will no longer be working at

cross-purposes'. The concept also promises a focus on the processes that produce exclusion and disadvantage, rather than only their unjust outcomes.

However, while social inclusion is said to be a 'vague' and 'elastic' term, and notoriously difficult to define (Silver 1994), many have noted that in different national contexts it has tended to focus almost exclusively on certain socioeconomic aspects of inclusion, rather than cultural aspects. Indeed, many have argued that it 'superseded the notion of poverty in the analysis of social inequality' (Edwards 2001). In particular, workplace participation has been a key aspect of social inclusion in Australia: 'workplace participation is the foundation of social inclusion' (Gillard & Wong 1997).

The absence of a cultural and racial dimension to the social inclusion agenda in Australia has two main consequences. Firstly, cultural and racial dimensions of well-recognised (socioeconomic) aspects of social inclusion will not be taken into account, and this will affect the ability to address the welfare of disadvantaged people of minority ethnic groups. For example, racism is a key barrier to social inclusion for minority ethnic groups: it affects their participation in the workplace, in schools, in services, in the community, in leisure and in public places (AHRC 2010; VicHealth 2009). Without adequate consideration of racism, and other relevant cultural and racial issues, the social inclusion agenda will be unlikely to succeed in addressing the welfare of minority ethnic groups. Many have noted, for instance, the omission of the specific needs of vulnerable new arrivals and refugees in the agenda's focus on jobless families (FECCA 2009).

Secondly, it means that social inclusion will remain limited in Australia to narrow notions of socioeconomic inclusion, without regard to other needs of minority ethnic groups, which also affect their overall welfare. Multicultural policy in Australia has previously recognised the right of all Australians to express their own culture and beliefs and the reciprocal obligation to respect the right of others; the entitlement of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, ensuring all to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia; and the significant cultural, social and economic benefit arising for all Australians from the diversity of our population (Clyne 2008). These factors are just as important to a person's overall wellbeing and social inclusion.

Recognising these cultural factors raises the issue of the exclusion of people of minority ethnic groups who are culturally excluded, but not socioeconomically disadvantaged. The Brotherhood of St Laurence believes that in the Australian social inclusion agenda priority should remain with the most socioeconomically disadvantaged, but it needs to be recognised that the most disadvantaged include people from minority ethnic groups, and that their welfare is inherently bound to cultural and racial issues, which are also inherently linked to socioeconomic factors, as discussed above. This means that cultural and racial exclusion issues must be incorporated adequately into the Australian social inclusion agenda.

This raises broader issues about how we understand social inclusion in Australia. Overall, this policy paradigm, like other dominant policy paradigms, has not been particularly good at reflecting the experiences and concerns of different social groups (Morrison 2010), including women (Jackson 1999, Lister 2006), people with a disability (Edwards 2001, 2009), and Indigenous people (Humpage 2006; Hunter & Jordan 2010), as well as minority ethnic groups (Loftman 2001, Clyne 2008). This is not surprising if we recognise that social inclusion is not just a specific suite of policies, or a new form of governance. It is also a normative concept, providing a vision, a set of values, and a way of seeing the world. It defines who and what is at the centre, and who and what is at the margins (Levitas 1998), creating as well as attempting to address these configurations.

Because of its inherent flexibility and elasticity, and typically wider policy focus, it is easy to suggest that yet another part of the processes of social exclusion should simply be ‘added in’ or incorporated into existing definitions. But attention to what addressing multiculturalism and the needs of the disadvantaged people from minority ethnic groups would actually entail suggests something larger and more fundamental. Specifically, it means deepening and broadening our notions of what social inclusion means in Australia. It cannot imply a form of assimilation, and a subsequent silence in relation to racial and cultural exclusion. Rather, it needs to encompass the priorities of a multicultural society, which empowers all Australians to fulfil their potential, and be fully accepted and respected in their diversity. Along with this, it also needs to include the policy and services that specifically recognise the social inclusion issues faced by asylum seekers, refugees and disadvantaged migrants.

Forty years since the thinking on multiculturalism was introduced to Australia’s political landscape, a wealth of knowledge and practice has been generated to respond to the reality of cultural diversity. The valuable learning from the subsequent implementation of the principles of multiculturalism—recognition and respect, tackling issues of access, addressing needs through equitable services, and creating an economic competitive edge (by utilising the skills and talents of all Australians) (Koleth 2010)—cannot be overlooked and must inform the social inclusion thinking. This is contingent on a reciprocal responsibility of all citizens to have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, accepting its basic structures, democratic beliefs and laws. While it is a requirement of all citizens to uphold this responsibility so that they can take part in the broader society and contribute to it, this commitment cannot extend to lifestyle choices provided that they are practised within the law.

Australia’s history confirms that we need a holistic social policy framework for all citizens, with pathways to meaningful cultural, economic and social inclusion. Therefore, Australian social inclusion, in the pursuit of equal participation and better outcomes for all community members, cannot ignore multiculturalism or treat it as a fringe issue, especially in light of the country’s strong immigration program. **The BSL believes that multiculturalism must be part of a new social contract that continues to sit alongside the Indigenous policies and applied social inclusion approaches, to inform them and be informed by them.**

The Minister for Social Inclusion recently gave a brief to the Social Inclusion Board to examine issues of racism; an indication of the Australian Government supporting the emphasis on investigating issues around the treatment of citizens and acknowledging the impact racism has on increasing social exclusion. By incorporating the cultural and racial exclusion issues into the Australian social inclusion agenda, the ability to attend to the welfare of new arrivals, especially those who come through ‘forced migration’ under the refugee and humanitarian stream, would be strengthened. Similarly, the social inclusion agenda would also be strengthened if welfare, educational and government services meeting needs of new arrivals are brought from the margins into the central concerns of core social institutions. This is an important course of action in engaging with multiculturalism and social inclusion and an indication that they are interdependent.

The BSL position reaffirms the fundamentals of multicultural policy and the need to align them with important social inclusion priorities and policies concerning Indigenous citizens so that cultural experiences and technical skills of all Australians are recognised, capacity developed and genuine economic, civic and cultural participation enhanced without relinquishing differences.

4 Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees (TOR point 3)

While the BSL believes in the importance of incorporating the underlying principles of multiculturalism in the social inclusion agenda to inform the mainstream effort around social justice concerns, equity and recognition, we are aware of the challenges for the universal service system in seeking to include all groups in the broader community. In responding to the third Term of Reference, the BSL would like to take this opportunity to demonstrate how this process works in practice and the impact it has not only on migrants and refugees, but on all Australians.

Family Relationships Services Program for Humanitarian Entrants

One example is the Family Relationships Services Program for Humanitarian Entrants, which recognises the significant relationship stresses of the refugee experience while also recognising the benefit that refugee families—just like any Australian family—can gain from professional support and counselling to overcome family problems and to maintain nurturing environments for healthy connected families.

This program, funded through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and delivered through the EMC's family services team¹ is a good example of how a government department responds to needs of newly arrived refugees.

Recognition is paid to the specific and very complex needs of individuals and families who have survived a refugee experience, are recovering from trauma and from human rights abuses individually and collectively suffered, and are simultaneously experiencing a very significant transition into a new culture and place.

The BSL's Refugee Family Relationships Services Team comprises highly qualified professionals who embrace a range of psycho-social interventions based on the latest neuroscientific research. The therapeutic approach they bring to their work in helping people recover from refugee trauma and restoring fractured family relationships is coupled with down-to-earth practical settlement assistance to help clients navigate services and adjust to life in a land that they view as strange. Feelings of safety and control are paramount for those who have survived a refugee experience, so the team focuses on helping clients rebuild these. The great resilience and richness of the cultures of refugee clients is also acknowledged and woven into strategies to help clients once again lead fully functioning lives.

While the reasons to access these services depend on the circumstances of the families that receive support, most family problems in the refugee population relate to settlement in a new country.

There is a range of challenges created for newly arrived families when gender roles and domestic responsibilities change. Shifts in household roles (due to mothers rather than fathers receiving child support payments and Centrelink benefits, and women accessing low-paid, low-skilled fields of employment more quickly than men) place women at the head of the family, giving them more responsibilities over the financial resources and environment of their families. However, changed household authority can lead to increased domestic tension and the breakdown of family relationships. There are cases of women resenting being put in this position, having to sacrifice their traditional role in the domestic sphere and being unable to reconcile the imposed situation,

¹ The program is delivered by EMC in the Northern and Western regions of Melbourne and by the South Eastern Migrant Resource Centre Dandenong in the South Eastern region.

which limits their care of their children and participation in social activities. These feelings are extended to men, as they feel undermined by the diminution of their traditional status as family providers. While there is no available data on the prevalence of family breakdown in newly-arrived communities, the issue is increasingly highlighted as requiring urgent attention, particularly among community leaders and service providers working with these communities.

This situation is compounded for young mothers with many children, as they have difficulty coping with life and are particularly at risk of social isolation. Women who do not have strong community links or an established social support network suffer from distress and depression which affect their everyday lives and overall wellbeing.

Numerous reports suggest that changes in family structure, dynamics and roles (particularly where young people take on leadership roles in the family as they acculturate faster to their new society) lead to the 'parentification' of older children. There are cases of young people from refugee backgrounds being called on by their family to take on advocacy roles—providing interpreting support in interactions with services and government organisations—as they are more proficient in English than their adult family members. These responsibilities extend to playing an important role in providing the care and protection of younger siblings, often under difficult circumstances. This can impede a young person's own educational and life opportunities, and can lead to a power/role shift within the family which eventuates in family conflict (O'Sullivan 2006).

Additionally, the huge cultural shifts experienced following migration to a new country often lead to relationship strain in families and intergenerational conflict due to differences in values and expectations (particularly relating to activities outside the home, intimate relationships, independence, responsibilities and academic achievement); differences in gender roles and expectations; differing degrees of 'westernisation' and maintenance of cultural traditions and values and language barriers (Tee 2009).

As family members embark on their individual journeys of settling into a different way of life, they often lack the traditional support from immediate and extended family members, and community elders.

While refugee families in the transition to settlement in Australia face many of the same relationship and settlement challenges as other new arrivals, their risk of family breakdown is compounded by the challenges of simultaneously coming to terms with and embarking of a painful journey of recovery from the refugee experience of trauma, threat to safety, fear, immense loss and grief.

It is the size of these challenges that warrants a targeted response and commitment from FaHCSIA towards refugee families. The BSL believes that FaHCSIA's Family Relationships Services Program for Humanitarian Entrants is not only providing specialised support to families who have survived a refugee experience but also strengthening the mainstream family relationships service system through the transfer of this learning to other settings across agencies.

The shared responsibility of government and organisations like ours in developing and delivering the programs that reach out and connect with all Australian families is a successful example of centring specialised services within the mainstream. **The body of knowledge captured from this program is a resource for family counselling in Australia to become more creative and flexible in responding to the diversity of our population. This includes considering the role of elders, the experiences of refugee trauma and the myriad ways of engaging with all kind of families and their challenges.**

Refugee Children's Outreach Settlement Program

A second example related to the effectiveness of innovative settlement initiatives is the BSL's work with very young refugee children at its Napier Street Child and Family Resource Centre. It shows how Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) settlement grants are responsive to trialling new approaches that lend themselves to replication across states and territories to strengthen the inclusion of new arrivals in the universal service system, in this case in early childhood services.

The Refugee Children's Outreach Settlement Program² has been designed for the specific needs of refugee children and focuses on providing support for their own settlement and developmental needs. This is in response to pre-school children's experience of prolonged transition, trauma, uncertainty and danger arising from their refugee experience before, during and after settlement.

Children under five years of age in refugee families have often experienced multiple traumas themselves. Their mothers' experiences of trauma also have a significant impact on their attachment with their children, often rendering them incapable of resolving their children's needs. This challenge is not reflective on the mothers' parenting skills but the adverse effects of the circumstances they lived through, particularly when they are coming to terms with their individual traumas, their loss and grief, disrupted family hierarchies and the process of settling in a new country.

Given that the immediate and long-term capacity of children to participate in the social and economic life of their community depends on their own and their family's successful settlement, this project highlights the need to invest in early years settlement opportunities that assist young children and their families (Williams-Smith 2008).

The two key activities underpinning this program rely on building trusting relationships with parents and children to gain insight into the framework that informs their relationship and to offer professional support in a therapeutic setting that assists them in maintaining nurturing environments for healthy families. The role of the outreach worker also involves active advocacy for the child and parent in mainstream early-years services. It is important that child and family welfare service planners are well informed about how best to support refugee families using culturally competent family intervention and community development practices. The need for this program therefore remains until the children's support needs are adequately met in mainstream early-years services and in responses to the needs and broader circumstances of their family.

A forum, 'In their own right', convened by the Brotherhood of St Laurence during the pilot phase of this project found agreement among those in the early childhood and settlement sectors that investment is required in pre-school refugee children's settlement, as this is an area largely overlooked by settlement services, which tend to focus on adults and young people (Williams-Smith 2008). Investment in early intervention for very young refugee children was seen as a morally and ethically critical area of unmet need (EMC 2008)

To continue supporting refugee children in their own right, **the BSL recommends that government invests in evidence-based research to appraise the work being done with newly arrived refugee children to significantly improve their settlement outcomes through early intervention.**

² The Refugee Children's Outreach Settlement Program has operated since 2008 and is funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

While settlement is a federal responsibility, **the BSL recommends that this demonstration project be further tested at scale with a view to becoming part of the early childhood service system in areas with significant refugee family arrivals. A collaborative approach is therefore required for programs such as this to be rolled out.** This is an example of where federal DIAC settlement services and state early childhood jurisdictions meet.

Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

A third example of practical social inclusion is the BSL's work to support and strengthen the parenting role in creating a positive learning environment for their children is the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)³. The program targets parents, often recently arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants, with four-year-old children who may be at risk of not starting school as ready to learn as other Australian children. HIPPY therefore aims to improve the child's school readiness by developing the skills of parents. It uses structured learning materials that home tutors introduce to parents whom they visit fortnightly in their home. HIPPY home tutors are offered a supported pathway to further training and employment and many become local community leaders.

The tutors, recruited from the local community, either are or have been HIPPY parents themselves. Their home tutor job is usually their first paid work in Australia. They work family-friendly hours and receive training and support from a qualified early childhood professional. English language and literacy development is a key focus in the teaching and training of tutors.

Parents attend centre-based group meetings organised by their home tutors every second fortnight. The meetings often include settlement-related information for parents and provide an important forum for forging links with other community members and family services. The meetings are a key way of familiarising participants with the use of program materials, allowing parents to participate in 'enrichment activities' that focus on parenting skills and child development in Australia. .

By improving the parent-child relationship (including the parents' sense of wellbeing and social inclusion), HIPPY has evolved as a valuable family-strengthening strategy and a highly cost-effective means of strengthening society as a whole by enabling disadvantaged Australian families to live up to their potential.

In an evaluation of the national rollout of HIPPY undertaken by the BSL's Research and Policy Centre Early Years research team, Monash University and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), preliminary findings⁴ have indicated that HIPPY is an appropriate and successful program in addressing the needs of Australian families including refugee families.

The aims of the program are consistent with key policy initiatives across Australia and reflect the government's commitment to achieve better early childhood outcomes for all Australians. **The BSL therefore recommends that the federal government along with relevant state government**

³ The Australian Government has committed \$32.5 million over five years (2008–2012) for the BSL to roll out the HIPPY program through local community partners to 50 communities nationally, supporting 3000 families.

⁴ Findings included improved children's school readiness, increased parents' awareness of the importance of early learning, increased active involvement of parents in their children's learning, high levels of wellbeing, and increased engagement in the local community from building new networks through HIPPY. The national evaluation findings are due to be finalised shortly.

departments extend their support for the future sustainability and growth of HIPPY programs, considering the demonstrated social and economic benefits for refugee families and communities.

Given the Chance Employment and Education Program for Refugees

The next example of innovation arises out of our extensive work looking at successful and sustainable responses to reverse the significant unemployment rates of refugees. The work of the BSL here highlights the relationship between specialist services or responses that target a population group (refugees) and the mainstream service system, which is required to work with all Australians irrespective of their backgrounds. It also presents a strong argument for more effective investment to assist refugees in the labour market.

The Given the Chance (GtC) program, an education and employment pathways program for refugees, was piloted and developed by the EMC in response to the needs of a specific population group. It was designed to respond to a range of barriers for refugee job seekers: discriminatory attitudes of employers, labour market conditions in regional areas of settlement, lack of understanding of the cultural issues in the Australian workplace, and lack of employment history and networks. Since the federal government employment assistance system was systematically failing this group and further marginalising them, EMC took the initiative to pilot the GtC program with the intention to test new approaches for successful pathways into paid employment for this group.

The GtC program relies on a set of integrated support strategies, including intensive training in English as a second language to enhance understanding of Australian workplace culture, training for participating employers, supported business mentoring, traineeships and direct job placement with large and medium-sized businesses. Clients of the GtC program also receive case management from experienced and highly qualified caseworkers who assist refugee job seekers to find, obtain and keep work.

Mentoring constitutes a large part of the GtC: refugee job seekers are matched to people with relevant business contacts and skills. The mentors, drawn from business and government, provide community connections and open the door onto Australian workplaces and everyday culture. Partnerships established with national employers like the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ) and Woolworths bring a direct 'line of sight' to paid employment as well as building employment-related skills. The second line of sight to a real job is through supported traineeships in a community enterprise or with a host employer.

An evaluation of the GtC employment model conducted in 2007 by the BSL's Research and Policy Centre demonstrated success in the development of social, educational and employment outcomes for people from refugee backgrounds. Many participants found mentoring to be a beneficial aspect of the program, particularly in expanding their social networks and overcoming social and economic barriers (Mestan 2008). The involvement of these volunteer community mentors has added considerable value to refugee job seekers, representing a significant benefit in building social capital (MacDonald et al. 2004). The GtC training has enhanced employment-related skills and understanding of Australian workplace norms. The work placements have proven to be beneficial in promoting employment opportunities and securing jobs. There were less tangible benefits as well, such as refugees becoming more trusting of Australians.

This approach to addressing unemployment and exclusion of refugees is based on a community support model and was largely funded by the former Victorian government's Community Support Fund through its Community Strengthening strategy. While no employment funds were secured

from DEEWR or from DIAC, the GtC program was showcased as a successful case study worthy of attention by these departments (DIAC 2008).

Our experience in seeking support for GtC suggests that while governments see the sense in taking a cross-departmental approach to solutions to enduring social issues, they lack the ways to do this in practice. DEEWR's suggestion to develop the GtC program as a refugee specialist Job Services Australia (JSA) contract would not be viable.

The BSL has now moved to test the Given the Chance approach at a neighbourhood level by using DEEWR Innovation project funds to adapt GtC to helping unemployed residents of public housing estates into employment.

At the beginning of 2010, the program became a central part of the Brotherhood's Centre for Work and Learning. The BSL recognised that the client-centred approach that succeeded for refugees could also work for other highly disadvantaged job seekers. Thus, a program designed for a population group by a specialist refugee settlement centre within the BSL became part of the offering of the CWL for other highly disadvantaged groups.

The BSL's Centre for Work and Learning focuses on the work, learning and personal development needs of public housing tenants in and around Yarra, aiming to get them into paid work. The Centre works closely with JSA service providers by offering highly disadvantaged job seekers an integrated package of extended work experience, health and welfare support, and certified tailored training relevant to local labour market opportunities. This project is into its second year and a formal evaluation is well underway.

In working for the future sustainability of its Given the Chance Employment Program for Refugees, the BSL believes that yet another pilot or innovation in this area may not bring the influence for a significant reallocation of DEEWR resources to address refugee unemployment. While the BSL has been working to get the GtC program funded and rolled out nationally, there is still no national refugee employment strategy, despite the goodwill of business and the community. **The strongest way forward is to bring the refugee unemployed into a broader cohort of highly disadvantaged job seekers, and to call for a new flexible employment and training approach that builds on the Given the Chance approach.**

To this end, in January 2011, the BSL's submission to the Australian Government on the Future of its Job Services noted that while the current JSA is doing a decent job for most people, it has struggled to meet the needs of those in Stream 4⁵. Accordingly, the BSL **recommends setting up an integrated employment pathway for Stream 4 highly disadvantaged job seekers with multiple barriers, drawing on the work that has proven so successful for refugees and is now being further tested and evaluated with public housing residents.**

These recommendations will address refugee unemployment in the mainstream employment services system by drawing on the best work of the settlement services and welfare agencies to better tailor services for highly disadvantaged job seekers.

⁵ Employment outcomes result for only 15% of JSA Stream 4 clients and only 28% of this stream are reported as achieving positive outcomes (September 2010 data, DEEWR 2010). Only one-third of those obtaining employment have permanent jobs.

Refugee Action Program

Final comments in this section are about an initiative that the BSL believes will enhance coordination of efforts that strengthen the leadership capacity of emerging community groups and associations to achieve better settlement outcomes. The Refugee Action Program (RAP)⁶ developed from a need to support disadvantaged communities and leaders so that members can make informed choices about their own affairs.

The RAP employs a community development approach to working with emerging refugee communities in Victoria. It steers communities towards greater self-sufficiency by providing intensive support to community leaders and their organisations, as well as working on community needs analysis and action plans that harness mainstream community resources.

It involves setting up partnerships through direct collaboration between refugee community organisations and individuals, local government agencies and service providers. These partnerships provide a contact point for service providers and enable them to better understand and address the local needs of communities.

The EMC's early work in this area provided the template for broader community capacity building across Victoria especially among refugees and migrants, and incorporated a five-stage approach to ensure effective program development and delivery (Renner 2007). This involves:

- establishing meaningful engagement with stakeholders and communities, with a focus on building trust and goodwill through ongoing hands-on support and a flexible relationship-driven approach
- in partnership with the community, carrying out a needs assessment which involves developing community profiles with leaders, mapping local services and linking communities to these services
- targeting training for community capacity building so as to allow community leaders to perform their roles effectively, particularly in identifying community requirements and addressing these through tailored, community-owned responses. Training is also available to community members, to ensure broader community engagement. Our approach expands beyond training to include volunteer mentoring of community members, and support from community liaison officers
- planning and implementing community development projects that utilise a participatory approach based on extended consultation and intensive support to encourage learning through practice
- setting up a system of information sharing and continued collaboration between communities and local government with ongoing evaluation of initiative to project goals built into the plan for each community.

RAP is an incubator for innovative ideas driven by communities themselves to address needs (that they identify) by acting on the responses that are suitable to them. This work relies on a flexible approach so that community responses are continuously improved to address emerging practical needs.

⁶ The RAP is delivered by EMC and Spectrum MRC, which make the connections between refugee communities and mainstream agencies, through partnerships selected in geographical areas of high need. Its predecessor, the Refugee Brokerage Program, was funded by the Victorian Multicultural Commission from 2006 to 2009 as part of the Refugee Support Package and was a key initiative under the *Fairer Victoria* policy.

An example of this is the pilot project within RAP to address employment barriers and the gap that often exists between the employment/training sector and refugee community groups. This pilot develops the capacities of community members as employment advocates: they are provided with training and orientation about the sector and then placed with community or employment organisations (in either a traineeship or work placement) to increase their understanding of the sector as well as link community members directly to employment opportunities. The project also involves the creation of an online employment networking tool called Working Online Refugee Communities (WORCs), where participants (from the refugee community) and mentors (from the mainstream community) build networks and share information about jobs that are not advertised.

Many partnerships across Victoria have utilised the RAP's community development principles and flexible funding to work together with communities to create innovative programs in response to identified needs. **This Victorian Government initiative is one that could bring great benefits in successful settlement of refugee communities if adopted nationally.**

A centre-based approach to community capacity building

From the BSL's success in adopting an asset-based approach to capacity development, we are proposing a pilot of a centre-based approach to this kind of work. Such an approach for new refugee communities would build individual and group capacity and assist the development of stronger, more active community groups with increased assets such as knowledge and skills, social connection and networks.

We are aware that refugees often struggle to be involved in the economic, social and political life of their new country and community leaders are a trusted source of settlement support and guidance for them. We also recognise the invaluable role played by these leaders in facilitating interactions between new community members. Therefore, the leadership of emerging community groups and associations must be strengthened for better settlement outcomes. As the Refugee Action Program has contributed to building community capacity, we believe that more needs to be done, with greater coordination of effort and resources, so that we can reach more communities that require this kind of support.

A centre-based approach alongside the RAP approach will ensure government has direct access to highly sought after (but usually difficult to get) information about emerging communities, and their pressing issues and settlement needs. It will also enable evaluation and dissemination of new approaches to settlement programs delivered through community groups. Importantly, this approach would build a body of evidence about settlement approaches, in addition to expanding the practice knowledge of the workers and volunteers in the sector.

The BSL proposes trialling this approach in two ways. The first would service smaller dispersed communities across Melbourne, given that Australia's refugee and humanitarian intake is becoming increasingly diverse, with smaller and more dispersed refugee communities that face more challenges in establishing community infrastructure than the larger groups that were typical of Australia's historical refugee and immigrant intake. A central location such as the site of EMC is suitable because it is accessible to both new arrivals settling in the inner city and those travelling to the inner city to access services and support.

The second would support the African refugee community in Melbourne, as they face a range of challenges, including structural and attitudinal barriers that impact negatively on their lives and life opportunities, leaving many on the margins of Australian society. This suits a location like

Footscray, which is a central access point for the African Australian community. The Western Melbourne region has one of the highest humanitarian intakes across metropolitan Melbourne (3630 out of 17,938) with approximately 41% (1486) arriving from countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DIAC 2010). With this in mind, the BSL is in the process of developing an African Community Centre in Footscray that will spearhead a concerted effort among the African groups who are achieving poorer settlement outcomes.

The need for a place where community groups can gather to acquire skills and knowledge has been well documented. A plethora of reports and submissions from communities, research papers and program evaluations highlight the desire of community groups to build their skills and capacity to manage settlement. Therefore, our proposed centres will assist in the development of strong, active community networks that cooperate to build shared knowledge and skills, foster social cohesion and strengthen mainstream connections. The premises will also function as a community facility and include a space for community groups to utilise computers, have access to meeting rooms, get support from experienced community development professionals and volunteer mentors, as well as access a broad range of BSL programs.

The proposed centre based approach would achieve the following outcomes:

- practical benefits for community groups in the acquisition of leadership skills and training, knowledge and confidence
- cross-fertilisation of ideas and positive collaboration between groups, learning from each other in addressing shared priorities
- development of organisational group structures and processes to make the best decisions for their communities
- new ways for group leaders to interact with government, not-for-profit and other community groups with an increased confidence and capacity in identifying and accessing resources. Mainstream services will also have a convenient point of contact with otherwise dispersed community groups
- fostering of cross-cultural understanding through relationships between volunteers from the mainstream community and members of emerging communities.

Thus, the BSL recommends trialling a centre-based approach to community capacity building in support of smaller dispersed refugee communities at EMC and of African refugee communities at a community access support centre in Footscray.

5 Potential government initiatives to assist migrant business enterprises (TOR point 7)

Stepping Stones Project for Refugee Women

The last section includes a practical example of a program the BSL delivers through EMC to support refugee women in setting up micro-enterprises for refugee women. Studies have identified several barriers for refugee women participating in the workforce in relation to communication skills, access to job-seeking information, knowledge of the systems, access to childcare, and academic qualifications. These barriers contribute to refugee women's financial disadvantage and hinder their capacity to participate actively in the community.

The Stepping Stones Project responds to an identified gap in current employment services. The BSL recognises that developing a micro-enterprise can offer a flexible and empowering income generation alternative for refugee women. These women have product development skills, small trade experience and professional skills that could be strengthened and further developed into small enterprise and self-employment opportunities. In response, a program was designed by the EMC that would increase refugee women's understanding of Australian financial systems and business structures in order to help them establish their own small businesses in Australia.

The key features of Stepping Stones combine the provision of training programs to develop foundational skills such as increasing financial capacity (through the ANZ Money Minded program) and developing small business management skills. There is also a small business mentoring component for one-on-one peer support. This is vital for developing relationships between volunteers from the mainstream community (knowledgeable business women from the mainstream community) and members of emerging communities.

The combined approach of training and the involvement of mentors aims to increase the women's social interaction, and develop their business skills and financial decision making by improving their understanding of financial systems, starting a new business in Australia and developing supportive networks in the broader community. This approach would enhance their confidence and economic participation.

One outcome of the program has been the Iskashi project, an Islamic fashion business model that involved a series of workshops to teach basic sewing skills to these women in partnership with 'The Social Studio'. The workshops also incorporated learning about business plans, marketing techniques, and money handling.

The success of Stepping Stones pilot has now secured corporate funding for the demonstration project phase until December 2013. **The BSL recommends the establishment and replication of women's small-enterprise facilitation projects based on the learning from this demonstration project and others.** Indeed this type of micro-business mentoring project could have broader application to disadvantaged communities throughout Australia, including men, older people and younger job seekers.

This is another example that highlights the need to draw on successful programs trialled for refugee communities in Australia to tailor services for other disadvantaged Australians.

6 Conclusion

The BSL's vision of an 'Australia free of poverty' involves ensuring full access and participation for disadvantaged communities in Australian society. This relies on two crucial steps: first, setting up, trialling and evaluating services for a diverse immigrant population with complex needs; and second, broadening the range of services provided by the public structures by mainstreaming successful specialised services to organisations that serve the general public as inclusively as possible. The primary goal is to make community participation an all-pervasive element of public administration in Australia. This means strengthening multiculturalism by adopting an approach that minimises the marginalisation of migrants, in respect to mainstream services and management. Our approach therefore focuses on the practical developments of multiculturalism and the critical intersection with the social inclusion agenda. Our experience in applied social inclusion and practical multiculturalism demonstrates that integration of both agendas is necessary and promises significant benefits for all Australians. This approach confirms our obligation as a mainstream welfare organisation to people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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