Final Report

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# Refugees, housing, and neighbourhoods in Australia


authored by

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# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| AFENET | African Field Epidemiology Network |
| AHSS | Australian Humanitarian Settler Survey |
| AHURI | Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited |
| AMEP | The Adult Migrant English Program |
| ASAS | Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme |
| ASRG | Australian Survey Research Group |
| AUSCO | Australian Cultural Orientation |
| BAs | Bilingual Assistants |
| BVE | Bridging Visa E |
| CALD | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse |
| CAS | Community Assistance Support |
| CCS | Complex Case Support |
| DIAC | Department of Immigration and Citizenship |
| DIBP | Department of Immigration and Border Protection |
| DIMA | Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs |
| DSS | Department of Social Services |
| FCS | Family and Community Services (NSW) |
| GSS | General Social Survey |
| HSS | Humanitarian Settlement Services |
| IHSS | Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy |
| IMA | Irregular Maritime Arrival |
| LAS | Living in Australia Survey |
| LGA | Local Government Area |
| LSIA | Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisation |
| NRAS | National Rental Affordability Scheme |
| NSPN | National Settlement Policy Network |
| OMAC | Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship |
| OMI | Office of Multicultural Interests (WA) |
| OOP | Onshore Orientation Program |
| PPV | Permanent Protection Visa |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| REIV | Real Estate Institute of Victoria |
| REIWA | Real Estate Institute of Western Australia |

| | |
|---|---|
| SEIFA | Socioeconomic Index for Areas |
| SGP | Settlement Grants Program |
| SHP | Special Humanitarian Program |
| SONA | Settlement Outcome of New Arrivals |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education |
| THM | Transitional Housing Management Program |
| TPV | Temporary Protection Visa |
| Vic | Victoria |
| WA | Western Australia |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The majority of refugees resettled in Australia in the last few years came from African countries, the Middle East and Asia. During 2012–13, Australia had an intake of 20 019 humanitarian entrants (those with a refugee or other humanitarian visa), an increase of 45 per cent from the previous year (DIAC 2013g).

Ensuring that refugees have access to long-term sustainable housing is one of the greatest challenges facing countries of resettlement (UNHCR 2002). The present study addresses this issue by mapping the housing experiences of refugees in Australia.

Our study, *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, is a three-year research project, which began in 2012 and focuses on the housing, homelessness, neighbourhood and broader social inclusion experiences of refugees in Perth and Melbourne.

The study addresses three key research issues:

1. *The housing experiences of refugees and related non-shelter outcomes.*

   To what extent are refugees able to access and sustain long-term suitable and affordable housing? What types of formal and informal assistance are they accessing? What are the barriers to accessing housing? What are the key non-housing outcomes (e.g. employment and education) that are associated with their housing situations over time? What are the experiences of humanitarian entrants with respect to homelessness?

2. *The neighbourhood experiences of refugees and related non-shelter outcomes.*

   What are the characteristics of neighbourhoods with high concentrations of refugees? How do refugees experience 'neighbourhood' and to what extent are they affected by the non-housing outcomes associated with 'neighbourhood', such as economic opportunity, social inclusion and wellbeing? To what extent do refugees access dedicated settlement programs?

3. *The effectiveness of housing assistance and support programs and settlement assistance in improving housing outcomes and resulting non-shelter outcomes.*

   Are refugees accessing relevant housing, homelessness, and health and wellbeing services available to them when needed? How effective is the homelessness service response to those who are homeless?

The present report, *Refugees, housing, and neighbourhoods in Australia*, is the first of two reports from the study. It includes a literature and policy review, and the analysis of primary quantitative and qualitative data from June 2012 to March 2013 in Perth (Western Australia) and Melbourne (Victoria). These two cities were selected as much for their similarities (e.g. a high refugee intake and suburbs with concentrations of refugee populations), as their differences, such as in the economic environment (strong economic growth in Western Australia running off the resources boom at the time and a consequent rising housing prices in Perth and lower growth in Melbourne).

The project involves a mixed methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches:

- A systematic review of the literature and relevant policies that impact on the housing, economic opportunity, social inclusion and wellbeing outcomes of refugees.

- A longitudinal survey, the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, conducted with a small cohort of refugees who have been in Australia for one to five years to examine their experiences of housing, neighbourhood and key non-housing outcomes.
- A one-off small survey of refugees experiencing homelessness in Perth and Melbourne.
- Focus group discussions with policy-makers and service providers to identify relevant issues and processes affecting refugees' housing and neighbourhood outcomes.
- Transect walks, where researchers explore a local environment guided by local informants, providing key insights into the refugee experiences of neighbourhood that might not otherwise be uncovered.

The systematic literature review presented in this report, reveals that housing and housing programs play a key role in producing positive settlement outcomes for refugees settling in a new country. The Australian Government assumes primary responsibility for the resettlement of refugees and provides a range of programs that provide settlement support. The principal program of support, available for the first six to 12 months following arrival, is the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS). For ongoing support requirements for up to five years from arrival, assistance is provided through the Settlement Grants Program (SGP).

The first wave of the longitudinal *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* was completed between June and November 2012. Respondents came from a range of household types, with a balanced gender representation and countries of origin from across the Middle East, South East Asia and Africa. The results revealed that the vast majority (85%) of survey respondents were residing in private rental accommodation, with the remainder staying with friends or family, living in public or community housing, or having purchased their own home. There was no primary homelessness (no shelter) reported over the previous 12 months in our survey respondent group. However, secondary homelessness in the form of staying with family and friends as they had nowhere else to live had been experienced by close to one in 10 respondents in the past 12 months. Despite experiences of social isolation among respondents, the vast majority of survey respondents reported that they had been made to feel welcome in Australia.

Focus group participants, many of whom were settlement workers from the HSS and SGP programs, spoke of the difficulties that their clients experienced in accessing and maintaining private rental tenancies including meeting housing costs. These discussions also highlighted the serious problems of homelessness, including primary homelessness, experienced by refugees in Australia. Focus group respondents reported an increase in the number of single men presenting for assistance; difficulties in finding them suitable accommodation was a strong theme in the focus groups. The issue of homelessness within the refugee community is the focus of the second report in this study.

The evidence from transect walks revealed issues surrounding a general lack of communication or unfriendliness amongst neighbours who were also concerned about the 'visibility' of groups of refugees, particularly young people, congregating in public places.

Overall, the services provided through settlement providers, as well as mainstream housing and homelessness services, were identified as playing a vital role in helping refugees access and maintain housing. In addition, sporting events and church activities were also important factors in bringing the community together. Innovative

programs, such as a swimming program run by a multicultural service provider, were important in bringing together those experiencing social isolation, including refugees from different backgrounds and members of mainstream Australian society.

The second report of the study *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion in Australia* will:

- → Provide findings with respect to the housing and community experiences of refugees as they continue their life in Australia (through follow-up waves of the survey and subsequent transect walks).
- → Present a detailed analysis of homelessness and marginalised housing experiences of refugees.
- → Consider the policy and practice implications of the research.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2012) estimates that, at the end of 2011, some 42.5 million people around the world had been forcibly displaced from their homes and neighbourhoods. Of this total, 35.8 per cent (15.2 million) were deemed refugees and 62.1 per cent (26.4 million) internally displaced persons. The vast majority (80%) of refugees reside in developing nations. Australia is one of 22 resettlement nations and, in terms of the number of refugees received, has been one of the 'top three' UNHCR resettlement countries since 2008–09 (DIAC 2012b).

This study investigates the housing and broader neighbourhood and social inclusion experiences of refugees in Australia. Housing is the central focus of the study. Securing and maintaining appropriate housing is a particular challenge for refugees and significantly influences other settlement processes and refugees' overall sense of belonging and social inclusion. Refugees' experience of neighbourhood is also explored through the study. Our focus is on understanding, especially in those areas where refugee settlers have residentially concentrated, refugees' connectedness to both their own ethnic community and the wider community. Refugees' experiences of homelessness will also be a focal point of a second report of the study to be released in due course.

More specifically, this project aims to examine:

- The housing careers of humanitarian entrants and address the issue of whether refugees during their initial years in Australia access and sustain secure and suitable long-term housing; the barriers to housing experienced by humanitarian entrants; and the role of neighbourhood in the achievement of appropriate housing outcomes as well as economic opportunity, social inclusion and overall wellbeing.
- The extent to which specialist housing and homelessness services, together with settlement services and mainstream and specialised refugee health, employment and other services, are successful in facilitating settlement for humanitarian entrants.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. *RQ1: Housing experiences of refugees and related non-shelter outcomes*

   To what extent are refugees able to access and sustain long-term suitable and affordable housing? What types of formal and informal assistance are they accessing? What are the key non-housing outcomes that are associated with their housing situations over time? What are the experiences of humanitarian entrants with respect to homelessness?

2. *RQ2: Neighbourhood experiences of refugees and related non-shelter outcomes*

   What are the characteristics of neighbourhoods with high concentrations of refugees? How do refugees experience 'neighbourhood' and to what extent are they affected by the non-housing outcomes associated with 'poorer' neighbourhoods? To what extent do refugees access dedicated settlement programs?

3. *RQ3: Effectiveness of housing assistance and support programs and settlement assistance in improving housing outcomes and resulting non-shelter outcomes*

   Are refugees accessing relevant housing, homelessness, and health and wellbeing services available to them when needed? How effective is the homelessness service response to those who are homeless?

This report is the first publication from the three-year study, based on a literature and policy review and the analysis of primary quantitative and qualitative data collected from June 2012 to March 2013 in Perth and Melbourne. The report was largely completed prior to the change of government at the federal level and so greater emphasis has been given to the policies and programs in place during the period June 2012 to March 2013.

Australia's current humanitarian intake consists of both onshore (e.g. former asylum seekers) and offshore processed refugees, with the former outnumbering the latter in terms of the number of visas issued in 2011–12. For the purposes of this study and in keeping with common usage, the terms 'refugees' and 'humanitarian entrants' are used interchangeably unless specific reference is being made to particular categories in Australia's Humanitarian Program. For the purposes of this report, the terms 'refugees' and 'humanitarian entrants' refer to settlers (holders of permanent residency visas) who entered Australia on humanitarian visas (that is, their visas have been processed offshore) or have been granted protection visas subsequent to seeking asylum in Australia and their visas have been processed 'onshore'. The housing issues experienced by bridging visa holders, that is asylum seekers living in the community who have not yet been granted a protection visa, are not the focus of the present study.

The terms 'humanitarian entrant' and 'refugee' do have specific meanings under Australia's Humanitarian Program. The offshore component of the Humanitarian Program consists of two categories—namely, the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and the Refugees Program with the term 'refugees', in this context, referring only to those in the latter category.

The term 'humanitarian entrants' is quite often used as an umbrella term for all those receiving visas for humanitarian reasons irrespective of whether their visa was processed onshore (i.e., former asylum seekers) or offshore. However, when used alongside 'refugees' as in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, it refers to non-refugee humanitarian entrants. The official use of the term 'refugees' by the Australian Government, does not apply to onshore processed visas but refers to the visas processed offshore to those who are *outside* their country of nationality and have left due to fear of persecution.

It should be noted that not all recipients of offshore visas are referred to as refugees. For example, those entering Australia through its Special Humanitarian Program are internally displaced people (IDPs); they are people facing the same issues as refugees but as they are residing within their country of nationality they are not formally described using the term 'refugee'.

In the literature, refugees are identified as an especially vulnerable group of immigrants. They experience a range of issues related to: language acquisition, education, cultural differences and conflict of values, qualifications recognition, employment, family issues including family violence, inter-generational conflict, changing gender roles and child rearing practices, racism and discrimination, unrealistic expectations of life in Australia, knowledge of and access to services, housing and health and mental health issues. Therefore, their settlement is typically more fraught and problematic than that of other immigrant categories (Waxman 1998; Silove & Ekblad 2002; Tilbury 2007; Fozdar & Torezani 2008; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2006, 2007; Refugee Council of Australia 2008, 2009, 2010; OMI 2009; Pittaway et al. 2009; Nunn 2010).

Housing is widely recognised as playing a critical role in the resettlement process, affecting all other settlement issues. Ensuring that refugees have access to long-term

sustainable housing has been identified as one of the greatest challenges facing countries of resettlement (UNHCR 2002). The present project focuses primarily on relatively recent arrivals that have generally had a length of residency in Australia of between one and five years. This is the period beyond that of initial government assistance (through the Humanitarian Settlement Services program) and during the time that most refugees become fully exposed to the rigours of the Australian private rental market and, in some cases, making attempts to gain a foothold on home ownership. While the study has a strong focus on those who have lived in Australia for between one to five years, it does include some perspectives on the experiences of newer arrivals (those in the country less than one year) and refugees who have been residing in Australia for close to, or over a decade.[1]

The size of the humanitarian component of the Australian immigration program has changed little from the early 1990s, with the annual humanitarian entrant intake typically between 13 000 and 14 000[2]. A total of 20 019 humanitarian entrants were accepted in 2012–13 (DIAC 2013a) and represents a significant departure from previous trends. In 2011–12, the Australian Government granted 13 759 visas under its Humanitarian Program, roughly evenly divided between the offshore (resettlement) component and onshore (protection) component. The vast majority of visas granted under the offshore component in 2011–12 was to refugees from Asia (40.9%), followed by the Middle East (37.1%) and then Africa (21.5%) (DIAC 2012c).

At the time that the first phase of the study was taking place (June 2012 to March 2013) the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) oversaw the settlement of humanitarian entrants through the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) program, which replaced the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) in April 2011.[3] The HSS provides settlement support for refugees' first six to 12 months in Australia, including assistance with accommodation. Exit from the program is based upon the attainment of settlement outcomes set by DIAC, including residing in long-term accommodation, generally with a lease of at least six months (DIAC 2013f). However, the propensity for this group thereafter to experience problems associated with accessing housing and sustaining tenancies and mortgages, together with economic and social participation problems and social isolation, remains significant.

There is also a concern that humanitarian entrants may concentrate in neighbourhoods with low socio-economic profiles and existing problems and, therefore, face additional place-based issues in achieving desired outcomes in terms of employment, income and social participation. Availability and affordability of long-

[1] Focus groups, for example, discussed delivery of the HSS program and the experiences of new arrivals (those who have been in Australia one year or less) were considered at some length. Additionally, the inclusion of a participant in transect walks who had been in Australia more than 10 years provides another perspective on the settlement process, such as the experience of arriving in Australia without an established ethnic community to support the settlement process and to comment on the community's growth over time (see Zeya's account, Chapter 6).

[2] The 1994–95 reporting period is the exception, with 49 559 humanitarian entrants processed. This relates to the decision to provide access to permanent residency to people temporarily in Australia, directed primarily at Chinese nationals who had been on four-year temporary entry permits and faced uncertainty about their future in Australia (DIMA 2001).

[3] Following the change of government in August 2013, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) was renamed the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and responsibility for some functions of the former DIAC moved to other government departments. With respect to policies pertaining to humanitarian entrants, the recently formed Department of Social Services (DSS) has assumed primary responsibility for multicultural affairs and delivering settlement support services such as the HSS and SGP. The Department of Industry has assumed responsibility for the Adult Migrant Education Programme, formerly administered by DIAC. Policies related to the issuance of humanitarian visas are the responsibility of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP).

term appropriate housing has a significant influence on the choice of settlement location, alongside the desire to find locations in which community support from compatriots will be highest. Australian housing markets may be a difficult place to navigate for recent arrivals with language difficulties, different cultural expectations and low incomes. Australian housing prices and the steady decline of housing affordability since the early 1980s, are a significant challenge for the mainstream population on average incomes and even more so for recent immigrants, particularly refugee arrivals.

Significant policy changes have occurred in recent years and certainly since the last AHURI study of refugee housing was conducted by Beer and Foley in 2003 (*Housing need and the provision for recently arrived refugees in Australia*). Moreover, there have been significant changes in the background of refugees coming to Australia since that time. While Beer and Foley (2003) examined housing experiences in some depth, the role of non-shelter outcomes, such as education, employment and neighbourhood effects, were not explored. Neighbourhood and community are crucial elements of refugee resettlement as well as local social cohesion which is part of DIAC's objective in fostering a socially cohesive society that enables equitable participation of recent arrivals (DIAC 2009).

Once refugees have exited the HSS program, they receive less intensive resettlement assistance. Those with exceptional needs are eligible for the Complex Case Support (CCS) program, where they may receive intensive case management for up to five years from their arrival in Australia. More general settlement support is provided through the Settlement Grants Program (SGP). This program is also open to eligible migrants and is available for up to five years from entry to Australia. The SGP does provide some casework service for some humanitarian clients, including support to assist these clients to locate and secure housing. Mainstream support is available in the form of Commonwealth Rent Assistance, public housing authorities, housing and homelessness programs and community housing responses. Of interest is the effectiveness of this broad set of support systems in meeting the needs of humanitarian entrants.

Over time, we would hope to see refugees move towards more secure, suitable and sustainable housing, and to live in neighbourhoods that serve their needs and in which they feel connected and not isolated from opportunity. This report seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of the housing careers of humanitarian entrants and the impacts that housing and non-shelter outcomes and neighbourhood have on refugees in their first years in Australia and provide policy-makers with a stronger evidence base on which to make policy.

Against this background, our research provides an overview of the broader Australian context to resettlement with a focus, in terms of our own primary data collection, on the experiences of refugees in Perth (Western Australia) and Melbourne (Victoria). These two cities were selected as much for their similarities (e.g. a high refugee intake and suburbs with concentrations of refugee populations), as their differences, such as in the economic environment (strong economic growth in Western Australia running off the resources boom at the time and a consequent booming housing market in Perth). In 2011–12, Western Australia (WA) received 10 per cent of Australia's humanitarian entrant intake, while Victoria received the country's largest intake at 32 per cent (DIAC 2013a).

The purpose of this longitudinal study is to map the housing, neighbourhood and non-shelter experiences of humanitarian entrants in Perth and Melbourne for a period of three years (2012–15). It will examine whether, how and to what degree humanitarian entrants face difficulties in accessing and sustaining long-term housing. The study will

also examine the non-shelter consequences of the housing outcomes achieved by humanitarian entrants (e.g. in employment and education), the role of neighbourhood in affecting their overall experience of social inclusion and the effectiveness of support programs in assisting humanitarian entrants to achieve desired housing outcomes and overall settlement success.

The study uses a mixed methods approach and involves the following components:

- A systematic database search for literature on refugees and resettlement and a review of housing and other policies that potentially impact on the economic opportunity, social inclusion and wellbeing outcomes of humanitarian entrants.
- A longitudinal survey of refugees, the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, to examine their experiences of housing, neighbourhood and key non-shelter outcomes.
- Focus groups with policy-makers and service providers to identify relevant issues and processes affecting housing and settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants.
- Transect walks: an ethnographic participant observation exercise where researchers, guided by local residents (settlement workers and others who have good insight into issues affecting refugee communities) visit the suburbs and neighbourhoods where refugee settlers have concentrated, in order to gauge how the local sub(urban) environment may affect housing and social inclusion issues.
- Interviews with refugees who have experienced homelessness (conducted in the second phase of the study).

The baseline of the longitudinal *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, was conducted from June to November 2012 in Perth and Melbourne. A second survey, taking place one year from the original survey, has been completed, achieving a 76 per cent follow up rate. A third and final survey is scheduled for completion one year on from the second survey. Examination of results across all surveys will allow us to capture the development of refugee housing careers and neighbourhood experiences over the period of two years, at a relatively early stage of their Australian settlement.

This first report presents an overview of the policy framework and findings from the study's baseline wave of the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, which was completed with 85 humanitarian entrants primarily from areas with high concentrations of refugees in Perth and Melbourne, the majority of whom have been in Australia from one to five years. It also reports findings from focus groups held with settlement service providers, representatives from relevant government departments and representatives from community housing and homelessness services in both cities. Results from the transect walks in Perth and Melbourne suburbs provide new and insightful qualitative information on refugee experiences of the suburbs and neighbourhoods they settled into.

The findings presented in this first Final Report are intended to provide preliminary insights into the research questions. These will be further developed in subsequent phases of the project. This report additionally discusses some of the policy implications in the areas of housing, neighbourhood and service delivery that findings from the project's first year have brought to the fore (see Chapter 7).

Future reports of the study *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion in Australia* will:

- → Provide findings with respect to the housing and community experiences of refugees as they continue their life in Australia (through follow-up waves of the survey and additional transect walks).
- → Present a detailed analysis of homelessness and marginalised housing experiences of refugees.
- → Consider the policy and practice implications of the research.

The present report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides an in-depth literature review and discusses the relevant policy context. Chapter 3 outlines the study's methodology. Chapter 4 presents the results from the baseline wave of the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*. Chapter 5 presents findings from the focus groups, Chapter 6 findings from the transect walks and Chapter 7 a summary and discussion of policy implications.

# 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND POLICY CONTEXT

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major issues and debates associated with the resettlement of refugees in Australia and internationally, as highlighted in the academic literature and through policy reports. Our review of the literature and policy settings has informed the development of the primary qualitative and quantitative data collections in our study.

Particular emphasis is given to the role of housing in the resettlement experience. Finding a house and establishing a 'home' is fundamental to finding employment, accessing education, establishing social connections and, ultimately, becoming an active citizen of Australia, or any other country for that matter (Abramsson et al. 2002; Beer & Foley 2003; Carter & Osborne 2009; Forrest et al. 2013; Netto 2011a, 2011b).

In order to identify a comprehensive range of academic literature on the broad topic of 'refugee housing and resettlement', a systematic search of six major databases using a number of keyword strings was undertaken. This generated a total of 726 potential references (see Table 1).

All references were entered into ENDNOTE X5, a bibliographic database. After discounting all duplicate references, theses, news articles and other non-academic material across all six academic databases, 437 references published over the period 1943–2012 remained. This number was reduced to 246 references after eliminating references prior to 2000. In addition to the academic material sourced via this systematic search, government publications, annual reports and evaluations relating to refugees, housing and resettlement were also consulted.

Ultimately, it has been necessary to be somewhat selective in the material used in this literature review. Put simply, we have given precedence to academic and policy literature that focuses on the Australian experience. Next, we made use of research in countries with broadly similar political and policy approaches to refugee resettlement (e.g. the UK and Canada), particularly in relation to housing, as published in key peer-review international journals.

The literature review and policy context are discussed in three broad parts:

1. *Demographic trends and characteristics of refugees*—This section highlights the trends and profile of refugees settling in Australia drawing on national and international data sources. This demographic context is important in order to highlight the nature of the policy challenges associated with refugee resettlement.
2. *Government approaches to refugee resettlement*—This section highlights the Australian Government's overarching policy approaches to refugee resettlement with particular attention given to the primary settlement program, the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS).
3. *Housing and the resettlement experience*—This section highlights the key issues and challenges faced by refugees engaging with the housing system, their housing careers and the centrality of securing long-term affordable housing in enhancing the resettlement outcomes for refugees.

**Table 1: Systematic database search for literature on refugees and resettlement**

| | Database consulted | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Soc index** | **Sociological abstracts** | **Social services abstracts** | **Econ lit** | **Scopus** | **APAIS** | |
| **Records in database and year range** | 2,100,000+ (1895-) | 955,030+ (1952-) | 155,000+ (1979-) | 999,795+ (1969-) | 47,000,000+ (1823-) | 390,000+ (1945-) | *Total* |
| Refugee* and housing (economic* or employ* or education*) and (social or health) | 79 | 75 | 28 | 10 | 108 | 13 | *313* |
| Refugee* and resettlement and (government* or policy*) and housing | 17 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 25 | 3 | *59* |
| Refugee* (and government* or welfare) and NGO and (Australia* or UK or Ireland or Canada or Sweden or Denmark or Netherlands) and (housing or resettlement*) | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | *8* |
| Refugee* and housing and (Australia* or UK or Ireland or Canada or Sweden or Denmark or Germany or Netherlands) and (housing or resettlement*) | 90 | 103 | 26 | 11 | 78 | 38 | *346* |
| *Total* | *187* | *192* | *58* | *22* | *213* | *54* | *726* |

* Keyword string in the literature review.

## 2.2 Demographic trends and characteristics of refugees

### *2.2.1 Global trends*

The resettlement of refugees (and asylum seekers) remains a significant issue for Australian policy-makers at the Commonwealth and state levels. In fact, assisting and resettling refugees remains a global problem given the scale of the number of people fleeing their homes and countries due to civil unrest, ethnic persecution and natural disasters.

The UNHCR (2013) estimated that at the end of 2012 some 45.2 million people, up from 42.5 million in 2011 (UNHCR 2012), around the world were forcibly displaced. Some 15.4 million (up from 15.2 million in 2011) of this total were deemed to be refugees with the majority (10.5 million) 'under the UNHCR's mandate' while the remaining 4.9 million were Palestinian refugees under the care of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Of the world's forcibly displaced people, 28.8 million were internally displaced persons, up by 2.4 million on the previous year (UNHCR 2012, 2013).

The vast majority (just over 80%) of refugees reside in developing nations. The UNHCR (2013) notes that: 'the 49 Least Developed Countries were providing asylum to 2.4 million refugees by year-end' (p.i). Pakistan is host to the largest number of refugees, some 1.6 million, who have mainly fled Afghanistan. Iran, Germany and Kenya were the nations with the next highest levels of refugees hosting 868 200, 589 700 and 565 000 people respectively.

Australia is one of 22 UNHCR resettlement countries. In 2012, UNHCR resettlement countries accepted a total of 88 600 refugees, an increase of 11 per cent compared to 2011 (79 800 refugees); this is equivalent to 5.5 per cent of the number of refugees living in Pakistan. The USA accepted 66 300 refugees, well over half the total number of 'resettled' refugees. This was followed by Canada (9600, 10.8%), Australia (5900, 6.6%), Sweden (1900) and Norway (1200) who collectively accepted 3.5 per cent of refugees (UNHCR 2013).

The 2011–2012 DIAC Annual Report indicates that a total of 14 512 humanitarian entrants were settled in Australia during 2011. More specifically, DIAC issued 13 759 Humanitarian Program visas in 2011–12 with some 49 per cent (6718) of visas issued to offshore (resettlement) applicants and 51 per cent (7041) to onshore protection refugees (p.126). Notably, the majority (68%) of onshore visas were granted to Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) or so-called 'boat people'.

In 2012–13, the then Labor Government made a commitment to increase the number of humanitarian resettlement places to 20 000, up from 13 750. In fact, 20 019 places were granted and of these almost 63 per cent (12 515) of visas were issued under the Program's offshore component (12 012 visas were granted to refugees and 503 visas were granted under the Special Humanitarian program) while '7504 program-countable visas [were] granted under the onshore component' of the resettlement program (DIAC, 2013g).

The increase in the number of visas to refugees under the Refugee and Humanitarian Programme was recommended by the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers (Australian Government 2012) who also recommended that the number of visas issued could actually be increased to 27 000 by 2017 should the government be successful in stemming the flow of Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) as they were then termed. The new Coalition Government has redefined this term to mean Illegal Maritime Arrivals as part of its overall strategy to deter people smuggling.

### *2.2.2 Offshore and onshore processing of visas*

The number of onshore-to-offshore visas granted to refugees since 2000–01 has fluctuated quite significantly. In 2000–01, for example, the number of onshore-to-offshore visas granted was approximately 6000:7500. By 2004–05, the split was 1000:11 500 and reflected the then government's strict approach to border protection policy. That is, the then Coalition-led Government under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard used offshore processing as a tactic to discourage refugees/asylum seekers from coming to Australia. However, by 2010, the mix of onshore-to-offshore visas had been almost restored to 2000–01 levels at 5000:8500. A breakdown of the types of visas issued since the 2007–08 financial year, the visa subclass codes and the location of their processing has been listed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Visa types issued from 2007–08 to 2011–12 and visa subclass code, by processing location**

| Visa type | Visa subclass code | Processing location |
|---|---|---|
| Refugee Visa | 200 | Offshore |
| In-Country Special Humanitarian Visa | 201 | |
| Global Special Humanitarian Visa | 202 | |
| Emergency Rescue Visa | 203 | |
| Women at Risk Visa | 204 | |
| Former Skilled Refugee Applicants (no longer issued) | 816 | Onshore |
| Resolution of Skills Visa | 851 | |
| Protection Visa | 866 | |

Source: DIAC Website and Settlement Reporting Facility accessed 2013.

Further examination of onshore and offshore processing was completed through the generation of reports from the DIAC Settlement Reporting Facility.

Table 3 shows how the composition of refugees with respect to visa subclass as well as gender has changed over the last five reporting periods. The gender balance of humanitarian entrants was fairly even during 2007–08, but by 2011–12, males accounted for the majority (63.5%) of refugees.

Analysis of visa subclasses shows that the increase was due to an increase in the number of onshore processed 866 Protections Visas and a reduction in offshore processed 202 Global Special Humanitarian Visas. The increase in 866 Protection Visas and the gender imbalance is explained by the overall increased number of irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs)[4] who are mainly single males.

[4] There is a small portion of 866 visas granted to non-IMA asylum seekers in the community (arrived with a prior visa and then applied for protection) (NSPN 2012).

**Table 3: Newly-arrived humanitarian entrants, by financial year, visa subclass and gender**

| Visa Subclass code | 2007–08 | | | 2008–09 | | | 2009–10 | | | 2010–11 | | | 2011–12 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Gender | | Visa type | Gender | | Visa type | Gender | | Visa type | Gender | | Visa type | Gender | | Visa type |
| | F | M | % | F | M | % | F | M | % | F | M | % | F | M | % |
| 200 | 2,386 | 2,682 | 38.5 | 2,683 | 2,869 | 40.2 | 2,440 | 2,648 | 36.9 | 2,394 | 2,766 | 37.6 | 2,324 | 2,823 | 37.4 |
| 201 | 141 | 176 | 2.4 | 104 | 130 | 1.7 | 31 | 32 | 0.5 | 16 | 27 | 0.3 | 29 | 20 | 0.4 |
| 202 | 2,508 | 2,350 | 36.9 | 2,327 | 2,137 | 32.3 | 1,731 | 1,502 | 23.4 | 1,606 | 1,360 | 21.6 | 403 | 319 | 5.2 |
| 203 | 3 | 2 | 0.0 | 0 | 4 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 2 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 204 | 514 | 284 | 6.1 | 516 | 262 | 5.6 | 538 | 257 | 5.8 | 528 | 219 | 5.4 | 565 | 257 | 6.0 |
| 816 | 0 | 2 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 851 | 0 | 5 | 0.0 | 146 | 223 | 2.7 | 36 | 66 | 0.7 | 3 | 3 | 0.0 | 0 | 3 | 0.0 |
| 866 | 840 | 1271 | 16.0 | 884 | 1528 | 17.5 | 1,104 | 3,411 | 32.7 | 1,171 | 3,646 | 35.1 | 1,712 | 5,321 | 51.1 |
| *Total* | *6,392* | *6,772* | *100.0* | *6,660* | *7,153* | *100.0* | *5,881* | *7,916* | *100.0* | *5,718* | *8,023* | *100.0* | *5,033* | *8,743* | *100.0* |
| *Gender Composition (%)* | *48.6* | *51.4* | | *48.2* | *51.8* | | *42.6* | *57.4* | | *41.6* | *58.4* | | *36.5* | *63.5* | |

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Settlement Reporting Facility, *Humanitarian Settlers by Visa Sub-Class (code) by Financial Year of Arrival*, by gender extracted from database on 12 April 2013.

Note: The total number of humanitarian entrants in 2011–12 according to output from this report is 13 776, which differs from the total reported in the DIAC 2011–12 *Annual Report* of 13 759. New data is uploaded to the Settlement reporting facility on the fifth day of every month and is a source of more up-to-date information (DIAC 2013d).

200 Refugee Visa

201 In-Country Special Humanitarian Visa

202 Global Special Humanitarian Visa

203 Emergency Rescue Visa

204 Women at Risk Visa

816 Former Skilled Refugee Applicants (no longer issued)

851 Resolution of Skills Visa

866 Protection Visa

The increase in the number of single refugee males entering Australia through its humanitarian program poses significant housing challenges. Australian housing markets are not particularly geared in terms of rental costs and/or location to meet the demands of single-person households. The difficulty in finding private rental accommodation for recently-arrived single male humanitarian entrants receiving support through the HSS was acknowledged in the 2011–12 DIAC Annual Report (DIAC 2012c, p.235).

> The HSS program continues to experience high numbers of single clients entering the program, driven predominantly by the large proportion of single adult men among the former irregular maritime arrival (IMA) cohort. Single clients are among the most challenging cohorts from a service delivery perspective, particularly in light of the extremely tight rental market across much of the country.

Representatives from settlement service providers in both the Perth and Melbourne focus groups commented on the high numbers of single men presenting for assistance and the difficulties they faced in finding them accommodation and providing additional settlement support services (see Chapter 5 for further information).

Table 3 also shows that, in absolute terms, Australia's intake of refugees has remained relatively constant since 2007–08. The Australian Government's Human Rights Commission (AHRC 2012, p.38) notes that:

> Australia is the only country in the world to numerically link its system for granting asylum onshore and its scheme for resettling people from offshore under a single program. The effect of this link is that each time a person is granted refugee status within Australia (onshore), one place is subtracted from the offshore component. Other countries determine a particular number of refugees to be resettled each year, depending on global needs, and meet this commitment regardless of how many people arrive in the country and seek asylum.

### *2.2.3 Nationality of humanitarian entrants*

Refugees to Australia in recent times come primarily from three regions—the Middle East, Asia and Africa. In 2011–12, refugees from Asia accounted for the largest proportion (40.9%) of offshore applicants (6718), followed by refugees from the Middle East (37.1%) and Africa (21.5%) (DIAC 2012c). There are year-to-year changes with the composition of the refugee intake. For example, in 2010–11 the largest proportion (38.3%) were allocated to people from the Middle East with Iraqis receiving the largest share of visas within this group; this was followed by refugees from Asia (30.4%) and then Africa (15.2%) (see Table 4).

Trend data for the last five years shows that the number of refugees from Africa has been on a slight downward trajectory since 2007–08. The proportion of humanitarian entrants from the Middle East has remained broadly constant, whereas there has been a slight upswing in refugees from Asia since 2007–08 (DIAC 2012b).

**Table 4: Offshore Visa Grants by Country of Origin of Entrant (2010–2011)**

| Region/Country | Refugee | Special Humanitarian Program | Total | Per cent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Middle East** | | | | |
| Afghanistan | 423 | 604 | 1,027 | 11.4 |
| Iran | 141 | 130 | 271 | 3.0 |
| Iraq | 1,114 | 1,037 | 2,151 | 23.9 |
| *Sub-Total* | 1,678 | 1,771 | 3,449 | 38.3 |
| **Asia** | | | | |
| Burma | 1,393 | 50 | 1,443 | 16.1 |
| Bhutan | 1,001 | 0 | 1001 | 11.1 |
| Sri Lanka | 78 | 211 | 289 | 3.2 |
| *Sub-Total* | 2,472 | 261 | 2,733 | 30.4 |
| **Africa** | | | | |
| Congo (DRC) | 514 | 51 | 565 | 6.2 |
| Ethiopia | 297 | 84 | 381 | 4.2 |
| Sudan | 61 | 182 | 243 | 2.7 |
| Somalia | 144 | 46 | 190 | 2.1 |
| *Sub-total* | 1,016 | 363 | 1,371 | 15.2 |
| **Others** | 832 | 578 | 1,410 | 15.7 |
| *Total* | 5,998 | 2,973 | 8,971 | 100.0 |
| *Per cent* | 66.8 | 33.2 | 100.0 | |

Source: DIAC (2011b) Humanitarian Program Outcomes http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/statistical-info/visa-grants/refugee.htm

### *2.2.4 Mental health and the influence of cultural and educational background*

The number of refugees who resettled in Australia during 2011–12 is small compared to the number of refugees in Pakistan or the total intake of refugee in North America. Yet, in terms of the number of refugees Australia receives, it has been one of the 'top three' UNHCR resettlement countries since 2008–09 (DIAC 2012b).

Irrespective of the number of refugees who come to Australia, the resettlement experiences of refugees, especially those fleeing war-torn environments and persecution, are challenging. Khawaja et al. (2008) suggest that refugees have been forcibly displaced (war, famine and ethnic persecution) from their homelands and this combined with direct experiences of torture, physical and sexual abuse, separation from family members and living in camps or detention centres, means that many refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The literature on refugee adaptation also demonstrates that while pre-migration experiences have a significant impact on psychological distress, post-migration stressors, such as difficulties with resettlement and the loss of social and cultural support; add appreciably to post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. In their meta-analysis of the literature, Porter and Haslam (2005) identified a number of post-migration conditions such as accommodation and financial stress, as factors

contributing to and reflecting poor mental health outcomes (Khawaja et al. 2008, p.490).

The resettlement of refugees also poses major budgetary, practical and political challenges for government at all levels, as well as service providers contracted from the community/NGO and private sectors. This was confirmed in focus group discussions (see Chapter 5) with government and community sector agencies. The challenges faced by government and community sector service providers on the ground are made all the more complex with refugees who exhibit high levels of PTSD and/or simply find it too difficult, because of their age, English language skills, gender, or cultural practices within their own community, to engage, navigate, comprehend and adapt to the social, cultural, economic and bureaucratic norms of the host nation (Phillimore 2011, Broadbent et al. 2007). As the profile and migratory experiences of refugees to Australia has changed over the last decade, policy-makers and service providers need to constantly adapt their own practices to meet the needs of new groups; a process which is time-consuming and costly.

### *2.2.5 Diversity of refugee settlement*

The resettlement experiences of refugees, even within the same ethnic group, are by no means the same. In their study on the resettlement of Bosnian refugees in Australia, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) developed a typology of refugee resettlement styles. The typology captures the diversity of refugee aspirations and the array of resources (educational, psychological, financial, and social) that individuals and families possess to help them overcome serious difficulties that the refugee experience inevitably brings, and to realise their resettlement potential in the new environment.

Refugees characterised as ‘achievers’ and ‘consumers’ are said to exhibit an active style of resettlement. They are able to tackle and overcome difficulties to do with language, cultural differences and formal structures and processes and thus ‘integrate’ into the host society. The ‘active’ settlers are able to engage in certain activities (e.g. learning English, studying, seeking employment, developing social networks outside their ethnic community) due to possessing significant cultural and social capital, and utilising the available settlement support.

On the other hand, refugees characterised as ‘endurers’ and ‘victims’ are those who buckle under the multiple challenges of being forced to leave their countries and communities and resettle in a vastly different social environment. Among them are many who suffer health and mental health consequences of their refugee experience, and who will often face conflict in the family due to changed gender and intergenerational relations. In response, they may adopt a ‘passive’ approach to resettlement and ‘live in relative social isolation from mainstream society, as well as from their “ethnic community”’ (p.73). In consequence, it is difficult to develop English language skills and social capital to draw upon, which, in turn, compounds the sense of isolation and marginalisation. We utilised the Colic-Peisker and Tilbury typology in the development of our longitudinal survey discussed further in Chapter 4.

From a policy perspective, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury’s typology points to the need for government and service providers to be attuned to the diversity of refugee needs, within the same ethnic group as well as between groups. Younger and better educated refugees have the potential to adjust with less difficulty; ‘whiteness’ and a relative ethnic ‘invisibility’ is also undoubtedly an advantage in the Australian context: Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007) demonstrate this in their comparison of settlement, and especially employment, experiences of ex-Yugoslav (mainly Bosnian), Middle Eastern (mainly Iraqi) and African (from several sub-Saharan countries) refugees. The

ability of different groups to successfully resettle in Australia is dependent on cultural distance, the severity of their displacement experience and the reception from the mainstream society, and ultimately on the resilience of individuals and families in overcoming multiple difficulties.

Government policy-makers and refugee service providers need to be more flexible in their policy outlook and understanding of service delivery techniques. Furthermore, successful resettlement involves more than simply quantifying the volume of refugees who take part in and complete key tasks within resettlement programs. As the Australian Survey Research Group (ASRG) (2011, p.1) has recently noted in their *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals* report:

> A key finding of the study is that DIAC defines successful settlement differently from how Humanitarian entrants think about settling well, where an equivalent phrase for settling well is living comfortably in Australia. Where DIAC, like other agencies, defines successful outcomes in terms of systemic outcomes (social participation, economic well-being, level of independence, and personal well-being), Humanitarian entrants define settlement in terms of life outcomes (personal happiness and community connectedness).

## 2.3 Government approaches to refugee resettlement

### *2.3.1 Refugee policy in Australia: a recent history*

Around 13 000 refugees are accepted into Australia each year. In the most recent reporting period, 2012–13, that number rose to 20 019 per year (DIAC 2013g), prompting increased interest in the issue and a need for greater understanding of the housing and wider resettlement experiences of refugees in Australia. Policy questions surrounding refugees in Australia have been constantly under the political and media microscope over the last five years. This attention is largely a result of so-called 'irregular maritime arrivals' (IMAs) who arrived in relatively large numbers from 2007–08 under the then Labor Government and who are now the target of the new Coalition Government's border protection strategy 'Operation Sovereign Borders'. Under this new policy (at the time of writing this report), IMA's or 'boat people' are intercepted by Australian authorities in northern Australian waters and 'turned back' toward Indonesia if their boat is deemed seaworthy or otherwise placed into detention on Nauru or Manus Island.

There have clearly been significant changes in refugee policy since Beer and Foley's (2003) study of the housing outcomes of refugees holding Temporary Protections Visas (TPVs) and those holding Permanent Protection Visas (PPVs). Gale (2004) argues that refugee policy at this time was premised on populist political rhetoric that emerged in the wake of 'Hansonism' in the late 1990s. In short, the then Liberal Government articulated the need for greater 'border protections' in order to hold back the 'flood' of refugees from non-western nations seeking refuge in Australia. Following the Australian Labor Party's election victory in 2007 under then leader Kevin Rudd, a more 'compassionate' approach to refugees was seen to have been adopted with onshore processing being favoured and TPVs being dropped.

This approach was heavily criticised by the then Opposition who argued that it would merely increase the number of 'boat people' coming to Australia. Under the then Prime Ministership of Julia Gillard and her Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen, the Labor Government's policy stance on refugees gradually moved back towards the adoption of stricter border protections and greater use of detention for IMAs and other groups.

Data from DIAC's 2012 *Annual Report*, shows that 14 438 IMAs had been held in immigration detention during 2011–12, up from 9044 in 2010–11 or an increase of 60 per cent (DIAC 2012c). In comparison, the number of people held in on-shore detention as a result of holding an expired or cancelled visa or unauthorised arrivals via air totalled 4392 in 2011–12. This was up from 3998 or just under 10 per cent on the previous year.

Following the recent election of the Coalition Government in September 2013, the new Minister for Immigration, the Hon. Scott Morrison, has indicated that the Government will not be issuing permanent visas to anyone deemed to have entered Australia 'illegally' by boat and that off-shore processing is the most effective means of deterring further 'illegal' arrivals:

> Denying permanent residency to those who have already come by boat is as important as ensuring that those who now seek to come are denied settlement in Australia by being sent to Nauru or Manus Island. The fact that Labor does not understand this just highlights again why they can never be trusted to protect our borders. Once again they have shown they are divided, double minded and always deferring to the Greens.
>
> There can be no amnesty on permanent visas for illegal boat arrivals and under this government there will not be.
>
> This government will not give an inch when it comes to protecting our borders and will take every step necessary to ensure that people who have arrived illegally by boat are not rewarded with permanent visas, despite the best efforts of Labor and the Greens (Morrison 2013).

Irrespective of the political rhetoric of all sides of politics as to who has the most 'muscular approach' to dealing with the whole refugee issue, the role of housing, neighbourhood and community are essential elements in helping refugees settle and integrate into Australian society and thus generating wider social cohesion.

### *2.3.2 Government provision of settlement services to humanitarian entrants*

Refugee policy and the granting of visas to refugees is the domain of the Australian Government. However, state and local governments invariably assume varying degrees of 'settlement policy responsibility' as a result of their control of various government programs in the areas of education, health and public housing. Since the majority of refugees end up in the private rental market, community-based settlement services and housing and welfare organisations play an active role in helping refugees find, rent and maintain their housing.

**Government programs in support of humanitarian entrant resettlement**

The current policy approach to refugee resettlement has its roots in a major policy rethink about how to deal with refugees and support them to develop the necessary skills to live more independent lives within Australia:

> From 1997, the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) began to develop a national framework to make more effective use of settlement services for humanitarian entrants through partnerships with community organisations and improved links between settlement planning activities and service delivery. … Following a 1998 report on DIMA's settlement services by the Auditor General and a 1998 DIMA review of material assistance to humanitarian entrants, the Department began to explore options for a more *developmental approach* to humanitarian settlement. The new service for supporting humanitarian entrants needed to be explicit in its

> aim of respecting their autonomy and not encouraging dependency. It sought to affirm the capacity and dignity of entrants and provide them with skills and tools to reach self-sufficiency and make their own way along the settlement path as soon as possible. (Urbis Keys Young 2003, p.4, *emphasis added*).

The Australian Government provides a suite of services to address the resettlement needs of newly-arrived humanitarian entrants for up to five years from their arrival. These provide a broad mix of social, welfare and housing initiatives and are set out in Table 5 below in the order in which humanitarian entrants may access them throughout the first five years of settlement. For example, the pre-arrival Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program is listed first and the Settlement Grants Program (SGP), which is available for up to five years from arrival, is listed last. Two additional programs have been listed, namely Community Assistance Support (CAS) and the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS). These are available to asylum seekers or IMAs who have exited detention and are holding a Bridging visa, but are awaiting a protection visa. These programs have been included to show the entire set of programs funded by the Commonwealth to support the resettlement of humanitarian entrants, regardless of whether they have been granted permanent residency.

In its quest to facilitate the efficient and effective resettlement of refugees into Australia the Commonwealth Government established the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS). The HSS program commenced in 2011, replacing the former Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), which commenced in 2005 and is the most comprehensive support program for refugees funded by the Commonwealth Government. As indicated in Table 6 below, the HSS and Complex Case Support (CCS) are the only two onshore dedicated refugee settlement support services and are only open to humanitarian entrants. While the CCS is only available to those humanitarian entrants in exceptional circumstances, the HSS is by far the more universally accessed of the two programs.

The HSS program generally provides support to refugees for their first six to 12 months in Australia. As noted, the HSS forms part of a suite of integrated programs designed to provide refugees with basic skills to understand and negotiate the key systems, institutions and social practices of Australia.

The SGP is a key program in this suite of services available to humanitarian entrants. While it is open to eligible migrants and therefore not dedicated to humanitarian entrants alone, the majority of the program's clients are humanitarian entrants. The program is available to refugees for up to five years from their arrival in Australia and provides casework and projects of various kinds that assist in the settlement of individual clients and communities.

A structured orientation component of the HSS is the Onshore Orientation Program (OOP), which is about developing refugees' core competencies in a number of skills and knowledge areas. As such, this program is very much outcomes-focussed and its success is measured by the extent to which refugees can exhibit mastery of certain skills and knowledge. As outlined in the HSS document:

> Clients complete the OOP once they demonstrate the necessary skills and knowledge to confidently address the following areas: (i) finding information and accessing services; (ii) making an appointment; (iii) transport; (iv) money management; (v) tenancy issues; (vi) employment and education; and (vii) Australian law.

So, for example, in relation to tenancy issues, refugees who complete the HSS OOP are expected to be able to demonstrate the following:

- → An understanding of their tenancy obligations and be capable of maintaining their rental property whether that be in the public, community or private rental sector.
- → An understanding of what is involved in terms of searching and applying for a rental property and be in a position to apply for a lease, either independently or with the assistance of a service provider.
- → An understanding of the need to inform all relevant agencies when people move and change their address.

The core competencies that refugees are supposed to demonstrate at the end of their time in the HSS OOP are informed by the recommended topics the government expects service providers to cover in orientation programs and classes they deliver. The topics include: money management, renting, education, health, youth issues, family life, work, cultural issues and Australian law.

- → The different types of housing, neighbourhoods and costs associated with renting accommodation and highlighting the fact that different housing tenures carry different lease obligations and penalties.
- → Navigating the private rental sector in terms of housing search strategies, application processes, and bond and condition inspections.
- → The need to effectively manage and maintain a property in terms of connecting and disconnecting gas, electricity, water and phone, timely payment of rent, interior and exterior property maintenance and establishing links with neighbours in order to develop friendship and other support networks.

A brief overview of three of the other non-HSS programs in Table 6 is outlined below, including the Settlement Grants Program (SGP), which is available to humanitarian entrants who require additional settlement support after exiting the HSS for up to five years from their arrival in Australia (DIAC 2011a):

1. *Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program*—This program is delivered to refugees prior to their relocation to Australia. It is a five-day program that provides refugees with basic information about 'Australian laws, values and lifestyle' (p.28).
2. *Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)*—This is the largest program administered under the government's overall settlement program for refugees and has been in operation since 1948. Developing sufficient English language skills is seen by the government as 'one of the major keys to settling successfully in Australia' (p.29). Under this voluntary program, all eligible refugees are entitled to 510 hours of English language courses during their first five years of settlement in Australia. Refugees with 'special needs' can receive up to a further 400 hours of tuition.
3. *Settlement Grants Program (SGP)*—This is the funding program that eligible organisations from the community/NGO and private sectors can access if they are providing orientation services designed to enhance the general life skills of refugees. Funding is provided under the following four categories: 'Casework, coordination and delivery of services', 'Community coordination and development', 'Youth settlement services', and 'Support for ethno-specific communities' (DIAC 2013h).

**Table 5: Commonwealth funded settlement support programs available to humanitarian entrants**

| Program | When provided and for how long? | Who is eligible? | What *direct* accommodation support is provided? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) | Pre-arrival (offshore). Delivered over five days before visa holders begin their journey | Humanitarian entrants only. This program is delivered to those over the age of 5 who are preparing to settle in Australia | Topics covered during the course include: housing including renting and household management arrangements |
| Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) | Six to 12 months from arrival | Humanitarian entrants only | Assistance with finding accommodation (short and long-term) and property induction |
| Complex Case Support Services (CCS) | Up to five years from arrival. | Humanitarian entrants with exceptional needs | Support to manage accommodation, financial or legal issues |
| The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) | Up to five years from arrival | Humanitarian entrants *and* eligible migrants | Nil |
| Settlement Grants Program (SGP) | Up to five years from arrival | Humanitarian entrants *and* eligible migrants | The SGP funds organisations that provide four service types. Those receiving funding under the service type 'Casework, coordination and delivery of services' provide information, advice, advocacy or referral services in a range of areas including referral to housing services and advice on tenancy rights and responsibilities |
| Community Assistance Support (CAS)* | | Eligible Bridging visa holders | Accommodation for six weeks, information regarding longer term accommodation,<br>innovative programs in housing<br>and employment, such as Homestay Network |
| Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS)* | | Eligible Bridging visa holders for those assessed as vulnerable | Casework support including referrals for accommodation support |

Source: DIAC 2013a; Australian Red Cross 2013a, 2013b; NSPN 2012

* During study period (June 2012 to February 2013), these programs available to holders of Bridging Visas (BVEs) only.

Again, in relation to housing issues, service providers outlining information on renting are expected to give emphasis to:

The complex and diverse mix of refugee categories invariably creates its own bureaucratic (and political) challenges in terms of what services and how much support different refugees can access. In short, rules surrounding what programs can and cannot be accessed by different refugee groups are complex, confusing and impractical. The table 'Onshore client groups' eligibility for humanitarian settlement services (HSS)' in Appendix 2 has been reproduced from the National Settlement Policy Network's September 2012 Report and provides an excellent summary of eligibility for HSS services as at September 2012 (NSPN 2012). However, changes to government policy have occurred since September 2013 (refer to the footnote to Appendix 2).

The complex policy environment that existed at the time of the project's first wave of data collection and the impact that this had on service delivery is discussed in the findings from the focus group discussions under Section 5.6: 'Current policy framework and factors of successful programs'. Future focus group discussions will examine whether policy changes have resulted in a clearer, more streamlined policy environment for settlement agencies and settlement workers in addition to their effect on refugee settlement outcomes.

## 2.4 Housing and the resettlement experience

Forrest et al. (2013) note that 'relatively little research has been undertaken on the housing experiences of refugees settling in Australia, either as a category or as groups from different cultural backgrounds' (p.2). Indeed, AHURI has only funded one major project (Beer & Foley 2003) in this policy area. This lack of housing-focused research is curious given the general political and policy significance attached to refugee issues in Australia over the last five to 10 years and the centrality of housing and neighbourhood in their resettlement process. A number of commentators in Australia (Jupp 1994; Tuohey 2001; Pittaway et al. 2009; Sampson & Gifford 2010), the UK (Netto 2011a, 2011b; Phillips 2006; Robinson 2010; Mullins & Jones 2009; Zetter & Pearl 1999) and Canada (Carter & Osborne 2009; Kissoon 2010; Hulchanski et al. 2000; Murdie 2008; Murdie & Teixeira 2000) and Europe (Abramsson et al. 2002; Dutch Refugee Council 1999) have all highlighted that the successful resettlement and integration of refugees into the host society is dependent upon accessibility to appropriate, affordable and secure housing and establishing a place to call 'home'.

The significance of housing and home, and their implications on non-housing outcomes is captured by the Dutch Refugee Council (1999, p.4) who note that:

> A home impacts on a great number of aspects influencing personal well-being. A home is much more than a roof over one's head, a shelter form the elements. A home provides security, privacy from the outside world, a place to love, and feel safe. It is this notion of feeling safe that makes housing such a key issue in integration for refugees. … However, the availability of accommodation in itself is not the only thing that matters; not only for refugees, but to every citizen in a country. The location of the house has an impact on access to employment, public services, educational opportunities, leisure, friends and relatives.

Securing adequate, appropriate and affordable housing in a location that offers easy accessibility to essential services and opportunities to better oneself, is by no means an easy task. This is particularly true of cities where the supply of affordable housing

is severely limited due to economic and population growth. Perth is a case in point. Vacancy rates in Perth's private rental market fell from approximately 5 per cent at the end of 2009 to just 1.9 per cent at the end of 2012, but increased to 2.3 per cent in the March quarter of 2013 (REIWA 2013).

Such housing market conditions have a tendency to generate fierce competition among prospective renters and result in rental prices being 'bid up'. When this happens, refugees seeking accommodation are more likely to be squeezed out of the housing market, on account of having limited financial resources due to being unemployed or in relatively low paid jobs.

Refugees also face the prospect of direct and indirect discrimination in the housing market. As a result of having no rental history and references, refugees face automatic indirect discrimination from realtors and landlords. Moreover, refugees face direct discrimination because of their racial/ethnic background and their refugee status (Beer & Foley 2003; Carey-Wood et al. 1995; Fozdar & Torezani 2008; Taylor 2004).

In addition to market forces 'discriminating' against refugees seeking to exercise their housing and non-housing choices, government policy and regulations on the rights and responsibilities of refugees may also (un)wittingly present discriminatory hurdles. Paradoxically, this may undermine the policy aims and efforts put in place by governments in order to try to integrate and resettle refugees.

**Restricting and dispersing refugees resettlement**

The ability of refugees to secure and maintain their housing and develop relationships in the neighbourhoods they live in is structured by a complex mix of inter-related structural (e.g. war, ethnic persecution, cultural norms and racism), institutional (e.g. national and state government laws and regulations in relation to support and entitlements) and personal factors (e.g. lack of financial resources, low English language skills, family structure and gender) (see Pittaway et al. 2009). As a result of these various factors, negotiating the housing system in developed nations such as Australia, the UK and Canada and maintaining a property to Australian 'norms' can be a bewildering experience for refugees. This is especially the case for those refugees who have lived in refugee camps for extended periods and those that have suffered direct trauma and persecution at the hands of government officials in their own countries. Suspicion and mistrust within refugee communities are major hurdles that community-based service providers outlined to us in our focus group discussions (see Chapter 5). We also examined these issues in depth in the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* and our findings from the survey confirm their importance.

The lack of financial resources held by many refugees when they initially commence their resettlement process in Australia (or elsewhere), combined with different governments' 'restrictionalist' approaches to refugees and asylum seekers (Phillimore 2011; Johnston et al. 2009; Netto 2011a) means that they have limited housing choices. While government assistance with housing will normally be provided to refugees for an initial period of time during the early phases of the resettlement process, the expectation now, under what might be termed the 'integrationist' approach informing current refugee policy, is that refugees will eventually move into mainstream housing and live independently.

In the UK, for example, the government has stipulated that asylum seekers it considers to be homeless and destitute will be provided with accommodation in locations it determines to be appropriate. The 'restrictionalist' approach of the UK Border Agency (2012), the government organisation responsible for dealing with asylum seeker issues, is reflected in the following statement from its website:

> We will not provide housing in London. Very limited housing may be available in the south-east of England. While we are providing your housing, you must stay at the address we give you unless we give you permission to move. … You will not be able to choose where you live if we are providing your housing. If you no longer want us to provide your housing, please tell your case owner. If you do not stay in contact with your case owner and report to us as you have been instructed, your support may be stopped and you may be detained in a secure centre.

Finally, the personal, cultural and experiential attributes of refugees will also play a role in the success of their resettlement experience (Strang & Ager 2010; McMichael & Manderson 2004). For example, an ability to speak and read English crucially enhances the ability of refugees to engage with people and develop an understanding of the systems and procedures in their new social environment. However, many refugees struggle with developing sufficient English language competencies, spoken or written, due to advanced age, limited education, low literacy in their native language, health issues and other barriers (Jupp 1994; Colic-Peisker & Waxman 2005).

Older refugees, for example, find it relatively more difficult to learn English, even though they may attend classes via the AMEP. In contrast, refugee children who attend primary or high school tend to learn English quickly, because of their stage of development and also because they are constantly interacting with others who speak only English. Some refugee women from particular backgrounds may also struggle with English language due to cultural practices and lived 'norms' in relation to education, employment and home life which often mean that they have considerably less opportunities than men to develop their English language skills, employment prospects and interact with people outside their own communities. In such circumstances, they may remain dependent on their husbands/partners, children and service provider organisations. This is especially problematic in case of incidences of domestic violence, separation and divorce, and/or death of their partner.

The various market, government and personal barriers facing refugees during their resettlement and integration into the new host society can be ameliorated to an extent, if certain inter-related resources are at hand. Those refugees endowed with appropriate language skills and educational qualifications that enable them to adopt an 'active' approach to resettlement (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2003), have access to social capital and support networks within their own refugee communities and have good links with wider community/NGO service provider organisations who specialise in helping refugees and other disenfranchised groups, are likely to enjoy a smoother resettlement journey.

How, then, can the extent to which refugees have become integrated into their host society be measured? The discussion below seeks to answer this question and informed the development of our own *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* whose baseline results are reported in Chapter 4 below.

### *2.4.1 Measuring refugee resettlement and integration*

Within the Australian context, DIAC has overseen three major surveys under the title of the *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia* (LSIA 1, LSIA 2 and LSIA 3), which were aimed at measuring the settlement experiences of immigrants. The first two LSIAs collected data on humanitarian entrants; however, the last survey only collected data on migrants who came to Australia via the Family and Skilled Migration visa streams (DIAC 2007).

Hence, available systematic data on the resettlement of humanitarian entrants in Australia is somewhat outdated and patchy. This is one of the reasons why DIAC initiated a new longitudinal survey in 2013 to examine the settlement outcomes of humanitarian migrants only (DIAC 2010; DSS 2014). Nevertheless, the available data provides some useful insights into the resettlement experiences of refugees and other migrants. More generally, Hugo (2010, p.48) highlights the efficacy of longitudinal research, as opposed to cross-sectional research, in helping capture data underpinning the dynamic processes of refugee resettlement:

> … longitudinal approaches can assist in our understanding of the dynamics of the adjustment process itself. … Adjustment is a dynamic process and there are a number of dimensions where the understandings of the changes taking place are crucial including: participation in the labour market; the housing market; health (physical and mental); education; living arrangements, family situation; engagement with the wider community; and mobility.

The data variables outlined above by Hugo point to the existence of a conceptual framework and set of indicators and benchmarks to measure the degree and extent of resettlement success among migrant groups. Indeed, Khoo and MacDonald (2001) developed such a framework for the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) based on data collected via LSIA 1.

The need for a framework to measure the success of migrant/refugee resettlement was driven by the simple fact that DIMA needed to be able to quantify its own policy definition of successful immigrant resettlement—the active economic and social participation in Australian society as self-reliant and valued members' (Khoo 2010).

The indicators and benchmarks framework devised by Khoo and MacDonald (2001) comprised four inter-related domains or dimensions, each with a corresponding set of indicators (see Table 6 below). These indicators were benchmarked, using data mainly from the census, against the performance of the Australian-born population in order to provide an assessment of the degree and extent of resettlement. With the exception of physical wellbeing, we examined each of these dimensions in the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*.

**Table 6: Dimensions of immigrant settlement (Australia)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. Social participation**<br>→ English proficiency<br>→ Participation in education and training (young adults)<br>→ Australian citizenship | **2. Economic participation**<br>→ Labour force participation<br>→ Employment and unemployment<br>→ Occupational status<br>→ Job satisfaction |
| **3. Economic wellbeing (living standard)**<br>→ Income<br>→ Income from government pensions and allowances<br>→ Home ownership | **4. Physical wellbeing**<br>→ Physical health<br>→ Mental health<br>→ General health |

Source: Adapted from Khoo and MacDonald, 2001

As can be seen from Table 6, home ownership features as a key indicator of successful resettlement. Put simply, given the socio-economic and cultural significance attached to home ownership in Australia, if refugees/migrants demonstrate home ownership rates (70%) similar to the Australian population, then they can be deemed to be making positive progress in terms of their resettlement and

integration into Australian society. Interestingly, Khoo and MacDonald (2001) found that rates of home ownership among migrants with at least 15 years residency tended to exceed rates among the Australian-born population.

An 'indicators of integration' framework has also been developed by Ager and Strang (2004) for the Home Office in the UK. This framework is similar to that of Khoo and MacDonald (2001) in that it is centrally concerned about levels of social and economic participation, and health and wellbeing within migrant/refugee communities. However, the Ager and Strang framework is more fine-grained in terms of the range of domains and indicators it uses to measure the extent of integration by migrants/refugees; more specifically, the indicators they suggest can be used to guide and assist decision-makers at the policy (i.e. government agencies) and practice (i.e. service providers) levels of refugee resettlement. Hence, Ager and Strang (2004, p.12) note:

> The [indicators of integration] framework is intended for use in local *planning* and *evaluation*. In terms of planning it seeks to help clarify those aspects of integration that a project or service is aiming to impact. In terms of evaluation it provides a basis for then identifying if such targeted impacts have occurred.
>
> The [indicators of integration] framework supports similar processes at a wider policy level. It may be used as a framework to structure *policy development* in terms of potential measures to support integration. It may then be used as a tool to support policy review, noting areas of progress and areas of continuing need.

Table 7 below illustrates the main themes and domains within this framework and highlights the specific policy and practice indicators used within the housing domain.

As noted earlier, definitions and perceptions of successful resettlement may differ between government policy-makers and refugees; the former have a tendency to take a systemic outcomes view, while refugees are more likely to evaluate their resettlement through a life outcomes lens (ASRG 2011).

Recent research shows that, in overall terms, humanitarian entrants have a relatively more protracted resettlement experience than other migrants who come to Australia via skilled migration or family visa programs. At the same time, resettlement experiences across and within different refugee groups tend to vary as a result of age, sex, country of origin and language skills (ASRG 2011; Forrest et al. 2013; Khoo 2012; Hugo 2011).

### *2.4.2 Housing and resettlement*

Forrest et al.'s (2013) analysis of LSIA 2 data (1999–2000) on the housing experiences of a range of immigrant groups, shows that, in overall terms, 73.3 per cent were living in accommodation within the private rental sector 18 months after their arrival in Australia. The significance of the private rental sector varied considerably across different migrant groups.

For example, 93.7 per cent of Sudanese refugees were found to be living in private rented accommodation. Other groups that depended significantly on the private rental sector for their housing included those from the former Yugoslavia (81.6%), Iraq (80.6%) and Afghanistan (80.4%).

**Table 7: Indicators of integration (the United Kingdom)**

| Theme | Domain | Indicators (Housing) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Policy | Practice |
| *Means and Markers* | → Employment<br>→ Housing<br>→ Education<br>→ Health | → Proportion of refugees in owner-occupied and secure tenancy situations relative to the wider population.<br>→ Proportion of refugees living in neighbourhoods.<br>→ Housing overcrowded within refugee communities relative to the wider population. | → Proportion of refugees in owner-occupied and secure tenancy situations relative to the wider population.<br>→ Proportion of refugees living in the top 10 per cent most deprived local authority wards.<br>→ Refugee satisfaction with current housing situation.<br>→ Number (proportion) of refugees deemed to be homeless. |
| 'these domains represent major areas of attainment that are widely recognised as critical factors in the integration process' (Ager & Strang 2004, p.3) | | | |
| *Social Connections* | → Social bridges<br>→ Social bonds<br>→ Social links | | |
| '[these three domains] stress the importance of relationships to the understanding of the integrations process' (Ager & Strang 2004, p.3) | | | |
| *Facilitators* | → Language & cultural knowledge<br>→ Safety and stability | | |
| '[these two domains] represent key facilitating factors for the process of integration' (Ager & Strang 2004, p.4) | | | |
| *Foundation* | → Rights & citizenship | | |
| '[this domain] represents the basis upon which expectations and obligations for the process of integration are established' (Ager & Strang 2004, p.4) | | | |

Source: Adapted from Ager and Strang 2004

More recent research by Hugo (2011) on the housing experiences of different visa categories between 2001 and 2006 found that 70 per cent of those on humanitarian visas were living in rented accommodation by 2006. Those on Family (42.5%) and Skilled Worker (51%) visas were much less dependent on rental accommodation. The higher rate among skilled workers is partly explained by the fact that such visa holders are initially only granted temporary residency, usually between two to four years. As such, this delays any upward housing career movements by members of this group who become permanent residents and then citizens.

Results from Hugo's study which utilised the survey instrument, the *Australian Humanitarian Settler Survey (AHSS)*, revealed that just over 21 per cent of humanitarian visa holders were in some form of home ownership (i.e., fully owned, mortgaged, being purchased under a shared ownership scheme) in 2006. This contrasted with home ownership rates of 52 and 44.6 per cent for those on Family and Skilled Worker visas respectively.

In terms of immigrants from different countries, Hugo's (2011) research shows relatively significant improvements in home ownership rates for second-generation migrants over first generation migrants. In terms of 'recently arrived' migrant groups, Sri Lankan and Burmese migrants saw their already high home ownership rates

increase from 70.4 to 78.9 per cent and from 67.2 to 71.8 respectively. Home ownership rates among the Burmese community in 2006 were above the Australian average of 73.6 per cent.

Whilst most recently arrived groups had home ownership rates above 50 per cent in 2006, a small number of groups, notably all from Africa (Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Somalia), had home ownership rates ranging from 16.2 to 48.1 per cent (see Table 8 below).

The recent report by Australian Survey Research (2011) for DIAC: *Settlement outcomes of new arrivals (SONA)—Report of findings*, points to a higher proportion of humanitarian migrants living in rental accommodation. It is important to note that humanitarian entrants in the Hugo study totalled 649, with all participants having lived in Australia for at least five years and 40 per cent having lived in Australia for more than 10 years. However, the SONA research, based on the *Living in Australia Survey* (LAS), had a total of 8576 respondents, of whom almost two-thirds (5378) were humanitarian visa holders and had been living in Australia for less than five years. This study found that just under 81 per cent of humanitarian migrants were in rental accommodation, contrasting with just 35.6 per cent for family visa holders and 48.7 per cent for skilled worker visa holders.

Outright home ownership in the SONA report is almost non-existent for humanitarian entrants at a rate of 0.6 per cent. Skilled and family migrants have low rates of outright home ownership at 6.5 and 6.6 per cent respectively. Humanitarian entrants were also much less likely to have a mortgage or home loan (8.2%) in comparison to skilled (38.9%) and family (29.9%) migrants.

While a significant proportion of humanitarian groups may be in some form of long-term accommodation, their over-dependency on the private rental sector exposes them to housing vulnerabilities in terms of annual increases in rents and decisions by landlords to sell their rental properties.

Based on housing tenure alone as an indicator of successful resettlement, the data from Forrest et al. (2013), Hugo (2011) and Australian Survey Research Group (ASRG 2011) all show that, in general, humanitarian entrants tend to struggle more than other types of migrants. This also applies to other aspects of housing (e.g. difficulty in paying rent or mortgage costs) and neighbourhood issues such as happiness with proximity to shops and medical centres.

In terms of difficulty in finding accommodation, 40.2 per cent of humanitarian respondents to the ASRG study indicated that experienced difficulty in finding accommodation, compared with 25.1 per cent and 15.5 per cent for skilled and family migrants respectively (ASRG 2011). The income capacity and social networks of these two groups help explain why finding accommodation is less problematic. The ASRG (2011) report found that the three most common reasons why humanitarian migrants found it difficult to find accommodation were:

1. high costs of renting or buying
2. lack of appropriate accommodation due to under-supply, poor location, too small, far from work and unsafe location
3. lack of employment and income.

**Table 8: First and second generation home ownership rates, by country of origin, per cent**

| Recent arrivals | First Generation % | Second Generation % | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 31.7 | 54.7 | 23.1 |
| Burma (Myanmar) | 67.2 | 71.8 | 4.7 |
| Burundi | 4.9 | 53.1 | 48.3 |
| Congo | 24.0 | 58.6 | 34.7 |
| Eritrea | 29.9 | 48.1 | 18.3 |
| Ethiopia | 40.0 | 52.6 | 12.7 |
| Iran | 54.2 | 71.8 | 17.7 |
| Iraq | 44.2 | 56.0 | 11.9 |
| Liberia | 6.5 | n/a | n/a |
| Sierra Leone | 11.1 | 31.0 | 19.1 |
| Somalia | 9.2 | 16.2 | 7.3 |
| Sri Lanka | 70.4 | 78.9* | 8.6 |
| Sudan | 13.8 | 23.8 | 10.1 |
| Kurdish ancestry | 56.7 | n/a | n/a |

Source: Hugo 2011

While a significant proportion of humanitarian respondents in the ASRG (2011) survey indicated that they were 'happy' with being close to shops (63.2%) and medical centres (56.1%), even greater proportions of skilled and family migrants were happy with their proximity to these services: shops (80.3% and 78.7%); medical centres (73.9% and 73.0%). This suggests that the latter two migrant groups are able to exert relatively greater housing choice and location preferences and/or have higher levels of mobility (i.e. car ownership) to access services.

The ASRG survey found a convergence in the proportion of humanitarian (48.1%), skilled (56.3%) and family (53.5%) visa holders 'happy' in terms of their proximity to schools and child care facilities.

Lack of proximity to workplaces was the area that humanitarian visa holders were least happy with in terms of their housing. Only 38.8 per cent of respondents claimed to be a 'bit happy' or 'happy' with their proximity to work. This was in contrast to 75.5 per cent of skilled migrants and 55.3 per cent of family migrants.

## 2.5 Summary

The UNHCR (2013) estimated that at the end of 2012 some 45.2 million people around the world were forcibly displaced—2.7 million more than in 2011—with 34 per cent (15.4 million) of this total deemed to be refugees and 63.7 per cent (28.8 million) categorised as internally displaced persons. In terms of numbers of refugees received, Australia is ranked by the UNHCR as a 'top three' resettlement nation.

The 'successful' resettlement of refugees has been a longstanding and important policy objective for the Australian Government. The various waves of migrants who have come to Australia since the post-war period have posed different sets of challenges for both government and migrants in terms of their resettling and integrating into Australia.

A systematic review of literature on refugees and resettlement located 246 relevant publications since 2000. Precedence was given to academic and policy literature that focuses on the Australian experience and research in countries with broadly similar political and policy approaches to refugee resettlement (e.g. the UK and Canada), particularly in relation to housing. International literature from UK, Canada and Holland highlighted that the successful resettlement and integration of refugees into the host society is dependent upon accessibility to appropriate, affordable and secure housing and establishing a place to call 'home'.

The literature shows that *all* migrants endure some kind of challenge in adapting to their new environment. These challenges can be cushioned or amplified, depending on various resources such as the personal, economic and cultural connections and factors underpinning their migratory journeys that immigrants bring with them.

Refugees in Australia receive help with their resettlement process via settlement programs funded and structured by the Commonwealth Government and delivered on the ground via community, not-for-profit and private sector service providers. Support with finding and maintaining accommodation is provided through these programs. As evidenced in the DIAC commissioned SONA study, the majority of newly arrived humanitarian entrants reside in private rental accommodation. Together, the current Humanitarian Settlement Services Program and Settlement Grants Programs are the key programs providing various forms of assistance to refugees for up to five years from their arrival in Australia.

The initial resettlement process for all refugees presents various challenges. Those fleeing war-torn environments and those who have lived in refugee camps for extended periods of time before relocating to Australia tend to find it more difficult to resettle and integrate, especially in the short-term (i.e. up to five years).

In overall terms, the literature suggests that it takes between 10 to 15 years for refugees to become 'successfully' and 'fully' resettled and integrated into Australia. This is at least double the length of time direct support to refugees is provided by the government under the HSS and SGP. This time lag between the end of Commonwealth-funded support for refugees and achieving successful resettlement outcomes raises questions as to how refugees manage to achieve this outcome.

In the following chapters we explore the challenges faced by refugees in settling in Australia through a range of methods including focus groups with service providers and policy-makers, the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, which utilised the Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) and Khoo and MacDonald (2001) typologies of refugee resettlement styles and outcomes focusing on housing, neighbourhood and social inclusion outcomes, and through transect walks which explored in particular the role of neighbourhoods.

# 3 METHODS

## 3.1 Introduction

The study employs a mixed methods approach to data collection taking place in Perth and Melbourne. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods have been employed to gain a broad, yet in-depth, understanding of the settlement issues faced by refugees, particularly in relation to housing.

A longitudinal survey conducted with recently arrived humanitarian entrants forms the quantitative element of the study. The *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* has been designed to be completed with participants three times over three years and the survey's first wave was completed with 85 participants in 2012. The quantitative data builds a profile of the housing and neighbourhood experiences of refugees and was informed in its design by the Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) and Khoo and MacDonald (2001) typologies of refugee resettlement styles and outcomes as well as existing data collections such as the *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia* (see Chapter 2 for a discussion).

Transect walks complement the survey data by gaining some deeper insights into the neighbourhood experiences of refugees by 'walking through' neighbourhoods of significance. The 'walks' also provide additional information on housing experiences. The focus groups help to further develop these understandings and at the same time, build knowledge in the areas of service delivery and the effectiveness of support programs.

Transect walks were conducted in suburbs with high concentrations of refugees in Perth and Melbourne, with the first round of walks being completed in late 2012 and early 2013. Focus group discussions with representatives of settlement service providers and mainstream housing and homelessness services were conducted in the latter half of 2012 in Perth and Melbourne.

Two aspects of the study, roundtables with appropriate government officials, as well as interviews with a cross section of recently arrived refugees (in Australia for less than five years) who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, are due to be completed at later stages of the project. Results from these two aspects of the study, together with the final results from the first three elements of the study, will be presented in the second Final Report. The methodologies employed in conducting the longitudinal survey, focus groups and transect walks are outlined below.

## 3.2 Longitudinal survey

The baseline wave of the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* was completed with recently arrived humanitarian entrants in Melbourne and Perth from June to November 2012. The survey examined refugees' experiences of housing, neighbourhood, and key non-shelter outcomes.

Over the three years of the project, two successive waves will be completed with the same respondents, each one year apart. With the exception of certain demographic questions such as age, gender and date of birth, the same questions will be repeated in each survey, allowing the research team to map changing settlement experiences over time. In the second wave of the Survey, we will also undertake a retrospective detailed trajectory of the housing careers and homelessness histories of respondents (substituting out some questions on social inclusion to ensure the survey is not too lengthy).

### *3.2.1 Survey design*

The survey consisted of four sections: A) Administrative information; B) Demographic and socioeconomic information; C) Housing and homelessness; D) Neighbourhood and experience of living in Australia. The survey contained questions unique to the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* together with questions adapted from the *Living in Australia Survey* (LAS) and the *Australian Humanitarian Settler Survey* (AHSS), as well as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2010 *General Social Survey* (2011a), the ABS *2011 Census of Population and Housing* (2012a)) and the *Third Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia* (LSIA 3).

Results from the ABS studies will allow us to examine the outcomes of humanitarian entrants in comparison to that of the general Australian population. The LSIA 3 did not include humanitarian entrants and results from the first wave of the study will allow comparison with recently arrived skilled and family migrants only.

Further detail on each of the survey's four sections is provided below:

*A) Administrative information*

This section collected information such as gender and the date of survey completion and included a code to link the respondent's contact details, which were recorded separately, to the survey instrument.

*B) Demographic and socioeconomic information*

This section contained questions on the respondent's country of birth, their ethnicity/ancestry, their English proficiency, educational attainment, current study arrangements, labour force status both current and prior to arriving in Australia, level and type of income, and whether or not the respondent provided financial help to family or friends overseas.

*C) Housing and homelessness*

This section contained questions on current housing and living arrangements, including current housing tenure, who the respondent lived with (i.e. partner or partner and children), how much they paid in rent or mortgage repayments and whether the respondent was waiting to access public or community housing. This section also included an 'accommodation calendar'. This calendar mapped the respondent's housing tenure status for every two-week period over the 12 months prior to completing the survey. For example, if a respondent was currently living in a private rental of their own, we could examine whether this was the case over the entire last 12 months or whether there were periods of time spent in another accommodation setting, such as living with family or friends as they had nowhere else to live. Responses to this calendar provided important information on the refugee's ability to sustain tenure arrangements over a relatively long period. In addition to tenure arrangements, Section C also asked the respondent about their satisfaction with various aspects of their housing.

*D) Neighbourhood and experience of living in Australia*

Questions in Section D investigated the respondent's experiences of living in Australia by asking a range of questions on utility of public spaces and their access to public services. How welcome respondents had been made to feel in Australia and perceptions of racial or religious discrimination in their local communities and wider Australia were queried. Section D also sought to explore feelings of trust among humanitarian entrants towards people holding various occupations (doctors, police) as well as various institutions. Feelings of personal safety in a variety of settings were also investigated.

### *3.2.2 Respondents*

Given the study's budgetary constraints and issues around getting access to a database of names and addresses, we decided to use a network of bilingual and bicultural workers in two migrant and legal resource centres, the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre in Western Australia and the Footscray Community Legal Centre in Victoria, to gather a sample of respondents. This technique means that the sample of respondents we obtained was not a random sample of refugees, though subsequent analysis against existing data collections suggested it was relatively representative of the refugee population. Given that the survey sample was primarily generated through the networks of the bilingual assistants (BAs) conducting the survey, it is important to understand who the BAs were and the networks they used to create the sample.

In total, the study employed nine bilingual research assistants to conduct surveys. All Melbourne BAs were current employees of a Community Legal Centre and accessed respondents through their professional and personal networks. The majority of the Perth BAs were employed by various settlement services and their respondents were often current clients or former clients. Each bilingual interviewer completed around 10 interviews. Given that the interviewees were drawn from their networks, the sample may well be somewhat 'homogenised'. While BAs were asked to recruit respondents who had both positive and negative experiences, overall, our respondents, especially when compared to the difficult settlement experiences described by focus group participants, appear to be among those who have experienced more positive settlement outcomes.

Bilingual assistants fluent in English and their relevant language of origin conducted all surveys face-to-face with participants. The bilingual interviews were inducted in a half-day workshop. Its purpose was to ensure assistants understood the ethical issues involved in administering the survey, such as obtaining client consent and maintaining client confidentiality, as well as becoming familiar with the survey instrument and gaining a thorough understanding of all survey questions. BAs were also asked to encourage participants to be as honest as possible when responding to questions. These workshops were also an opportunity for the BAs to inform researchers of questions in the survey that may cause unease or discomfort among participants. In the Melbourne workshop for example (run prior to the Perth workshop), a BA noted that it was not uncommon for some refugees in their networks to work for cash in hand. All BAs involved in the project were subsequently asked to reassure respondents of the confidential nature of the surveys, including information relating to income and receiving income from government allowances or benefits (i.e. no information they provided about their income situation would be released at all). When in the field, the interviews were usually conducted in the respondent's home and on average took about 45 minutes to complete.

The respondent's current address and contact details such as home and/or mobile number and email address were collected using a 'Contact Sheet' to help arrange follow-up surveys, over the project period. In case of change of details such as a new home or mobile number, respondents were also asked to provide the name and contact number of their next of kin. This information is not stored on any database in line with ethics recommendations.

In total, 85 surveys were completed. Table 9 below outlines the key characteristics of the sample. Relatively equal numbers of respondents came from Melbourne and Perth with 52 per cent and 48 per cent of the sample coming from each city respectively. The gender mix of respondents was quite balanced with males and females accounting for 52 and 48 per cent respectively..

With respect to the length of time in Australia, just over one-quarter (27%) of respondents had been in Australia for between 12 to 18 months; 34 per cent had been in Australia between 18 months and three years; and 39 per cent had been in Australia for over three years. Two thirds of surveyed people lived in family households. The remaining third were from households comprising groups of non-related persons such as friends or housemates and have been referred to collectively as 'group households'.

**Table 9: Respondents by city, length of respondent's residency in Australia, gender, household situation and region of origin**

| | | Proportion of sample % |
|---|---|---|
| **City** | Perth | 48.2 |
| | Melbourne | 51.8 |
| | *Total* | 100.0 |
| **Length of residency in Australia** | One year to 18 months | 27.1 |
| | 18 months to three years | 34.1 |
| | More than three years | 38.8 |
| | *Total* | 100.0 |
| **Gender** | Male | 48.2 |
| | Female | 51.8 |
| | *Total* | 100.0 |
| **Household situation** | Family household | 67.1 |
| | Group household | 32.9 |
| | *Total* | 100.0 |
| **Region of origin** | Middle East | 48.2 |
| | South East Asia | 25.9 |
| | Africa | 25.9 |
| | *Total* | 100.0 |

N=85

Nearly half of respondents to the survey (48%) came from a country in the Middle East.[5] Those originating from South East Asian nations or African nations made up 26 per cent of the sample each.

A more detailed analysis of the demographics of the sample is set out in Table 10 in Chapter 4. Over the course of the study, the research team expects a small rate of attrition on the baseline sample of 85 respondents.

[5] This includes Afghanistan. According to the ABS Standard Australian Classification of countries, Afghanistan is a Central Asian nation (ABS 2011b). However, for consistency with DIAC, this report refers to Afghanistan as a Middle East nation.

## 3.3 Focus groups

Focus groups with providers of settlement programs and specialist housing and homelessness support services were conducted in Perth and Melbourne. They helped us gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of the housing experiences of humanitarian entrants and broader service delivery issues. Through these discussions, we also gained insight into locational differences between Perth and Melbourne.

The focus group discussions took place between September and November 2012. The Melbourne focus group took place in Footscray (Melbourne's inner West) and gathered together representatives of housing and settlement service providers from Melbourne's West, where the majority of refugees have settled: in the suburbs of Footscray and nearby Sunshine and St. Albans. In Perth, focus group participants came from across the metropolitan area and discussions were conducted at the University of Western Australia.

While the project plan anticipated one focus group discussion in each city, five focus group discussions were completed in Perth due to additional staff resources in this location and opportunities to strengthen this part of our research design. Four of these discussions occurred with groups comprising representatives from NGO peak bodies, government departments, housing service providers and migrant services. One additional focus group was conducted with representatives from each group. This final Perth focus group discussion is examined alongside the Melbourne focus group discussion, which was conducted with representatives from migrant services as well as housing and homelessness services, in the present report. We will report on the remaining four Perth focus groups in a future report.

The positions held by representatives from organisations participating in the focus group ranged from directors of large settlement organisations to settlement workers with a day-to-day role involved in the finding of accommodation for recently-arrived humanitarian entrants. This allowed for different levels of discussions to take place. On the one hand, the impacts of changing government policy on program delivery were covered, and on the other we were able to discuss day-to-day issues facing settlement workers and refugees as they together try to secure suitable accommodation for recent arrivals.

It is worth noting that the focus group discussions highlighted the difficulties refugees experience with housing and general settlement matters to a larger degree than the results from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* and the transect walks. The reason for this is that service providers usually work with refugee settlers who are in great need of assistance and who may have reached a crisis point with their housing or other aspects of settlement. For example, focus group participants had significant experience with refugee arrivals experiencing homelessness, including primary homelessness. People who were able to manage largely on their own, or through strong links to their ethnic communities, and who achieved relatively satisfactory housing and other settlement outcomes, normally did not need to access support services.

Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed and then analysed by researchers to identify common themes and key issues raised in each discussion. The findings from focus groups are discussed in Chapter 5. One additional round of focus group discussions is scheduled to take place in the final year of the study.

## 3.4 Transect walks

A ‘transect walk’ is essentially a peripatetic interview where researchers explore a local environment guided by local informants. This ethnographic method, originally used by environmental scientists and now used by geographers and other social scientists, was, for example, used in South Africa to assess community risk (Van Staden et al. 2006). More recently, transect walks have been used in public health studies. A 2011 publication by the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET) promotes transect walks as a useful tool in public health participatory epidemiology (AFENET 2011). Transect walks were also a key methodological tool in a 2010 study seeking to further understand maternal and child health care arrangements in the urban slums of Bangladesh (Ahmed et al. 2010).

While typically used in rural, non-western settings the walks have been applied in the present study in suburban, western settings as the information they generate provides key insights into minority groups’ experiences of neighbourhood that may not otherwise be uncovered. The neighbourhoods examined in the study are those with high proportions of humanitarian entrants.

The design for the transect walks in the present study involved a researcher with two local informants from refugee communities. The transect walk participants were individuals recommended to the research team as suitable and well-informed members of refugee communities after consultation with the study’s research network. In each walk, two local informants, together with a researcher, would discuss areas of key interest and their neighbourhood and housing experiences of refugee settlers in general.

The Melbourne suburbs of Dandenong and Footscray were selected as areas for investigation through two separate transect walks as each has a high proportion of residents who have arrived in Australia on a humanitarian basis. For the same reasons, the Perth north-eastern suburbs were selected as an area for investigation in the Western Australian component of the study. However, the Perth walks were distinct from those conducted in Melbourne in two ways:

1. *Nature of walk—actual vs ‘virtual’*

Melbourne localities chosen for the study were more urban, that is, more densely populated, and therefore locations of key significance tended to be physically closer together and could be accessed on foot. As such, the Melbourne researcher walked with local participants on an identified path. Perth locations were more suburban and low-density, with areas of significance much further apart and it would therefore have been difficult to visit key locations by physically walking a route. Consequently, the decision was made to discuss areas of key importance to refugee housing and settlement in general by meeting participants as a group at a meeting place locally and identifying key areas with the aid of a map. In this sense, the walk was ‘virtual’ rather than actual.

2. *Locations covered*

In Melbourne, two transect walks occurred in the suburbs of Footscray and Dandenong. Dandenong is a local government area with the highest level of ethno-cultural diversity within Greater Melbourne (29% of the population speaks ‘English only’ at home according to the 2011 Census). Footscray is similar, although this inner Western suburb has somewhat lower, and dropping, levels of diversity due to fast gentrification and rising housing costs that have forced many recently-arrived refugees to move to surrounding suburbs. However, Footscray remains a ‘service suburb’ for refugees settled in Melbourne’s West.

In Perth, three ‘virtual walks’ took place with each ‘walk’ covering just one area comprising multiple suburbs in the north eastern Perth Metropolitan area. In terms of local government areas, these suburbs were located within the Cities of Stirling and Wanneroo. Participants were also asked to briefly discuss how their communities are distributed within the wider Perth area. The ethnic groups taking part in the Perth transect walks were Afghani, Sudanese and the Burmese Chin. In Melbourne, the researchers were accompanied by locals from Burmese, South African, South Sudanese and Afghani communities.

Both the Perth and Melbourne transect walks explored and discussed the following themes:

- Why did you choose to live in this suburb?
- What is housing like in the area where you live (e.g. affordable, suitable, good quality)?
- What public, communal and private spaces/places are important for you/your community and why (e.g. restaurants, cafes, community centres, sport grounds, parks, libraries, university, schools, markets, shopping malls)? Do these spaces facilitate community cohesion and interaction with other communities?
- This suburb is often described as diverse and multicultural. Is this an advantage or a problem?
- Do you know people in your neighbourhood and suburbs? Do you feel accepted and supported?
- What are the benefits that living in this area affords you?
- Any problems with this suburb?
- Any other aspects of living in this suburb you would like to mention?

The insights from the transect walks are presented in Chapter 6 and are aided by results from the 2011 Census on the suburbs being examined to provide readers with background information on the localities in point.

## 3.5 Summary

In conclusion, the research questions were addressed by examining primary data collected in the longitudinal *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* administered by bilingual assistants with refugees from different ethnicities, living with family or in group households with non-related persons. Results from focus group discussions and transect walks were also utilised to understand housing, and community and neighbourhood issues from the perspectives of service delivery providers and refugee communities. This report outlines the results from these three methodologies, each of which will be repeated over the life of the project. Results from successive surveys, transect walks and focus groups, along with those aspects of the study scheduled for completion at later dates; the interviews with refugees experiencing homelessness and roundtables with government officials, will be presented in a future report.

# 4 SURVEY RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we report the findings of the first wave of the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*. The survey draws on but further developed in terms of topics addressed the SONA study (ASRG 2011) and the *Australian Humanitarian Settler Survey*.

As outlined in Chapter 2, DIAC has commissioned two major studies in recent years that have investigated the *settlement experiences of humanitarian entrants; Settlement Outcome of New Arrivals* (SONA) (ASRG 2011) and *Economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants* (Hugo 2011). The latter study used a survey instrument named the *Australian Humanitarian Settler Survey* (AHSS) and included 649 humanitarian respondents (Hugo 2011), while the *Living in Australia Survey* (LAS), with a total of 5378 respondents, formed the basis of the SONA study (ASRG 2011). An eligibility requirement for those participating in the AHSS was a length of residency in Australia between five and 25 years and included second generation respondents, whereas all respondents to the LAS were required to have been living in Australia for five years or less, a length of residency shared with the majority (88.2%) of respondents to our own *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*.

While the AHSS was a source of several survey questions, the difference in length of residency and inclusion of second generation migrants and 7 per cent European representation in the sample (Hugo 2011) limits the degree to which results are comparable to that of the present study. Results from the LAS provide some excellent contextual and comparative value and will provide some indication of the degree to which our relatively small sample shares similarities with the general population of recent humanitarian entrants. While the LAS included skilled and family migrants (total N=8576), unless otherwise specified, LAS results discussed in this report are for the 5378 LAS humanitarian migrant respondents only.

Three key points of difference between the current study and the DIAC studies are:

1. The present study investigates recent accommodation experiences in greater detail, primarily through its use of a 12-month 'Accommodation calendar'.
2. The present study is longitudinal. Baseline respondents will be re-interviewed on two more occasions, each a year apart, to help understand factors that affect housing experience and related non-housing and neighbourhood outcomes for humanitarian entrants over time.[6]
3. The present study surveyed participants in Perth and Melbourne only. A focus of the study is on the different settlement experiences within each location.

## 4.2 The *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* sample

Responses from 85 humanitarian entrants, 44 from Melbourne and 41 from Perth, were collected. The Perth interviews were conducted with refugees residing in north-eastern metropolitan suburbs, primarily Balga and Mirrabooka as well as the surrounding suburbs, where many newly-arrived humanitarian entrants settle. In

[6] DIAC is currently funding and developing a new longitudinal study named *Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Survey of Humanitarian Migrants* (DIAC 2013c).

Melbourne, a large number of surveys were conducted in Melbourne's west, mainly in Footscray, Sunshine, St. Albans and Caroline Springs, as well as in Melbourne's outer-south-eastern suburb of Dandenong. Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) scores, based on information provided in the 2011 Census, were obtained for each participating suburb (ABS 2013b). More than half (53.6%) of the respondents lived in suburbs with a decile score of one or two; that is their relative socio-economic scores were in the lowest 20 per cent of all scores nationwide. (See Appendix 1 for the SEIFA scores of all suburbs of which survey participants were residents.)

The analysis has been completed for the combined results for the entire group of 85 respondents and additionally results were examined in the following five groups:

1. City: Melbourne (n=44) and Perth (n=41).
2. Length of residence in Australia: 1 year to 18 months (n=24), 18 months to three years (n=29). More than three years (n=32).
3. Gender: Male (n=41) and Female (n=44).
4. Household type: family (n=57) and group (n=28).
5. Region of origin: Middle East (n=41), South East Asia (n=22) and Africa (n=22).

It was anticipated that examining the sample in these groups would shed light on some of the factors influencing housing and social inclusion outcomes for recently arrived refugees. A discussion on each of the groups, as well as information on several key demographic characteristics, namely age, religion and English proficiency is set out below in Section 4.3 and summary statistics are presented in Table 10 below.

When interpreting the survey results, there are many interrelating factors to take into account. For example, when examining difficulties experienced when trying to access housing, cost of rent is seen as a greater impediment for females than it is for males (see Table 14). While gender may be a driving force behind this, as our discussion about household type below will reveal, a cross-tabulation of gender with household type shows that 72 per cent of respondents who live in family households are female (see Table 10). Family households, many of which have children, tend to have a higher demand for larger and subsequently more expensive housing. It is therefore likely that the challenges of housing a family, rather than gender itself, are behind the problems associated with the cost of rent.

## 4.3 Socio-demographic information

The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 63 years, with the average age being 32 (see Table 10). Overall, average ages were close to 30 years for each cohort, with the youngest group being those of African origin with an average age of 27 years and the group with the oldest average age were those who have been in Australia for one year to 18 months with an average age of 36 years.

*Region of origin and ethnicity*. Survey respondents originated from nine different countries. These were categorised into three broader groups: Middle East, South East Asia and Africa. The sole South East Asian country represented was Burma; the Burmese comprised 26 per cent of survey respondents. The majority of respondents (48%) came from the Middle Eastern countries of Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, and the remaining 26 per cent originated from five African nations, with the large majority of these (92%) from either Sudan or South Sudan.

**Table 10: Demographic information by cohort**

| | | Age | All respondents | City | | Length of residency in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Region of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | N=85 | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family Household | Group Household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | | Yrs ave | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| | | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) | (13) | (14) |
| | All | 31.7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **City** | Perth | 34.6 | 48.2 | | | 39.1 | 58.6 | 45.5 | 34.1 | 61.4 | 52.6 | 39.3 | 46.3 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| | Melbourne | 29.1 | 51.8 | | | 60.9 | 41.4 | 54.5 | 65.9 | 38.6 | 47.4 | 60.7 | 53.7 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| | *Total* | | 100.0 | | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Length of residency in Australia** | One year to 18 months | 31.8 | 27.1 | 22.0 | 31.8 | | | | 29.3 | 25.0 | 15.8 | 50.0 | 51.2 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| | 18 months to three years | 35.7 | 34.1 | 41.5 | 27.3 | | | | 31.7 | 36.4 | 38.6 | 25.0 | 43.9 | 36.4 | 13.6 |
| | More than three years | 28.3 | 38.8 | 36.6 | 40.9 | | | | 39.0 | 38.6 | 45.6 | 25.0 | 4.9 | 59.1 | 81.8 |
| | *Total* | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Gender** | Male | 31.3 | 48.2 | 34.1 | 61.4 | 52.2 | 44.8 | 48.5 | | | 28.1 | 89.3 | 51.2 | 50.0 | 40.9 |
| | Female | 32.2 | 51.8 | 65.9 | 38.6 | 47.8 | 55.2 | 51.5 | | | 71.9 | 10.7 | 48.8 | 50.0 | 59.1 |
| | *Total* | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Household situation** | Family household | 32.9 | 67.1 | 73.2 | 61.4 | 39.1 | 75.9 | 78.1 | 39.0 | 93.2 | | | 53.7 | 68.2 | 90.9 |
| | Group Household | 29.5 | 32.9 | 26.8 | 38.6 | 60.9 | 24.1 | 21.9 | 61.0 | 6.8 | | | 46.3 | 31.8 | 9.1 |
| | *Total* | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Region of origin** | Middle East | 33.4 | 48.2 | 46.3 | 50.0 | 91.3 | 62.1 | 6.1 | 51.2 | 45.5 | 38.6 | 67.9 | | | |
| | South East Asia | 33.0 | 25.9 | 26.8 | 25.0 | 4.3 | 27.6 | 39.4 | 26.8 | 25.0 | 26.3 | 25.0 | | | |
| | Africa | 27.5 | 25.9 | 26.8 | 25.0 | 4.3 | 10.3 | 54.5 | 22.0 | 29.5 | 35.1 | 7.1 | | | |
| | *Total* | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | | |

While respondents can be grouped in three geographical categories, each cohort is still a highly diversified group. Overall, 20 ancestral groups were identified by respondents[7] and 18 different languages[8] were named as those which respondents spoke best. Such a cultural and linguistic variety clearly presents a challenge for service delivery, at least in the early period of settlement, before a majority of arrivals achieve a reasonable proficiency in English.

An analysis by region of origin has been undertaken to help uncover potential differences in the settlement experience of refugees on this basis, as there will not only be stronger cultural similarities within these groups, but also greater similarity with respect to socio-political backgrounds. The sample size for each of the three groups is small, so results will by no means be conclusive; however, they may help to point to areas of greater need among different groups of refugees and highlight the need for more targeted and culturally appropriate service delivery. Examples of how these differences are already acknowledged and explored by organisations working with migrants and refugees settling in Australia include the Western Australian Office of Multicultural Interests publication *Settlement issues for African humanitarian entrants in Western Australia* (OMI 2009) and the Human Rights Commission 2010 project *African Australians: human rights and social inclusion issues* (AHRC 2010).

*City of residence*—Relatively even numbers of respondents came from Melbourne (51.8%) and Perth (48.2%) (see Table 10 above). Respondents from each city are relatively evenly distributed in terms of the length of time they have spent living in Australia with the greatest disparity existing among those who have been in Australia for between 18 months and three years, with 41.5 per cent (highest for Perth residents) and 27.3 per cent (lowest of Melbourne residents) falling into this category. More refugees living in group households, that is, with non-family members such as friends or housemates, were residing in Melbourne, with 60.4 per cent of Melbourne respondents identifying this as their living situation. More males lived in group households and, as such, their representation is higher in Melbourne. In relation to region of origin there was a perfectly even split of Perth and Melbourne residents among African and South East Asian respondents and a fairly even split among the Middle Eastern respondents with Melbourne home to 53.7 per cent of Middle Eastern participants as opposed to 46.3 per cent in Perth.

*Length of residency in Australia*—Respondents' year of arrival in Australia ranged from 2001 to 2011. Surveys were completed from June to November 2012 and bilingual assistants were asked to interview refugees who had been in the country for at least one year. Respondents who named 2011 as their arrival year are described as being in the country for between 'one year and 18 months'. Those who arrived in 2009–10 make up the next group with a length of residency of between '18 months to three years' and the remaining respondents whose arrival year was 2008 or earlier make up the final group of 'three or more years'. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents in the latter group arrived in either 2007 or 2008, with the earliest arrival being in 2001. The distribution of respondents is relatively even over the different groups, with notable exceptions being those from South East Asia and Africa (see Table 10 above). Only 4.5 per cent of each country group is represented in the 'one year to 18 months' cohort, with close to 60 per cent of South East Asians and a significant 82 per cent of Africans belonging to the 'three years or more' category.

While there may be some significant variations of results among the cohorts with differing lengths of residency, the study will, over its three-year length, primarily investigate differences in experience associated with length of residency through the comparison of baseline survey results with results from successive surveys. Given the uneven distribution of nationalities

[7] In the majority of cases, respondents named one primary or main ancestry/ethnicity. In the small number of cases where more than one ancestry/ethnicity was named, the first named only was used for analysis.

[8] Original responses have been coded according to the measure used by the ABS, the Australian Standard Classification of Languages, second edition (ABS 2011c).

within each length of residency cohort, the longitudinal analysis will help account for variations in results between these groups that are linked to region of origin, rather than length of residency.

*Gender*—The survey sample of respondents was gender-balanced, with men and women comprising 48 and 52 per cent of respondents respectively. In part, this was as the result of the study employing both male and female bilingual assistants to conduct interviews (see Table 10 above).

*Household type*—Overall, most respondents (67.1%) were from a family household. This definition includes, though is not limited to, living with a partner, living alone with children and living with a partner and children. The majority of respondents (40%) lived in the latter category. Close to three-quarters of Perth respondents were from a family household, while in Melbourne 39 per cent were living in group households. Significantly, 93 per cent of women who responded to the survey and 90.9 per cent of those from African nations were living in a family household. Accordingly, the majority of those living in a group household were Middle Eastern or South East Asian males.

*Religion*—Respondents were also asked about their religion, including the option to select 'no religion'. Over half of the sample were Christians (53%) and a high proportion of the remainder were Muslims (41%). Buddhists comprised 2.4 per cent of the sample and 3.6 per cent reported that they were not affiliated with any religion. Of respondents from both Africa and South East Asia, 91 per cent identified their religion as being Christian, with the remainder in each identifying as Muslims and Buddhists respectively. Just over three-quarters (78%) of Middle Eastern respondents identified their religion as Islam, with Christians (9.8%) and those with no religious affiliation (7.3%) comprising the remainder.

*English proficiency*—While around half of all respondents reported that they could speak English and read and write English either well (35.3%) or very well (15.3%), the remainder felt that they could not read, write nor speak English 'well' and several reported that they were not at all able to read, write or speak English (see Table 11 below). There was no significant difference between reported English skills in Perth and Melbourne; however, for those who had been in the country for more than three years, English skills were substantially higher than the more newly arrived. Those originating from South East Asia reported the greatest difficulty with English, with only 27.2 per cent of respondents reporting their ability to read and write English as 'well' or 'very well'.

Respondents to the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* reported similar rates of English proficiency to LAS respondents (see Table 11 below), indicating that the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* sample is consistent with that of the wider recent humanitarian entrant population in this domain at least.

## 4.4 Education, employment and income

*Education*—Overall, only a very small proportion (4.7%) of the sample had not had any schooling. Incomplete high school was the most common response, with 36.5 per cent reporting this as their highest level of educational attainment. Twenty per cent had completed year 12 (or equivalent) and significantly, 17.6 per cent of respondents had achieved a university degree or similar. While more males (19.5%) than females (15.9%) had attained university level qualifications, overall, women tended to have higher educational levels. Completion of a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) diploma or similar was nearly threefold the rate among women (13.6% for women as opposed to 4.9% for men) and completion of Year 12 at high school was higher at 22.7 per cent for women against 17.2 per cent for men.

**Table 11: Ability to speak English: LAS results and results from Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey, by cohort**

| How well do you speak English? | | Very well % | Well % | Not well % | Not at all % | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Living in Australia survey results*** | 11.4 | 35.8 | 41.3 | 10.4 | 98.9 |
| | All respondents | 15.3 | 35.3 | 45.9 | 3.5 | 100.0 |
| **City** | Perth | 12.2 | 36.6 | 48.8 | 2.4 | 100.0 |
| | Melbourne | 18.2 | 34.1 | 43.2 | 4.5 | 100.0 |
| **Length of residency in Australia** | One year to 18 months | 8.7 | 34.8 | 52.2 | 4.3 | 100.0 |
| | 18 months to three years | 10.3 | 31.0 | 55.2 | 3.4 | 100.0 |
| | More than three years | 24.2 | 39.4 | 33.3 | 3.0 | 100.0 |
| **Gender** | Male | 17.1 | 31.7 | 48.8 | 2.4 | 100.0 |
| | Female | 13.6 | 38.6 | 43.2 | 4.5 | 100.0 |
| **Household situation** | Family household | 15.8 | 38.6 | 42.1 | 3.5 | 100.0 |
| | Group Household | 14.3 | 28.6 | 53.6 | 3.6 | 100.0 |
| **Region of origin** | Middle East | 14.6 | 29.3 | 51.2 | 4.9 | 100.0 |
| | South East Asia | 18.2 | 18.2 | 63.6 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| | Africa | 13.6 | 63.6 | 18.2 | 4.5 | 100.0 |

* Results from the *Living in Australia Survey*, taken directly from 'Attachment C: Detailed figures' in the SONA report. Results do not total 100 per cent as 1.1 per cent of respondents provided no answer (ASRG 2011)

University or technical qualifications were held by 27 per cent of all respondents, which is lower than the 34.8 per cent reported in the LAS. Twenty-nine per cent of those of Middle Eastern origin held a university degree. This was followed by Africa at 13.6 per cent, while no respondent from South East Asia held a university level qualification. This finding is consistent with the LAS finding that people from Iraq, Iran and the Congo are more likely (compared with all other countries of birth of refugees) to have university qualifications before arriving in Australia (ASRG 2011).

Around half of respondents (49.4%) were presently in some form of education, whether this be English classes or university or some other form of higher education. The most common form of education being completed was TAFE/Technical or business college courses, undertaken by 22.4 per cent of the sample. Engagement in this form of education was high for females at 31.8 per cent, as opposed to 12.2 per cent of males. However, more males were completing university level education than females (14.6% as opposed to 2.3%). A significant 27.3 per cent of African respondents were currently undertaking university level education.

*Employment and income*—Respondents were asked whether they had previously been employed before coming to Australia and 59 per cent responded that they had been in employment before arrival, which is close to the Australian 2011 Census figure of 61.4 per cent of the Australian population (2011 Census Quickstats). More males than females had previously worked (70.7% as opposed to 47.7%). Employment rates pre-arrival were quite high for Middle Eastern (70.7%) and South East Asian (77.3%) respondents but were lowest for African respondents, with only 18.2 per cent reporting that they had worked before coming to Australia.

In terms of current employment, 35.4 per cent of respondents were in either full time or part time work; significantly below the Australian average. The average monthly wage was close to

$2500 for all those who were working. The only significant difference was that male average wages were higher at $2800 in comparison to $2100 for females. This wage differential is largely explained by the lower number of women in full time work (9.1% as opposed to 34.1% for men).

Centrelink payments were being received by 67.1 per cent of the sample. The most common payment was the Newstart Allowance, which was being received by 32.7 per cent of Centrelink recipients, followed by the Parenting Payment (30.9%) and Youth Allowance (23.6%).

## 4.5 Housing

The majority of respondents reported residency with long-term tenure, with 85 per cent living in private rental accommodation at the time of the survey (see Table 12 below). This figure is not dissimilar to the proportion of respondents from the LAS who reported a rental property as their place of residency (80.9%). Of the remaining tenure types identified, 7 per cent had purchased their own home (compared with 8.8% of LAS respondents), 5 per cent were staying with family or friends and 4 per cent were in public or community housing. The proportion of those residing in private rentals was similar in each city, with 85 per cent of Perth residents and 84 per cent of Melbourne residents in private rentals.

While the rate of home ownership in the overall sample was low, the highest rate of home ownership was found among those of South East Asian origin, with nearly one-quarter (22.7%) reporting that they had purchased their own home.

Overall, 7.9 per cent of respondents to the LAS were classified as staying with family/friends and paying no rent. No distinction between those staying with family or friends in a more permanent arrangement, or those staying temporarily as they had nowhere else to live, was made (ASRG 2011).[9]

Of the 5 per cent of respondents in the baseline of the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* currently staying with family or friends, over half (3.5%) were doing so as they had nowhere else to live. In the widely used definition of homelessness developed by Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992), this is a form of homelessness known as secondary homelessness.[10]

### *4.5.1 Accommodation calendar and homelessness*

To examine refugees' experience of housing over the past year, the survey included an 'accommodation calendar'. The calendar captured the main residency of respondents for roughly each fortnight in the year prior to completing the survey. It included housing options such as home ownership, private rentals and social housing, as well as precarious living situations such as living on the streets, living in rooming houses, hostels and motels and living in accommodation provided for the homeless such as men's shelters or women's refuges. The calendar also included residence in institutional settings such as a prison or hospital.. Short stays, such as a couple of nights in hospital, were not reflected in the calendar.

[9] Less than 1 per cent of respondents to the LAS had 'other' as their form of accommodation. Of this, 24 per cent were identified as in temporary accommodation or homeless (ASRG 2011).

[10] In the Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) structure, the three forms of homelessness are:

- Primary homelessness, people without conventional accommodation. This includes those sleeping rough or living in improvised dwellings.
- Secondary homelessness, people staying in or moving between various forms of temporary accommodation. This includes staying with friends or relatives with no other usual address and people staying in specialist homelessness services.
- Tertiary homelessness, including people living in boarding houses or caravan parks with no secure lease and no private facilities, both short- and long-term (Chamberlain and Mackenzie 1992).

**Table 12: Accommodation outcomes by cohort**

| | | All respondents | City | | Time in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Region of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Perth* | *Melbourne* | *One year to 18 months* | *18 months to three years* | *More than three years* | *Male* | *Female* | *Family household* | *Group household* | *Middle East* | *South East Asia* | *Africa* |
| **Current housing** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Purchasing/purchased own home | % | 7.1 | 9.8 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 10.3 | 9.1 | 4.9 | 9.1 | 10.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 22.7 | 4.5 |
| Private rental | % | 84.7 | 85.4 | 84.1 | 91.3 | 82.8 | 81.8 | 85.4 | 84.1 | 80.7 | 92.9 | 95.1 | 68.2 | 81.8 |
| Public housing rental | % | 1.2 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.0 | | 2.3 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Community housing | % | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 0.0 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Rent-free accommodation (e.g. with family) | % | 1.2 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 |
| Staying temporarily with family/friends (as nowhere else to live) | % | 3.5 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 4.3 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 7.3 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 7.1 | 2.4 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| *Total* | % | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Type of dwelling (%)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-standing house with garden | % | 57.6 | 65.9 | 50.0 | 52.2 | 51.7 | 66.7 | 58.5 | 56.8 | 54.4 | 64.3 | 46.3 | 90.9 | 45.5 |
| Terrace house/villa/unit | % | 38.8 | 34.1 | 43.2 | 43.5 | 44.8 | 30.3 | 36.6 | 40.9 | 43.9 | 28.6 | 48.8 | 9.1 | 50.0 |
| Flat in a low walk-up | % | 3.5 | | 6.8 | 4.3 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 7.1 | 4.9 | | 4.5 |
| *Total* | % | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Indicated currently on a public or community housing waitlist** | % | 25.0 | 35.0 | 15.9 | 17.4 | 35.7 | 21.2 | 14.6 | 34.9 | 32.1 | 10.7 | 25.0 | 13.6 | 36.4 |
| Average people per household | No. | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 5.4 | 4.8 |
| Average people per bedroom per household | No. | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.5 |
| Average times moved since coming to Australia | No. | 1.8 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 2.3 |

Examination of the results from the calendar revealed a high degree of stability in maintaining tenure type for a large portion of respondents. Eighty-five per cent of those currently in a private rental had been living in that type of housing for all of the past year. This does not necessarily mean the same private rental property, but it does indicate stability of tenure. The remainder of the private renters had spent time moving between public housing rentals and community housing rentals. However, in addition to this, several private renters had spent time in the last 12 months living with family or friends as they had nowhere else to live.

An important finding is that, with the exception of temporary stays with friends or relatives as they had nowhere else to live, no respondent reported an occasion (i.e. a period of around two weeks) in the last 12 months of having lived in any of the earlier mentioned precarious living situations or institutional settings. This indicates that humanitarian entrants have largely avoided adverse housing circumstances as well as having avoided serious problems with the legal system and prolonged stays with health providers. Secondary homelessness has only been experienced in the form of living with friends and relatives due to having nowhere else to live. This indicates that when problems with accessing housing arise, the close connection that humanitarian entrants have to friends and family play an important role in helping to avoid more serious or distressing forms of homelessness.

The prevalence of this form of homelessness, however, is significant with close to one in 10 respondents (9%) either currently experiencing it at the time of the survey, or having had experience of it in the previous 12 months. Experiences of homelessness, including primary homelessness, will be explored in greater detail through interviews conducted with humanitarian entrants accessing homelessness services in a later part of the study. Results from this process will be presented in a future report.

### *4.5.2 Moving house*

Respondents were asked how many times they had moved home since coming to Australia. On average, respondents had moved close to twice (mean=1.81) (see Table 3), with some respondents reporting that they had not moved since arriving in Australia (11%) and others reporting that they had moved up to seven times. The refugees who had moved the most times were those in the group who had been in the country more than three years (mean=2.15). Those in group households were the only other cohort to have moved homes an average of two occasions (mean=2.11) since arriving in Australia indicating that this group is fairly mobile.

### *4.5.3 Suitability of housing—size and quality*

Results from the 2011 Census revealed that the average household size Australia-wide, as well as in Greater Melbourne and Greater Perth, is 2.6 persons. The average number of persons per bedroom for each also had an equal value of 1.1 persons (ABS 2012a, 2012b & 2012c). The average household size among humanitarian entrants surveyed was significantly higher at 4.48 persons per household and the average number of people per bedroom was 1.53 persons (see Table 3). The number of persons per household ranged from one through to 10. There was not a significant size difference in persons per household between Perth (4.56) and Melbourne (4.41). However, Melbourne did have more people per bedroom at 1.6 compared with Perth's 1.4.

It is important to note that the Census average of 1.1 persons per bedroom is not a benchmark for overcrowding. The ABS utilises the 'Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness' (ABS 2013a) and our survey does not collect data in the level of detail required to calculate overcrowding on this basis. It is clear, however, that refugee households are much larger than population averages and it is unsurprising that there would be more shared bedrooms in these households, when compared to the general Australian, as well as Greater Perth and Greater Melbourne populations. However, it is important to note that while our sample reported a mean of 1.53, 26 per cent of households had an average of one person per bedroom or less.

Given larger household sizes, it is unsurprising that the most common type of dwelling occupied by refugees was a self-standing house with garden, with 58 per cent of respondents reporting this as their house type (see Table 3). A terrace house, villa or unit was occupied by 39 per cent of respondents and only 4 per cent of respondents reported that they lived in a flat in a low walk-up. All of those in the latter type of dwelling were Melbourne residents, while the majority of Perth residents occupied self-standing houses (65.9%). This is likely to be a reflection of the availability of housing in the different housing landscapes in each respective city, with the Perth metropolitan area being more suburban and Melbourne having a denser housing form.

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with two attributes of their home; the quality of their home and the size of their home (see Table 13 below). They were also asked about their satisfaction with the standard of housing that they have experienced since arriving in Australia. More than half of all respondents (61%) reported that they were either satisfied (53.7%) or very satisfied (7.3%) with the physical quality of their current dwelling and 69.1 per cent reported that they were either satisfied (60.5%) or very satisfied (8.6%) with the size of their dwelling. Overall, Perth respondents were happier than Melbourne respondents with their quality of housing in each of the domains.

Respondents of South East Asian origin reported very high rates of satisfaction with their housing, with over 80 per cent stating that they were either satisfied or very satisfied in each of the domains.

The most significant difference in rates of satisfaction with housing between refugees of different origins was in relation to the standard of housing since arrival in Australia. Eighty-six per cent of those of South East Asian origin reported that they were either satisfied (76.2%) or very satisfied (9.5%) with their housing, compared with 42 per cent and 55 per cent among those of Middle Eastern origin and African origin respectively. The high levels of satisfaction seen among refugees from South East Asia may be related to the greater rates of home ownership among this cohort. Home ownership affords residents greater control over managing problems that arise with their dwelling; they are not reliant on landlords to make arrangements for repairs and maintenance.

### *4.5.4 Access to housing—affordability*

Just over half of the humanitarian respondents (56%) to the LAS reported that finding a place to live in Australia had not been difficult. For the still significant proportion that did, however, the most commonly reported primary reason was the expense of housing (ASRG 2011).

As discussed earlier, the majority of clients were residing in a private rental at the time of the survey. In the December 2012 quarter, the median rental for the Perth Metropolitan area, as calculated by the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA) and therefore based on rental prices charged by licensed real estate agents, was $450 per week (REIWA 2013). REIWA's Victorian equivalent, the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV), recorded the median rental, as at February 2013, as $390 per week (REIV 2013).[11] Results from the survey reflected this price difference between cities, with a median outlay of $350 per week for Perth residents, considerably higher than Melbourne resident's median of $300 per week. The median weekly rental among all private rental tenants was $330. However, there was considerable range in the amount that households paid for their dwelling, with rents from $160 to $1083 per week. It is clear that refugees were seeking homes in areas where the rental price was below metropolitan medians. In Perth this was lower by $100 per week and in Melbourne lower by $90 per week.

[11] REIWA and REIV median rental rates have been used in favour of ABS rates as ABS rates include government rentals, caravan parks and other rental options, which will lower the average rental rate. REIWA and REIV rates more accurately reflect the private rental market rates that humanitarian entrants are more likely to be required to pay.

Apart from the difference in the amount paid for rental properties in Perth and Melbourne, there were no significant differences for the median weekly rentals with respect to other groups examined, with the exception of region of origin. Those of South East Asian origin had a lower median weekly rental payment of $300 compared with $340 for both those of African and Middle Eastern origin. Results from the LAS revealed that Burmese, above all other nationalities surveyed, find it easiest to make accommodation payments (ASRG 2011).

Perth's less affordable rental market is accompanied by a lower vacancy rate. REIWA reported a vacancy rate (unoccupied rentals as a proportion of total rentals), for the Perth metropolitan area of 1.9 per cent for the 2012 December quarter. This compares with a vacancy rate in Melbourne in February 2013 of 3 per cent. The 2012 *Making it Home Report: Refugee Housing in Melbourne's West* (Berta 2012) identified non-financial barriers for refugees trying to enter the private rental market as a lack of rental history, discrimination by agents and landlords and difficulties negotiating the private rental application process. While refugees may face these issues when accessing housing in the private rental market, it is clear that a lack of available rentals and the high cost of rent make accessing and maintaining a private rental tenancy particularly difficult. It appears that this is more so for Perth residents than for those settling in Melbourne.

The tighter rental market in Perth may have been one of the factors behind the higher proportion of respondents who indicated that they were currently on a public or community housing waiting list. While overall one quarter of clients reported that they were on a public or community housing waiting list, more than double the proportion were from Perth (35% vs 15% in Melbourne). Family households (34.9%) were also more likely to be on a housing waitlist as were those of African origin (36.4%). Respondents were also asked if they had received notification that they would be able to access public or community housing within the next six months; only one respondent reported that this was the case.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the cost of renting was a difficulty that they experienced when trying to access housing (see Table 14 below). This was experienced more among Perth residents, with 82.5 per cent of respondents falling into this category as opposed to Melbourne's 65.9 per cent and 40 per cent of Perth respondents strongly agreeing with this statement as opposed to Melbourne's 15.9 per cent. Recent arrivals were among those with a high number strongly agreeing with the statement (41.7%), as were family households (31.4%).

Unsurprisingly, the cost of buying a house was seen as a far more prohibitive pathway to accessing housing, with 84.2 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was a problem with respect to accessing housing (see Table 14 below). Again, Perth respondents considered this to be a problem more so than Melbourne respondents, as did family households.

## 4.6 Neighbourhood and social inclusion

Respondents were asked a range of questions in the final section of the survey about their experiences of neighbourhood and Australian society in general, as well as connections to their own ethnic communities. Some of the questions used in this section of the survey were adapted from the *Third Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia* (LSIA 3) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics *2010 General Social Survey* and, where applicable, our results have been compared with the results from these studies. Results from the LAS used in the SONA study also provide some contextual information. As mentioned earlier, the LSIA 3 does not include humanitarian entrants and the results used from this study are representative of the skilled and family migrant population.

### *4.6.1 Connections to community*

Wave one of LSIA 3, run in August 2005, asked whether migrants had been made to feel welcome since coming to Australia (DIAC 2007). Of those who completed both the first and second waves of the survey, 94 per cent of wave one respondents felt that they had been made to feel welcome. Ninety-seven per cent of respondents to the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* had experienced some degree of being made to feel welcome, with those feeling a little welcome at 20 per cent, quite welcome at 40 per cent and a great deal welcome at 36.5 per cent (refer Table 15a below). There was little difference between Perth and Melbourne responses to this question with Melbourne residents reporting being made to feel welcome only slightly more so than those in Perth (97.7% to Perth's 95.1%). With respect to findings on the extent of feeling welcome, the greatest variance was among the region of origin group, with 63.6 per cent of South East Asian respondents feeling welcome 'a great deal', followed by those of Middle East origin at 34.1 per cent and those of African origin at 13.6 per cent.

Respondents were also asked about the relationship they had with their own ethnic communities. Overall, 55 per cent reported that they had a strong network of friends that they could rely on within their own ethnic community. Nearly all (95.5%) South East Asian respondents provided this response, which was a far higher rate than the 57.1 per cent of African and 31.7 per cent of Middle Eastern respondents reporting strong links and support from their ethnic communities. Melbourne residents reported stronger ethnic links than Perth residents (58.1% to 51.2%), as did those who had been in Australia for more than three years (71.9%) when compared with more recent arrivals. Family groups also reported more links to their ethnic community when compared with those who were living in group households (60.7% vs 42.9%).

Fewer respondents described their networks within their local neighbourhood in such positive terms, with only 18 per cent of respondents reporting their connectivity as 'strong with a network of friends and other people I can ask for help'. More Melbourne respondents reported this than Perth respondents (12.2% vs 23.3%) and a greater proportion of respondents (31.3%) who had been in the country more than three years reported strong neighbourhood links than those with a length of residency from 18 months to three years (10.3%) or for one year to 18 months (8.7%). Again, those of South East Asian origin reported the strongest social networks within their local neighbourhood, with 40.9 per cent describing these networks as strong.

Thirty per cent of respondents reported that they did not speak to people living in their street or near them. Overall, the average number of people spoken to locally was 4.14 people. Melbourne respondents spoke to more people in their local neighbourhood with an average of 4.91 people compared with 3.26 in Perth. Given previous results showing a high level of connectedness for those of South East Asian origin with their ethnic and local communities, it is unsurprising that they also report the highest number of people they speak to locally with an average, nearly double the overall average, of 7.86 people. They are also one of two groups identified from the LAS as most likely to use their cultural groups for support (the other nationality was Congolese) (ASRG 2011).

It is interesting however, that in response to the question on feeling part of mainstream Australian social and cultural life (see Table 15b below), only 31.8 per cent of those of South East Asian origin agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected in this way. This compares with 57.9 per cent of those from the Middle East and 50 per cent of those from Africa, who were either in agreement or strong agreement on the question of feeling part of mainstream Australian social and cultural life. This suggests that while respondents of a South East Asian background have strong positive experiences of social inclusion in a number of areas, this may be more a result of well-developed connections within their own ethnic communities rather than strong connections with mainstream society.

**Table 13: Satisfaction with housing outcomes, by cohort**

| All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Region of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group Household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Physical quality of current home** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied | 7.3 | 12.2 | 2.4 | 9.5 | 3.4 | 9.4 | 7.7 | 7.0 | 7.1 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 14.3 | 4.5 |
| Satisfied | 53.7 | 58.5 | 48.8 | 57.1 | 44.8 | 59.4 | 43.6 | 62.8 | 57.1 | 46.2 | 48.7 | 71.4 | 45.5 |
| Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied | 12.2 | 4.9 | 19.5 | 9.5 | 13.8 | 12.5 | 20.5 | 4.7 | 8.9 | 19.2 | 12.8 | 4.8 | 18.2 |
| Unsatisfied | 18.3 | 12.2 | 24.4 | 14.3 | 31.0 | 9.4 | 25.6 | 11.6 | 14.3 | 26.9 | 23.1 | 9.5 | 18.2 |
| Very unsatisfied | 8.5 | 12.2 | 4.9 | 9.5 | 6.9 | 9.4 | 2.6 | 14.0 | 12.5 | 0.0 | 10.3 | 0.0 | 13.6 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Size of your dwelling** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied | 8.6 | 10.0 | 7.3 | 9.5 | 3.4 | 12.9 | 7.9 | 9.3 | 8.9 | 8.0 | 5.3 | 19.0 | 4.5 |
| Satisfied | 60.5 | 62.5 | 58.5 | 52.4 | 69.0 | 58.1 | 63.2 | 58.1 | 58.9 | 64.0 | 55.3 | 61.9 | 68.2 |
| Neither satisfied or unsatisfied | 6.2 | 2.5 | 9.8 | 0.0 | 6.9 | 9.7 | 10.5 | 2.3 | 7.1 | 4.0 | 2.6 | 9.5 | 9.1 |
| Unsatisfied | 14.8 | 12.5 | 17.1 | 28.6 | 10.3 | 9.7 | 13.2 | 16.3 | 12.5 | 20.0 | 23.7 | 9.5 | 4.5 |
| Very unsatisfied | 9.9 | 12.5 | 7.3 | 9.5 | 10.3 | 9.7 | 5.3 | 14.0 | 12.5 | 4.0 | 13.2 | 0.0 | 13.6 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Standard of housing since arriving in Australia** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied | 6.2 | 10.0 | 2.4 | 9.5 | 0.0 | 9.7 | 5.3 | 7.0 | 7.1 | 4.0 | 5.3 | 9.5 | 4.5 |
| Satisfied | 50.6 | 50.0 | 51.2 | 52.4 | 44.8 | 54.8 | 47.4 | 53.5 | 48.2 | 56.0 | 36.8 | 76.2 | 50.0 |
| Neither satisfied or unsatisfied | 21.0 | 17.5 | 24.4 | 14.3 | 20.7 | 25.8 | 23.7 | 18.6 | 21.4 | 20.0 | 21.1 | 14.3 | 27.3 |
| Unsatisfied | 12.3 | 10.0 | 14.6 | 14.3 | 17.2 | 6.5 | 18.4 | 7.0 | 10.7 | 16.0 | 18.4 | 0.0 | 13.6 |
| Very unsatisfied | 9.9 | 12.5 | 7.3 | 9.5 | 17.2 | 3.2 | 5.3 | 14.0 | 12.5 | 4.0 | 18.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 14: Difficulties experienced when trying to access housing, by cohort**

| Have the following been difficulties when trying to access housing? | All respondents | City | | Time in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Region of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Cost of rent** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 4.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 7.1 | 4.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Disagree | 8.3 | 5.0 | 11.4 | 13.0 | 10.3 | 3.1 | 7.3 | 9.3 | 8.9 | 7.1 | 9.8 | 4.5 | 9.5 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 13.1 | 10.0 | 15.9 | 8.7 | 20.7 | 9.4 | 19.5 | 7.0 | 12.5 | 14.3 | 9.8 | 13.6 | 19.0 |
| Agree | 46.4 | 42.5 | 50.0 | 30.4 | 34.5 | 68.8 | 43.9 | 48.8 | 46.4 | 46.4 | 36.6 | 68.2 | 42.9 |
| Strongly agree | 27.4 | 40.0 | 15.9 | 39.1 | 27.6 | 18.8 | 22.0 | 32.6 | 30.4 | 21.4 | 36.6 | 13.6 | 23.8 |
| Unsure/Don't know | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 4.3 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.8 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Cost of buying** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 4.9 | 0.0 | 9.1 | 9.1 | 6.9 | 0.0 | 7.5 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 11.1 | 7.7 | 0.0 | 4.8 |
| Disagree | 1.2 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 9.5 | 0.0 | 3.7 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 6.1 | 2.6 | 9.1 | 4.5 | 3.4 | 9.7 | 2.5 | 26.2 | 7.3 | 3.7 | 5.1 | 0.0 | 14.3 |
| Agree | 30.5 | 31.6 | 29.5 | 13.6 | 27.6 | 45.2 | 35.0 | 59.5 | 32.7 | 25.9 | 15.4 | 50.0 | 38.1 |
| Strongly agree | 53.7 | 60.5 | 47.7 | 59.1 | 58.6 | 45.2 | 47.5 | 2.4 | 56.4 | 48.1 | 61.5 | 50.0 | 42.9 |
| Unsure/Don't know | 3.7 | 2.6 | 4.5 | 9.1 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 7.4 | 7.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

### *4.6.2 Discrimination*

Respondents were asked whether they thought there was racial or religious discrimination present in their neighbourhood and in the wider Australian society. Overall, 14 per cent felt that there was either a lot or some discrimination in their neighbourhood (see Table 16 below). While there was little difference between city and gender, 27 per cent of those who had been in the country for more than three years felt that there was some or a lot of discrimination, compared with 10 per cent for those in the country between 18 months and three years, and none for those who had been in the country one year to 18 months. This, however, coincides with a high proportion of those of African origin reporting higher levels of discrimination in their local area compared with none among those of South East Asian origin and 7 per cent among those of Middle Eastern origin.

Overall, more than double the proportion of respondents felt that there was discrimination in wider Australian society, with 32 per cent of the sample feeling that there was some or a lot. Again, this was higher among those who had been in the country more than three years (42.4%) and those of African origin (50%).

The overall response rate does not differ greatly to respondents from the wave one LSIA 3. Forty per cent of those respondents felt that there was a lot or at least some racial discrimination in Australian society (DIAC 2007). It is worth noting that the LSIA 3 queried participants on racial discrimination only, whereas the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* included religious discrimination as well, which may have affected the response rate to perceptions of discrimination.

### *4.6.3 Trust*

Respondents were asked how much they agreed that the following people could be trusted: doctors, hospitals, police, real estate agents, people I work/study with and 'most people'.

Overall, the majority of respondents felt that doctors (71.4%), hospitals (68.25%) and the police (64.7%) could be trusted (see Table 17 below). Results from the ABS 2010 General Social Survey (GSS) showed that among the Australian general population, most people trusted their doctor (89%), local police (75%) and hospitals (73%) (ABS 2011a). While levels of trust are lower than the general Australian population, they follow a similar trend, in that the highest level of trust is for doctors and there is little difference between the levels of trust for police and hospitals.

With many refugees and asylum seekers having experienced traumatic events such as persecution, exposure to conflict, physical deprivation and in some cases torture and other human rights abuses, which have a well-documented impact on their physical and emotional health (Milosevic et al. 2012), their need for health care may be greater than that of the general population. It is an important finding that the level of trust in doctors among refugees in the sample is not significantly lower than that of the general population. However, there was still more than one-quarter of respondents with low levels of trust and this may pose a barrier to accessing necessary services among individuals who are potentially in great need of health care services.

**Table 15a: Experiences of neighbourhood and life in Australia generally, by cohort**

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Proportion indicated friends came to house for gatherings/ meals/coffee | 96.3 | 97.4 | 95.3 | 95.7 | 92.9 | 100.0 | 97.4 | 95.5 | 96.4 | 96.2 | 92.5 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Extent to which made to feel welcome in Australia** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not at all | 3.5 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 4.3 | 6.9 | 0.0 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 7.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| A little bit | 20.0 | 19.5 | 20.5 | 21.7 | 17.2 | 21.2 | 24.4 | 15.9 | 17.5 | 25.0 | 22.0 | 4.5 | 31.8 |
| Quite a lot | 40.0 | 36.6 | 43.2 | 34.8 | 41.4 | 42.4 | 36.6 | 43.2 | 49.1 | 21.4 | 36.6 | 31.8 | 54.5 |
| A great deal | 36.5 | 39.0 | 34.1 | 39.1 | 34.5 | 36.4 | 34.1 | 38.6 | 29.8 | 50.0 | 34.1 | 63.6 | 13.6 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Description of networks within ethnic community** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I have a strong network of friends that I can rely on | 54.8 | 51.2 | 58.1 | 30.4 | 55.2 | 71.9 | 57.5 | 52.3 | 60.7 | 42.9 | 31.7 | 95.5 | 57.1 |
| I have a couple of friends | 31.0 | 26.8 | 34.9 | 47.8 | 34.5 | 15.6 | 32.5 | 29.5 | 25.0 | 42.9 | 51.2 | 4.5 | 19.0 |
| I know people but would not call them friends or ask for help | 14.3 | 22.0 | 7.0 | 21.7 | 10.3 | 12.5 | 10.0 | 18.2 | 14.3 | 14.3 | 17.1 | 0.0 | 23.8 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 15b: Experiences of neighbourhood and life in Australia generally, by cohort**

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Best description of social networks within local neighbourhood** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I have a strong network of friends and other people I can ask for help | 17.9 | 12.2 | 23.3 | 8.7 | 10.3 | 31.3 | 26.8 | 9.3 | 16.1 | 21.4 | 7.3 | 40.9 | 14.3 |
| I have one or two people who are my friends/who I can ask for help | 36.9 | 34.1 | 39.5 | 34.8 | 37.9 | 37.5 | 19.5 | 53.5 | 44.6 | 21.4 | 31.7 | 40.9 | 42.9 |
| I have some people but would not call them friends or ask for help | 27.4 | 34.1 | 20.9 | 34.8 | 37.9 | 12.5 | 29.3 | 25.6 | 25.0 | 32.1 | 39.0 | 9.1 | 23.8 |
| I do not know people in my neighbourhood | 17.9 | 19.5 | 16.3 | 21.7 | 13.8 | 18.8 | 24.4 | 11.6 | 14.3 | 25.0 | 22.0 | 9.1 | 19.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **I feel part of mainstream Australian social and cultural life** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 1.2 | 2.6 | 0 | 4.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.5 |
| Disagree | 19.5 | 26.3 | 13.6 | 23.8 | 14.3 | 21.2 | 14.6 | 24.4 | 23.6 | 11.1 | 21.1 | 4.5 | 31.8 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 30.5 | 42.1 | 20.5 | 9.5 | 35.7 | 39.4 | 26.8 | 34.1 | 29.1 | 33.3 | 21.1 | 63.6 | 13.6 |
| Agree | 47.6 | 28.9 | 63.6 | 57.1 | 50.0 | 39.4 | 56.1 | 39.0 | 45.5 | 51.9 | 55.3 | 31.8 | 50.0 |
| Strongly agree | 1.2 | 0 | 2.3 | 4.8 | 0 | 0 | 2.4 | 0 | 0 | 3.7 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 16: Perceptions of discrimination, by cohort**

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Racial or religious discrimination in Australia—wider society** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| a lot of discrimination | 8.2 | 9.8 | 6.8 | 0.0 | 6.9 | 15.2 | 7.3 | 9.1 | 10.5 | 3.6 | 4.9 | 0.0 | 22.7 |
| some discrimination | 23.5 | 19.5 | 27.3 | 17.4 | 24.1 | 27.3 | 17.1 | 29.5 | 29.8 | 10.7 | 29.3 | 9.1 | 27.3 |
| a little discrimination | 24.7 | 19.5 | 29.5 | 43.5 | 20.7 | 15.2 | 24.4 | 25.0 | 22.8 | 28.6 | 24.4 | 22.7 | 27.3 |
| no discrimination | 23.5 | 22.0 | 25.0 | 21.7 | 24.1 | 24.2 | 29.3 | 18.2 | 22.8 | 25.0 | 17.1 | 40.9 | 18.2 |
| Don't know | 20.0 | 29.3 | 11.4 | 17.4 | 24.1 | 18.2 | 22.0 | 18.2 | 14.0 | 32.1 | 24.4 | 27.3 | 4.5 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Racial or religious discrimination in your neighbourhood** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| There is a lot of discrimination | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| There is some discrimination | 11.8 | 12.2 | 11.4 | 0.0 | 6.9 | 24.2 | 12.2 | 11.4 | 15.8 | 3.6 | 4.9 | 0.0 | 36.4 |
| There is a little discrimination | 15.3 | 14.6 | 15.9 | 21.7 | 13.8 | 12.1 | 7.3 | 22.7 | 19.3 | 7.1 | 19.5 | 0.0 | 22.7 |
| There is no discrimination | 52.9 | 48.8 | 56.8 | 60.9 | 58.6 | 42.4 | 53.7 | 52.3 | 47.4 | 64.3 | 53.7 | 86.4 | 18.2 |
| Don't know | 17.6 | 22.0 | 13.6 | 17.4 | 17.2 | 18.2 | 24.4 | 11.4 | 14.0 | 25.0 | 19.5 | 13.6 | 18.2 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Results from the GSS indicated that just over half of the general population (54%) felt that 'most people' could be trusted. This compares with only 24.7 per cent of respondents from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* who felt that most people can be trusted. Most other respondents (48.2%) neither agreed nor disagreed that most people can be trusted, rather than indicating that they could not be trusted. Additionally, the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* asked whether people felt they could trust those they worked/studied with as well as real estate agents. Respondents tended to trust those they studied and/or worked with more than 'most' people (46.3%); however, no respondents strongly agreed that real estate agents could be trusted and only 22.5 per cent 'agreed' that they could be trusted.

With the exception of trust for real estate agents, which was slightly higher among those of African origin than those of South East Asian or Middle East origin, trust in all other domains examined was lower, sometimes quite significantly for those from African nations. For example, trust for most people was 9.1 per cent among those from African nations compared with 36.4 per cent for those of South East Asian origin and 26.8 per cent for those of Middle Eastern origin. Additionally, those in Melbourne had higher levels of trust than Perth respondents in all domains. There was not a great degree of difference between male and female respondents.

### *4.6.4 Feelings of safety*

Results for responses on how safe humanitarian entrants felt in various environments are in Table 18. Most respondents (77.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe at home during the day, whereas only 57.1 per cent felt safe at home after dark. Results from the GSS showed that the majority of people within the Australian population (85%) felt safe or very safe at home alone after dark (ABS 2011a).

Again, the majority of respondents (65.9%) felt safe walking in their suburb during the day and only 22.9 per cent agreed, with no respondents strongly agreeing, that they felt safe walking in their suburb at night. Among the general Australian population, less than half (48%) of respondents felt safe or very safe walking alone in their local area at night. Women were much less likely (29%) than men (68%) to feel safe walking alone at night (ABS 2011a). Results from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* showed that women were also less likely to feel safe (18.6%) than men (27.5%). Both women and men's responses were lower than population averages; however, men much more so than women. The tendency for respondents to report lower feelings of safety is likely to be influenced by their background of coming from countries experiencing war and persecution. Furthermore, the majority have settled in areas of relative socio-economic disadvantage, where crime rates are generally higher (ABS 2010).

Melbourne residents had more trust for individuals, institutions and various professions and they also reported greater feelings of safety. The greatest difference was found among respondents feeling safe at home during the day, with only just over half (58.3%) of Perth respondents feeling safe, while nearly all (93.2%) of Melbourne respondents felt safe. However, the majority (65.9%) of Perth respondents were female and the majority of Melbourne respondents (61.4%) were male. While this slight difference in gender responses is likely to be influencing the outcome to a certain extent, there are cases where there is little difference between the gender results. For example, when asked about feeling safe and relaxed on public transport, close to equal proportions of males and females reported feeling safe (73.2% and 71.4% respectively), while 61.5 per cent of Perth respondents feel safe on public transport compared with a significantly higher 81.8 per cent in Melbourne. This points to a generally higher level of safety being experienced by Melbourne residents.

**Table 17: Trust, by cohort**

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Most people can be trusted** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 15.3 | 17.1 | 13.6 | 4.3 | 17.2 | 21.2 | 12.2 | 18.2 | 21.1 | 3.6 | 9.8 | 9.1 | 31.8 |
| Disagree | 32.9 | 41.5 | 25.0 | 43.5 | 37.9 | 21.2 | 34.1 | 31.8 | 29.8 | 39.3 | 34.1 | 27.3 | 36.4 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 27.1 | 17.1 | 36.4 | 30.4 | 20.7 | 30.3 | 31.7 | 22.7 | 22.8 | 35.7 | 29.3 | 27.3 | 22.7 |
| Agree | 23.5 | 22.0 | 25.0 | 21.7 | 20.7 | 27.3 | 22.0 | 25.0 | 24.6 | 21.4 | 24.4 | 36.4 | 9.1 |
| Strongly agree | 1.2 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **My doctor can be trusted** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 4.8 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 9.1 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 5.4 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 14.3 |
| Disagree | 11.9 | 20.0 | 4.5 | 9.1 | 17.2 | 9.1 | 12.2 | 11.6 | 10.7 | 14.3 | 14.6 | 13.6 | 4.8 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 11.9 | 15.0 | 9.1 | 4.5 | 6.9 | 21.2 | 12.2 | 11.6 | 14.3 | 7.1 | 2.4 | 13.6 | 28.6 |
| Agree | 53.6 | 50.0 | 56.8 | 54.5 | 51.7 | 54.5 | 43.9 | 62.8 | 57.1 | 46.4 | 51.2 | 63.6 | 47.6 |
| Strongly agree | 17.9 | 10.0 | 25.0 | 31.8 | 20.7 | 6.1 | 26.8 | 9.3 | 12.5 | 28.6 | 29.3 | 9.1 | 4.8 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Hospitals can be trusted** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Disagree | 12.9 | 14.6 | 11.4 | 0.0 | 13.8 | 21.2 | 9.8 | 15.9 | 15.8 | 7.1 | 7.3 | 13.6 | 22.7 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16.5 | 19.5 | 13.6 | 8.7 | 20.7 | 18.2 | 22.0 | 11.4 | 17.5 | 14.3 | 12.2 | 18.2 | 22.7 |
| Agree | 51.8 | 48.8 | 54.5 | 60.9 | 44.8 | 51.5 | 46.3 | 56.8 | 49.1 | 57.1 | 51.2 | 59.1 | 45.5 |
| Strongly agree | 16.5 | 17.1 | 15.9 | 30.4 | 17.2 | 6.1 | 19.5 | 13.6 | 15.8 | 17.9 | 26.8 | 9.1 | 4.5 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Police can be trusted** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 4.7 | 0.0 | 9.1 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 9.1 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 5.3 | 3.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 18.2 |
| Disagree | 14.1 | 19.5 | 9.1 | 4.3 | 17.2 | 18.2 | 12.2 | 12.2 | 14.0 | 14.3 | 9.8 | 18.2 | 18.2 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16.5 | 24.4 | 9.1 | 0.0 | 27.6 | 18.2 | 17.1 | 17.1 | 22.8 | 3.6 | 12.2 | 18.2 | 22.7 |
| Agree | 50.6 | 51.2 | 50.0 | 52.2 | 44.8 | 54.5 | 43.9 | 43.9 | 50.9 | 50.0 | 53.7 | 54.5 | 40.9 |
| Strongly agree | 14.1 | 4.9 | 22.7 | 43.5 | 6.9 | 0.0 | 19.5 | 19.5 | 7.0 | 28.6 | 24.4 | 9.1 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **People I work/study with can be trusted** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 3.7 | 5.3 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 3.7 | 6.3 | 5.0 | 2.4 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Disagree | 22.0 | 28.9 | 15.9 | 8.7 | 37.0 | 18.8 | 15.0 | 28.6 | 23.6 | 18.5 | 23.6 | 18.5 | 18.2 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 28.0 | 31.6 | 25.0 | 21.7 | 37.0 | 25.0 | 27.5 | 28.6 | 30.9 | 22.2 | 30.9 | 22.2 | 45.5 |
| Agree | 40.2 | 28.9 | 50.0 | 52.2 | 18.5 | 50.0 | 42.5 | 38.1 | 38.2 | 44.4 | 38.2 | 44.4 | 31.8 |
| Strongly agree | 6.1 | 5.3 | 6.8 | 17.4 | 3.7 | 0.0 | 10.0 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 14.8 | 1.8 | 14.8 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Real-estate agents can be trusted** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 18.8 | 21.6 | 16.3 | 19.0 | 10.7 | 25.8 | 15.4 | 22.0 | 22.2 | 11.5 | 21.6 | 4.5 | 28.6 |
| Disagree | 23.8 | 27.0 | 20.9 | 28.6 | 28.6 | 16.1 | 23.1 | 24.4 | 20.4 | 30.8 | 29.7 | 18.2 | 19.0 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 35.0 | 32.4 | 37.2 | 19.0 | 50.0 | 32.3 | 38.5 | 31.7 | 37.0 | 30.8 | 27.0 | 54.5 | 28.6 |
| Agree | 22.5 | 18.9 | 25.6 | 33.3 | 10.7 | 25.8 | 23.1 | 22.0 | 20.4 | 26.9 | 21.6 | 22.7 | 23.8 |
| Strongly Agree | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 18: Feelings of safety, by cohort**

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I feel safe …** | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **at home by myself during the day** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 1.3 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.1 | 0.0 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.0 |
| Disagree | 15.0 | 25.0 | 6.8 | 9.1 | 11.5 | 21.9 | 9.8 | 20.5 | 15.4 | 14.3 | 10.5 | 18.2 | 20.0 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 6.3 | 13.9 | 0.0 | 59.1 | 11.5 | 6.3 | 4.9 | 7.7 | 7.7 | 3.6 | 5.3 | 9.1 | 5.0 |
| Agree | 61.3 | 52.8 | 68.2 | 31.8 | 61.5 | 62.5 | 61.0 | 61.5 | 63.5 | 57.1 | 57.9 | 63.6 | 65.0 |
| Strongly agree | 16.3 | 5.6 | 25.0 | 0.0 | 15.4 | 6.3 | 24.4 | 7.7 | 11.5 | 25.0 | 26.3 | 9.1 | 5.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **at home by myself after dark** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 6.0 | 6.0 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 6.9 | 6.3 | 2.4 | 9.3 | 7.1 | 3.6 | 4.9 | 0.0 | 14.3 |
| Disagree | 23.8 | 23.8 | 20.5 | 26.1 | 17.2 | 28.1 | 17.1 | 30.2 | 28.6 | 14.3 | 22.0 | 13.6 | 38.1 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 13.1 | 13.1 | 13.6 | 8.7 | 10.3 | 18.8 | 9.8 | 16.3 | 14.3 | 10.7 | 7.3 | 22.7 | 14.3 |
| Agree | 54.8 | 54.8 | 59.1 | 56.5 | 62.1 | 46.9 | 68.3 | 41.9 | 48.2 | 67.9 | 63.4 | 59.1 | 33.3 |
| Strongly agree | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 4.3 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 4.5 | 0.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **walking alone in my suburb during the day** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 3.7 | 3.7 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 7.1 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 5.3 | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Disagree | 15.9 | 15.9 | 9.1 | 9.1 | 17.9 | 18.8 | 12.5 | 19.0 | 16.4 | 14.8 | 13.2 | 18.2 | 18.2 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 14.6 | 14.6 | 9.1 | 0.0 | 17.9 | 21.9 | 20.0 | 9.5 | 14.5 | 14.8 | 5.3 | 22.7 | 22.7 |
| Agree | 54.9 | 54.9 | 63.6 | 68.2 | 53.6 | 46.9 | 50.0 | 59.5 | 56.4 | 51.9 | 60.5 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| Strongly agree | 11.0 | 11.0 | 15.9 | 22.7 | 3.6 | 9.4 | 15.0 | 7.1 | 9.1 | 14.8 | 15.8 | 9.1 | 4.5 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

| | All respondents | City | | Length of residence in Australia | | | Gender | | Household situation | | Country of origin | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I feel safe …** | | Perth | Melbourne | One year to 18 months | 18 months to three years | More than three years | Male | Female | Family household | Group household | Middle East | South East Asia | Africa |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **walking alone in my local area after dark** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 15.7 | 17.9 | 13.6 | 9.1 | 20.7 | 15.6 | 12.5 | 18.6 | 21.4 | 3.7 | 15.4 | 4.5 | 27.3 |
| Disagree | 44.6 | 51.3 | 38.6 | 27.3 | 62.1 | 40.6 | 42.5 | 46.5 | 44.6 | 44.4 | 43.6 | 45.5 | 45.5 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16.9 | 10.3 | 22.7 | 27.3 | 3.4 | 21.9 | 17.5 | 16.3 | 12.5 | 25.9 | 15.4 | 22.7 | 13.6 |
| Agree | 22.9 | 20.5 | 25.0 | 36.4 | 13.8 | 21.9 | 27.5 | 18.6 | 21.4 | 25.9 | 25.6 | 27.3 | 13.6 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **and relaxed travelling on public transport** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 8.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 0.0 | 4.8 |
| Disagree | 15.7 | 20.5 | 11.4 | 0.0 | 25.0 | 18.8 | 17.1 | 14.3 | 14.5 | 17.9 | 12.5 | 13.6 | 23.8 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 9.6 | 15.4 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 21.4 | 6.3 | 9.8 | 9.5 | 10.9 | 7.1 | 5.0 | 18.2 | 9.5 |
| Agree | 54.2 | 43.6 | 63.6 | 52.2 | 46.4 | 62.5 | 51.2 | 57.1 | 58.2 | 46.4 | 52.5 | 68.2 | 42.9 |
| Strongly agree | 18.1 | 17.9 | 18.2 | 39.1 | 7.1 | 12.5 | 22.0 | 14.3 | 12.7 | 28.6 | 27.5 | 0.0 | 19.0 |
| *Total* | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

## 4.7 Summary

Responses from 85 humanitarian entrants, 44 from Melbourne and 41 from Perth, were collected. More than half (53.6%) of the respondents lived in suburbs with a socio-economic decile score of one or two; that is their relative socio-economic scores were in the lowest 20 per cent of all scores nationwide.

### *4.7.1 Housing*

The majority of respondents to the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* were living in long-term accommodation in the form of private rental properties; a finding consistent with the larger-scale SONA study. Furthermore, through examination of the survey's 'accommodation calendar' it was revealed that in the year prior to the survey, most respondents had been able to maintain a residency in private rental accommodation.

The median rentals paid by the sample are significantly lower than the median rentals in their respective cities, indicating that refugees are seeking out lower priced housing available to them in the community. The significant proportion of those who indicated that they were presently enrolled on public housing and community housing waitlists also indicated that high housing costs were placing them under pressure.

The survey enquired, again through the 'accommodation calendar', as to whether respondents had experienced primary homelessness over the past year. This had not been experienced by respondents; however, secondary homelessness, in the form of living with family or friends as a result of having nowhere else to live, had been experienced by nearly one in 10 respondents.

Experiences with housing quality were generally more positive for Perth respondents than those from Melbourne; however, the cost of housing was a greater issue for Perth respondents. The accommodation experiences of those of South East Asian origin were generally far more positive than the experiences of those from other regions of origin.

Against the Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) and Khoo and McDonald (2001) typologies of refugee resettlement styles and outcomes, respondents to our survey show relatively positive housing outcomes in that they are accessing and sustaining in the main permanent accommodation in the private rental market though most are yet to enter into home ownership. In terms of the labour market, a division is apparent in the respondent group with a minority achieving some success in gaining employment while the majority have not obtained work. However, among the latter a significant number are engaged in education and training activities.

### *4.7.2 Neighbourhood and social inclusion*

Overall, most respondents had been made to feel welcome in Australia, invited friends to their house for meals/gatherings and identified themselves as having strong links to their ethnic communities.

The degree to which their social networks within their local community and the extent to which they felt part of mainstream Australian social and cultural life was not as strong suggesting that the majority were still some distance from achieving success in this aspect of resettlement.

Perceptions of racial discrimination were not dissimilar to levels reported by non-humanitarian migrants in the LSIA 3 and were perceived as higher in the wider Australian society than in respondents' neighbourhoods. The majority of respondents felt that doctors, hospitals and police could be trusted; however, these rates were lower than those of the general Australian population. Where results could be compared with those for the general Australian population, feelings of safety were also lower. Melbourne respondents were much more likely to report feeling safe and feeling closer connections to neighbourhood than Perth residents. Those of

African origin generally reported lower rates of trust, feeling safe and connection to neighbourhood.

While analyses have been done at a number of levels, city of residency and region of origin tended to have the most significant bearing on housing outcomes and experience of neighbourhood. Overall, the results revealed Melbourne residents as experiencing greater social inclusion and more positive experiences of neighbourhood than Perth respondents.

# 5 FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

## 5.1 Introduction

Focus groups were conducted in Perth and Melbourne with providers of refugee settlement programs and specialist housing and homelessness support services. The focus groups provided additional insights into the housing experiences of humanitarian entrants and into broader settlement service delivery issues.

The participants in the focus groups ranged from directors of large settlement organisations to settlement workers on the ground. Most participants were settlement workers employed through the HSS or Settlement Grants Programs (SGP) and were involved day-to-day in finding accommodation for either recently arrived humanitarian entrants (HSS program) or those who have been in Australia for up to five years (SGP program). This allowed for several levels of discussion to take place: we discussed the impacts of changing government policy on program delivery, but also everyday issues facing settlement workers and refugee arrivals as they together try to secure suitable housing. Insights into the difficulties facing refugees throughout the settlement process, and specifically in securing housing, were shared by representatives from homelessness and housing programs. The Perth focus group also benefited from the contributions of a representative from the Western Australian Government's Office of Multicultural Interests and a settlement worker providing assistance to asylum seekers living in the community. Focus group discussions were guided by the research questions and were focused on the following themes:

1. Characteristics of refugee groups and factors affecting settlement patterns.
2. Challenges experienced by refugees in accessing and maintaining rental housing.
3. Formal and informal support provided to and accessed by refugees.
4. Refugees' experience of homelessness.
5. Current policy framework and factors of successful service delivery.

## 5.2 Characteristics of refugee groups and factors affecting settlement patterns

### *5.2.1 Characteristics of refugee groups*

**Background of refugees and its relevance to settlement needs**

In each focus group discussion, the ethnic background of humanitarian entrants arriving in Australia was briefly described. Participants outlined that in the 1990s the majority of humanitarian arrivals in Australia were from the former Yugoslavia, while later arrivals came predominantly from African and Asian countries. Reference was made to the 2007 Commonwealth policy change resulting in a reduced proportion of African refugees entering Australia. At that time, the annual quota of African refugees was reduced to 3900, or 30 per cent of Australia's total humanitarian intake, down from a high of 70 per cent of the intake in 2004–05. The then federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship controversially justified this move by claiming that 'African refugees [were] having trouble integrating into society' (Harrison 2007).

Both focus groups remarked on the high numbers of Burmese refugees arriving in recent years, as well as an increasing numbers of asylum seekers from Iran and Sri Lanka. It was also noted in the Melbourne discussion that Syrian refugees were among the most recent arrivals in Australia. Participants described the settlement needs of refugees as varying by nationality and ethnicity. Irrespective of ethnicity, however, employment and housing were identified as key settlement issues.

> … they [different nationalities] all come with different needs, but they all need housing, and they all need employment. (Melbourne Focus Group)

In addition to differing ethnic backgrounds, it was noted that refugees had wide-ranging educational backgrounds: some only had very basic education while others were highly educated. With respect to previous living situations, members of some refugee groups were described as having spent extended periods in refugee camps.

> So you would get the political refugees and the professors and that sort of stuff, but you also then get a population who have grown up in refugee camps. I was just thinking of the Burundians particularly who are characterised by not being literate in their own language, let alone trying to be literate in English. [They] have got a very basic level of education and a very rural background and so quite a different character than some of the other groups. (Perth Focus Group)

Coming from rural settings and having low education levels were characteristics linked to greater settlement needs and those needs extending over longer time periods. A history of living in refugee camps for extended periods was also identified as a significant factor contributing to higher settlement needs.

**Family groups and single men**

The increase in the number of single men within the refugee intake is outlined in Table 3 in Chapter 2. While the term 'single men' is applied to this cohort, this refers to their mode of arrival and subsequent living circumstances in Australia, rather than their relationship status; some are in fact married with families back in their home countries. Single men often contact settlement support services in relation to immigration issues associated with trying to ensure that their family members join them in Australia. Participants in both focus groups commented on the rise, over the last two years, in the number of single men who are seeking their assistance, relative to families groups who had, in the recent past, been a major group presenting for assistance. This may be at least partially attributed to a higher proportion of on-shore arrivals (asylum seekers) in the total humanitarian intake over the past couple of years.

> But I guess now, with the change of the different groups coming into Australia, we are not getting nowhere near as many new families—it is a lot of single people, and men—a lot of single men. (Melbourne Focus Group)

Moreover, this cohort was identified as somewhat challenging to house; generally much more so than family groups or single mothers with children. As with other refugees, accommodation in the private rental market is often the only viable longer-term housing option. To help ensure an affordable rent, single men usually need to live in shared rental accommodation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, accommodation difficulties among this cohort were acknowledged by DIAC in their *2011–12 Annual Report*.

Settlement workers noted that there was occasionally a need to facilitate establishing connections between single men, so they are able to form a group and together apply for private rental properties. However, these groups are subject to discriminatory behaviour in the private rental market, which favours families as tenants. This discriminatory behaviour, which applies to the general population and not just refugee arrivals, presents a significant problem for housing and settlement service providers.

While there are issues surrounding finding housing for single men, families were also identified as experiencing housing difficulties, for a range of reasons, including family size. Refugee families are often larger than typical Australian families. For example, it is not uncommon that families with six or seven children present for assistance. Affordability is a significant issue for larger families when looking for suitably-sized private rental housing. For example, a member of the Perth focus group shared the results of enquiries made by their organisation into the availability of five-bedroom dwellings in the private rental market:

> We also get some information in relation to the private rental market, but to look at larger five-bedroom dwellings, the minimum price started at $470 a week. There were about three or four properties that were below $500 and the median was $950 a week …. And of course there was limited stock. So out of the 2500 properties that were available at the time we looked, there were about 100–115 that were five plus bedrooms. (Perth Focus Group)

As illustrated above, the high cost of larger dwellings, as well as low levels of larger housing stock, were identified as prohibiting access by refugee families on lower incomes to suitably-sized housing.

An expectation voiced in the Perth focus group discussion was that with the then government's plan to increase the humanitarian intake, families will once again form a greater component of the refugee cohort and there will be larger families within this group.

### *5.2.2 Factors affecting settlement location*

**Neighbourhood of settlement**

Suburbs where the rent is affordable, where humanitarian entrants can be close to their ethnic community, and where relevant services such as migrant resource centres are located, were described as preferred settlement locations.

Participants with a direct role in providing settlement services understood the importance that support within ethnic communities plays in facilitating positive settlement outcomes, including overall wellbeing. They described their aim to settle humanitarian entrants close to their communities. Despite this, it is access to affordable housing which was identified as tending to be the primary determinant of settlement location.

> We always try our best to find private rental property [that was] close to their community and friends but it depends what's available in the market. (Melbourne Focus Group)

Perth focus group participants mentioned Mirrabooka (a north-eastern Perth suburb) and Cannington (a south-eastern suburb), as well as adjoining suburbs as two major areas of refugee settlement in Perth. The southern suburbs of Kwinana and Rockingham are emerging settlement areas. Melbourne focus group participants discussed refugee settlement concentrating in the western suburb of Footscray and surrounding suburbs such as Sunshine, an area where many focus group participants were located, as well as in the outer south-eastern Dandenong area.

The affordability of established 'refugee suburbs' was identified as declining over time. For example, Footscray has already experienced a degree of gentrification resulting in increasing housing prices which has made the suburb less affordable to newly arrived humanitarian entrants. Mirrabooka was compared to the Perth suburb of Fremantle, formerly a destination for newly arrived refugees but no longer accessible to people on lower incomes due to increased housing costs associated with gentrification. It was believed that this would occur in Mirrabooka in the next five to 10 years.

> I'll be interested to see what happens in five or 10 years when Mirrabooka is inaccessible because that's what's happened to Fremantle. Fremantle's inaccessible now—that whole area. (Perth focus group)

Participants in both Perth and Melbourne focus groups observed that refugees were increasingly pushed out of the inner-city and middle-ring settlement areas to outer metropolitan areas as a result of increasing housing prices. Services are following this drift outwards, for example the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre in Perth have recently set up an office in the outer metropolitan suburb of Clarkson, 32 kilometres north of Perth CBD.

Participants described suburbs with high concentrations of refugees as more 'comfortable' for refugees, as localities where they would not feel 'out of place'. While refugees may cease to reside in certain suburbs due to increasing housing costs, it was noted that these suburbs often remained destinations where refugee settlers could access services, socialise and do their shopping. The role of neighbourhood and features of suburbs with high concentrations of refugees are further discussed in Chapter 6, which reports on the outcomes of transect walks.

> Mirrabooka shopping centre is a place where, no matter what part of the world you are from, I think you'd feel not out of the ordinary which makes it comfortable. Whereas if you went to Claremont shopping centre you would feel quite out of the ordinary and feel incredibly uncomfortable. So anecdotally I do know that people come back to Mirrabooka for shopping, to catch up and for services around there. (Perth focus group)

At the same time, it was mentioned that some refugee arrivals preferred not to settle in areas with high concentrations of refugees. Family groups were identified as holding concerns of the negative influences that these suburbs may have on their children. A participant in the Perth focus group mentioned this in relation to the suburb of Mirrabooka. As discussed in Chapter 4, suburbs with high concentrations of refugees tend to be areas of relative socio-economic disadvantage, and on average experience higher levels of delinquency and crime (ABS 2010). Issues around safety in Mirrabooka were raised in the Perth transect walks (see Chapter 6).

**Mobility of humanitarian entrants**

Refugees settle in each state and territory of Australia. In the 2011–12 financial year Western Australia received 10 per cent of Australia's humanitarian intake and Victoria received the country's largest intake at 32 per cent (DIAC 2013a).

Focus group participants described humanitarian entrants as increasingly mobile after their initial settlement. The increase in the number of single men in the refugee population was identified as a reason for this. Participants observed that single men find it easier to move in the pursuit of employment or better housing opportunities.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of refugees settling in Western Australia has increased significantly in recent times with a member of the Perth focus group reporting that while WA has received about 10 per cent of the Australian refugee intake, this number in reality is higher with more humanitarian entrants opting to settle in WA by moving from interstate.

> I can tell you there is a greater view of people prioritising WA as a settlement area as in actual refugees choosing to come to WA as opposed to the Eastern States … I am not sure exactly why—but perhaps there is an expectation of jobs, perhaps because the communities have been built here—I am not sure [of] the reason, but there is a change in the perception of WA. (Perth Focus Group)

The expectations of greater employment opportunities in Perth and the establishment of more ethnic communities are likely to be key factors driving this interstate mobility. Changing location to be close to ethnic networks was also identified as a factor influencing refugee mobility. Evidence of entire families moving across the country to be close to their community was presented in the Perth focus group with the example of a Burmese family moving from Tasmania to regional WA. Overall, however, single men were described as 'transient' when compared with the relatively more sedentary family groups.

## 5.3 Challenges experienced accessing and maintaining accommodation

This section analyses a broader focus group discussion on the challenges that refugees encounter in securing long-term suitable and stable housing.

Settlement workers described their focus on finding private rental accommodation for recently arrived humanitarian entrants. A participant in the Melbourne focus group succinctly described the housing situation for new arrivals as 'on arrival, the condition is private rental'. The availability of alternative on-arrival accommodation was described as 'very, very limited'. In the post-arrival period (up to five years), the most usual accommodation option continues to be private rental. The present discussion therefore focuses on the problems faced by refugees in accessing and maintaining private rental properties, as identified by service providers who took part in focus groups. Issues related to the broader Australian housing system were also discussed.

### *5.3.1 Affordability*

Focus group participants explained that many recently arrived refugees lived on low incomes derived from Centrelink benefits or low-paying forms of employment. The private rental markets in both Perth and Melbourne are relatively expensive and highly competitive. Affordability was identified as one of the major barriers refugees face as they try to secure private rental housing.

Upon entering the private rental market, many refugees experience immediate housing stress. The 30:40 rule posits that a household is under housing stress if its housing costs exceed 30 per cent of income, provided the household is in the bottom 40 per cent of the income distribution (Yates & Milligan 2007).

Melbourne service providers explained that rental costs accounting for 55 per cent of household income emerged as a quasi-benchmark of housing affordability. To be eligible for a bond loan in Victoria, the weekly rent charged for the property cannot exceed 55 per cent of the applicant's total gross weekly income (Victorian Department of Human Services 2013). As outlined below, 55 per cent of a basic Centrelink benefit does not cover rent for a one-bedroom property in Melbourne's West, thereby effectively excluding these individuals from entering the private rental market. Given the high cost of rents throughout Melbourne, refugees are sometimes forced to spend more than 55 per cent of their income on rental housing and in this way become ineligible for government assistance with the bond payment.. It has also resulted in refugees taking less favourable accommodation options such as rooming houses, where the proportion of income spent on housing can still be higher than 55 per cent.

> … $460 a fortnight [from Centrelink], that is $230 a week and you only get [bond] support. So they are obviously saying 55 per cent of your income is okay to spend, so that is like $140. You cannot get one-bedroom property anywhere in the west [Melbourne's western suburbs] for that. It is unheard of.
>
> And then we put them in rooming houses where they pay $200 a week. (Melbourne Focus Group)

Similarly, the Western Australian setting was described as having high rental prices and limited availability of rental properties, which presented significant barriers to accessing and maintaining housing. Furthermore, Perth participants explained that the existence of 'option fees' in WA present a significant extra barrier to finding a private rental. An option fee is money paid by prospective tenants to show that their rental application is genuine (WA Department of Commerce 2013). While the payment is reimbursed in full if the application is rejected, the money sitting with a real estate agent until the decision is made on the rental application restricts a prospective tenant's ability to apply for other housing. Allowances for option fees were described as absent in federally designed settlement policies as they do not exist in other states.[12]

[12] The West Australian Government passed legislation that capped option fee amounts in May 2013 (WA Department of Commerce 2013).

### *5.3.2 Rental application process*

The competitiveness of the private rental markets was described as a major barrier to accessing housing for both newly arrived refugees and those with a longer residency in Australia. It was clear from discussions that affordability problems in a competitive private rental market is only one among a range of difficulties humanitarian entrants encounter in securing satisfactory housing.

We have heard that refugees were also likely to have difficulty with the following requirements for a valid rental application:

- references;
- one hundred point ID check;
- English proficiency—both written and verbal;
- transport—to get to property inspections; and
- knowledge of local areas.

Rental references may be in the form of written or verbal references from agents or landlords, a rental history for the past few years, rent receipts or personal references from employers or other people who know the applicant well (FACS NSW 2010). It was noted that many recent humanitarian entrants cannot provide such references. In addition, they often lack documents to fulfil the '100 point identity check'. The points are allocated to particular forms of identification and the amount of points allocated may vary by institution requiring the identity verification. For example, government bodies will often allocate 70 points to a passport whereas private organisations, such as real estate agencies, tend to assign them fewer points.

Transport to property inspections was identified as a significant obstacle because many newly arrived refugees do not possess a driver's licence. Poor English skills were outlined by participants as problematic when refugees need to communicate with real estate agents and sign lease agreements. As described below, these problems combine to reduce the likelihood of refugees having their rental applications accepted.

> They don't have references, they don't have employment, they are on Centrelink incomes, they have limited English, they have limited ability to even get from A to B to go to inspections, they often don't have the hundred point criteria that you need with the application, many of them will struggle to actually complete the application without assistance—so all those things combined—when you get a landlord looking at applications, I mean which one's going to get the bin and which one is going to get approved? (Melbourne Focus Group)

The issue of discrimination by real estate agents and private owners against refugees in the rental application process was raised in discussions. The prevalence and even the existence of discrimination against refugees in the private rental market was questioned at present and was described as 'hidden' due to the high level of competition for properties.

### *5.3.3 Understanding housing systems and housing rights in Australia*

While a range of issues were identified as barriers to entering the private rental market, a general lack of understanding of the complexity of the Australian housing system was identified as a significant problem for refugees. The ability to understand the difference between private rental, public and community housing, rooming/boarding houses and in the case of Melbourne, transitional housing, was identified as a challenge even for settlement workers who have a day-to-day role in navigating such systems on behalf of their clients. Refugees generally, and particularly those from refugee camps, as well as former asylum seekers, were identified as likely to experience difficulties.

> … it's the system understanding. It is hard enough for [settlement] workers to understand it and you know, people born in Australia and know what they are doing let alone someone who has come from a camp or detention centre and trying to navigate the difference between private rental, community housing, government housing and THM (Transitional Housing). (Melbourne Focus Group)

In terms of understanding tenant rights in private rentals, a minimal knowledge of the private rental system and regulation was identified as rendering refugees particularly vulnerable to illegal behaviour by landlords and real estate agents. A legal clinic established in Melbourne's west called the 'Tenancy Refugee Project' sought to assist refugees with disputes they were having, mainly in relation to private rentals:

> The biggest things we saw were bond disputes, disputes about repairs to properties and the condition of properties, evictions, and just other sorts of general dodgy behaviour by real estate agents.

An example of the impact of poor understanding of the housing system was provided in the Perth focus group in relation to groups that are 'not new arrivals' and therefore outside the period of initial HSS support. Following non-renewal of private rental leases, significant problems were reported in relation to finding a new private rental tenancy. Some refugees who had been in long-term stable accommodation, found it incredibly difficult to find a new private rental. This was highlighted as a particular problem among Burundian refugees in the Perth focus group discussion.

Once rental properties are secured, budgeting skills were identified as affecting refugees' ability to afford their rental payments on an ongoing basis. Poor budgeting skills may lead families and/or individuals to rent arrears and if the situation is not remedied, ultimately eviction. It was noted that budgeting problems are more pronounced among those who have spent extended amounts of time in refugee camps. One participant remarked that in refugee camps, as soon as money is received, it is spent on items necessary for survival. An ability to manage income and prioritise spending upon arrival in Australia was therefore lacking and was seen to result in problems with meeting rent payments.

## 5.4 Formal and informal assistance accessed by refugees

### *5.4.1 Support from ethnic community*

Both Melbourne and Perth focus groups acknowledged that a vital form of support for new arrivals comes from their ethnic community (referred to simply as 'community' in focus groups discussions). Refugee communities were described as providing a great deal of general settlement support, and in times of housing crisis, a place to live for individuals and families who would otherwise find themselves without a roof over their heads.

It was mentioned that not all new arrivals are accommodated through the HSS—some initially stay with family or friends. With 75 per cent of humanitarian entrants surveyed in the 'Living in Australia' survey described as 'Linked before arrival', that is, they knew someone in Australia before arrival (ASRG 2011), assistance with finding accommodation is usually not necessary for those people. Humanitarian entrants often live close to family members or their 'proposers'[13] living in Australia (DIAC Fact Sheet 98, 2013b).

In addition to ethnic communities, church groups were recognised as a vital source of support. For example, the Perth focus group identified the Karin Burmese community as having particularly strong church and community groups.

[13] A 'proposer' is required for a person to be considered for a Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) visa. A proposer must be an Australian citizen, an Australian permanent resident, an Australian organisation or an eligible New Zealand citizen (DIAC 2013b).

> There would be some very strong churches and very strong community groups and, for example, the Karin community—a couple of very strong community groups there—I don't know that I could actually name some of the other ones that are as strong as the Karins. Not as strong as the Karins, but they are there. (Perth Focus Group)

The support received from the community and church groups was described as 'far reaching' and 'hard to quantify'.

However, concern was also expressed about refugees being overly reliant on community and contacting a 'community leader' for advice or support. Sometimes the 'leaders' are self-appointed individuals who, as reported in a Perth focus group, sometimes abuse or exploit new arrivals.

> I'm always suspicious of community leaders. I don't want to offend anyone, but the number of self-nominated community leaders that are out there who have been actively abusive or have exploited new arrivals … so many examples of that. (Perth Focus Group)

### *5.4.2 Housing support through settlement programs*

As discussed in Chapter 2, the HSS is the Australian Government's primary program delivering settlement support to newly-arrived humanitarian entrants and providing initial housing as well as other housing and non-shelter support. While finding on-arrival accommodation is a particular challenge, an HSS worker from the Melbourne Focus group observed that during their initial six-month support period, refugees are unlikely to experience difficulties. Ongoing settlement support including housing support is provided through the Settlement Grants Program (SGP). Housing was described as an issue for the overwhelming majority of SGP clients:

> Ninety per cent of my clients have housing problems, if not more—if not every client has something. (Melbourne Focus Group, Co-ordinator SGP program)

Below we discuss the role that settlement workers play in the rent application process and in the areas of housing options, rights and tenant responsibilities, as it was conveyed to us in focus group discussions.

**Rental application process**

Settlement workers described assisting refugees who had poor English skills and minimal knowledge of the Australian housing system, private rental market and local areas. Navigating the housing system, communicating with real estate agents and landlords and helping refugees comprehend and complete relevant documentation associated with securing a private rental are part of workers' day-to-day roles. Settlement workers adopt an impressively proactive role in addressing refugees' settlement needs, particularly in finding housing, where they usually walk their clients through each step of the rental application process. We were told that it was described as 'impossible to house somebody if you can't leave the desk'.

One HSS worker described the range of responsibilities within their role as follows:

> My job is taking the clients to the real estate agents and … then look at the properties, an inspection with the clients … we put in an application and also we always put a case for our client's application. That is why we need to make sure to keep good relations with the property managers … (Melbourne Focus Group)

Language barriers were not perceived as a major obstacle in settlement work but rather a regular issue to be dealt with daily. When settlement workers are bilingual, they are able to take on the role of an interpreter. However, more commonly professional interpreters are hired to assist with settlement work. With respect to keeping good relations with property managers and real estate agents, the importance of this was raised on several occasions in each focus

group discussion. It is part of the wider advocacy role of settlement workers needed to secure housing for refugees.

This is conveyed in the quote below.

> In terms of accessing housing for people who don't speak English needing a good strong advocate, there is no longer any good to have somebody bi-lingual who can hardly speak the language assisting somebody, you actually need somebody with really strong advocacy skills to negotiate the minefield of getting a $470 a week one-bedroom house—to be able to put that person's application on the top of a pool of 50 applications, you need to have a very strong advocate and people are just lucky if they get one. (Perth Focus Group)

The term advocacy was used in both focus groups to describe the considerable lengths that settlement workers were prepared to undergo to secure accommodation for their clients.

**Housing options and rights and responsibilities**

As discussed in Chapter 2, orientation and training sessions for recent arrivals are administered through the HSS program which covers a range of settlement issues, including housing. A participant in the Melbourne focus group explained that the sessions aim to equip recent arrivals with an awareness of their responsibilities as tenants and in this way improve their chances of maintaining the tenancy. This includes informing refugees how to manage difficulties that may arise during their tenancy and how to exit a tenancy without damaging their rental history. In short, the sessions clarify tenants' rights and responsibilities under existing regulation.

> Tenancy training is providing [an understanding of] what does it mean, these agreements—so what is your responsibility as a tenant…what you need to do if there is an emergency like leaking water…whatever…who you need to contact, which day to pay the rent, [that] only the people signing the lease agreement can occupy the property, also the 28 days' notice, you cannot break a lease agreement, etc. (Melbourne Focus Group)

The information sessions contain significant new information on housing matters at a time where refugees learn about many other settlement issues. Capacity for retaining information at these early stages of settlement was described as far from optimal. The amount of information to take in early on in the settlement process was described as 'overwhelming'. Furthermore, differing education levels and the complexities involved in adjusting to a new environment and culture were outlined as factors affecting ability to profit from these information sessions.

### *5.4.3 Support from mainstream services*

Alongside settlement agencies, mainstream agencies perform considerable advocacy work to help refugees access and maintain housing. Discussions in the focus groups involving settlement services and mainstream services revealed high levels of communication between different agencies. A representative from a tenancy support program working in a Perth locality with growing numbers of refugees reported that they receive referrals for humanitarian entrants from different places. Clients are referred through HSS providers as well as the Department of Housing, real estate agents, property managers and property owners. The latter three were identified as often being in contact with the tenancy support service whenever rentalleases were due to end, especially forlarger and CALD families as these families are generally known to be more difficult to relocate.

The participant from this particular service described their role in assisting families, who are at the point of eviction but who are unaware that they have received the relevant notifications as they have not understood correspondence being forwarded to them in the lead up to eviction.

> … we are doing a lot of mediation between the property and the owner and the real estate agent to see if we can keep the family in the house until we can access another type of rental property. (Perth Focus Group)

As outlined in the quote above, in these cases, the organisation conducts mediation between tenants and the owner or the real estate agent to help maintain the family in a tenancy until they can be accommodated in another rental property.

### *5.4.4 Access to non-private rental accommodation*

Though focus group discussions had a considerable emphasis on challenges faced in the private rental market, the viability of alternative forms of housing was also discussed. Housing managed by settlement services, public housing, rooming houses, the national rental affordability scheme (NRAS),[14] and housing and home ownership were all raised in the focus groups discussions.

A participant working at a Migrant Resource Centre highlighted the fact that some settlement agencies have housing stock that they manage, albeit a limited amount, and as such they are only able to be accessed by a very small group of humanitarian entrants. As evidenced below, in addition to being limited in terms of numbers of properties, this accommodation also has a low turnover rate as the settlement agency waits for the tenants, who may have complex needs, to be housed in public housing.

> I manage four transitional properties as well, and there is no way those clients are going to be moving out of those houses until they get public housing … it is just not an option for them. (Melbourne Focus Group)

Public housing is available to refugees under the same conditions as to the general population; they typically have 'high needs' and multiple challenges. Both Perth and Melbourne participants noted that given the long waiting lists for public housing, this was not a viable housing option for the majority of refugees who present with housing difficulties. Examples were provided of successfully accommodating clients in public housing, although the process was described as very difficult. While access had been achieved for some, the suitability of public housing was brought into question in the Perth focus group. Below is an example of the reverse scenario; that is, rather than helping clients access public housing, assistance is provided to those exiting 'intolerable' public housing situations.

> A lot of the families and a lot of the people in public housing have very complex personal and social and psychiatric and mental health and physical histories and it can be very difficult when we put our CALD families in amongst often Indigenous neighbours and other people—and the stress that sometimes, even when they are in public housing, creates—those families leave. I have had lots of families that are just leaving public housing presenting to us because it's become intolerable living in that situation. (Perth Focus Group)

Access to the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) housing and the viability of home ownership was also discussed. NRAS, only very briefly discussed in the Perth focus group, was not considered suitable for the refugee cohort as these were highly competitive properties and not suitable for larger families. One participant commented that they had never been able to place any client in an NRAS property. NRAS properties were described as suitable for getting single young people off waiting lists; though there was no mention of NRAS properties

[14] National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is a long-term commitment by the Australian Government in partnership with the states and territories, to invest in affordable rental housing. The scheme, which commenced in 2008, seeks to address the shortage of affordable rental housing by offering financial incentives to the business sector and community organisations to build and rent dwellings to low and moderate income households at a rate that is at least 20 per cent below the market value rent (DSS 2013). See http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/programs-services/national-rental-affordability-scheme

being suitable for single refugee men. Service providers in WA encouraged single refugees to find work and purchase their own housing through the 'SharedStart' home loan available through the Department of Housing's loan provider Keystart.

> So the Share-start and the Key-start programs that are available for purchasing properties are really good for single people, single adults and that is a potential—and I would encourage any of the single men that are coming through now … to get work and purchase their own properties.

The program was described as more suitable for single people than families. Large family groups are eligible for very low loans which precludes them from the program. Rooming houses were also discussed as a housing option and as they are considered a form of homelessness, they are covered in the section below.

## 5.5 Refugees experiencing homelessness

Despite high levels of community support, settlement service support and mainstream housing and homelessness support, experiences of homelessness by refugees was a recurrent theme in both focus groups. Participants described various examples of homelessness experienced by individual refugees and refugee families. In the incidences outlined, homelessness occurred when refugees were unable to benefit from the support of their ethnic community and support services have not been able to intervene. A participant from a Melbourne homelessness agency reported that every morning there were 20–30 people experiencing some form of housing crisis queuing up at the front of their office. The crisis may be rent arrears, inability to pay rent in advance or they may be already homeless. While the service in question was a mainstream service, they reported that close to half of those in the queue would be recently arrived refugees.

Similarly, a Perth focus group participant from a mainstream homelessness service described humanitarian entrants as 'overrepresented' among their clients. Representatives from settlement services in both cities described situations of primary homelessness such as refugees living in tents or cars.

> We are literally working with a family this week who have been in their car for a week—six children, two adults—mum's seven months pregnant—and there is nowhere [to go]—we haven't got caravan parks, we haven't got anywhere to put this particular family and that's the nature of our work over the past six months. It's been very intensely focused on families who are coming to the end of their tenancies and just cannot, cannot, find—I haven't seen it like this for years. (Perth Focus Group)

Strong community support has been identified throughout this report and certainly in the focus group discussions as significant in securing positive settlement outcomes, including preventing homelessness. It is worth noting that 86 per cent of participants in the baseline of our Survey reported that they had either a couple of friends within their ethnic community that they could rely on for help or that they have a strong network of friends within their community. No survey participant reported occasions of primary homelessness in the past 12 months in the Survey's 'accommodation calendar'. However, focus group participants described the presence of individuals or groups outside the community due to various factors. Pre-arrival factors such as sectarian or religious differences were identified as leaving people excluded from a community group. The propensity for isolation was described as far greater among these people when compared to refugees with strong community support.

> The other thing—I have not said this very much—but there are people coming in to Australia who have been through strife in their own countries and the strife has been through different—either sectarian struggles and/or religious differences. Those differences don't stop when they arrive here. So yes, we say that there are communities that try and support their members, but if they are outside of that community then they

> have no one here—they have no family structure, resources, to support them and they are even more isolated. (Perth Focus Group)

We also heard about small 'ethnic communities' which have not yet developed links to the mainstream community. Additionally, there are refugees who lose community support post-arrival to Australia. Examples were given of community support being withdrawn in cases of family breakdown, domestic violence and teen pregnancy.

> They're among the ones we get. We get a lot of the ones where the community isn't—there isn't a community, or the community isn't assisting them, or they are outside the community with women that have escaped domestic violence. (Perth Focus Group)

As outlined above, women escaping domestic violence may experience no community support, leaving them vulnerable to primary homelessness. Housing issues experienced by single women with children were discussed in both focus groups. Single women presenting at services with housing problems as a result of a family breakdown was an occurrence that settlement workers were seeing 'all the time'. A point of difference between single men presenting for assistance and single women is that the women often arrived in Australia with their husbands but a relationship breakdown followed. In each case described, the women had children.

While there may be many reasons for family breakdown, the Melbourne focus group noted that major cultural differences between Australia and the country of origin played a role. The culture shock of settling in a new country brings many challenges and was described as 'tectonic'. A change in gender roles was identified as a significant problem facing refugee families.

> You have got massive role changes that are happening within families. You know, people coming from a quite patriarchal system—the male had these responsibilities, the female had these responsibilities, and you are coming and often seeing a massive role reversal where the men can't find employment, they are not able to support their family, the women are getting their own independent Centrelink payments. (Melbourne Focus Group)

In addition to single women with children separated from their partners, cases of pregnant young women presenting at services seeking assistance was raised in discussions. These women often ' … can't go back to their family because it's a cultural thing', we were told. Refugee communities where traditional patriarchal values are dominant tend to disapprove of women who seek separation from their male partners, even in proven cases of domestic violence and danger for women and children. Such women 'seeking independence' (separation, divorce, or a temporary refuge) are seen as behaving inappropriately and stigmatised, often blamed for destroying the family and sometimes ostracised from their extended families and ethnic communities. In consequence, they may find themselves homeless.

Housing problems and homelessness related to mental health problems also featured in both discussions. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Khawaja et al. (2008) note that many refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). Settlement workers observed the prevalence of mental health issues among this cohort with workers nominating depression and PTSD as conditions that they often encountered.

> I do find that the people are prone to post traumatic [stress] syndrome and I find that their anxieties are heightened. (Melbourne Focus Group)

A member of the Perth focus group commented on the stigma associated with mental illness among refugee communities. This was perceived as a significant factor affecting refugees' willingness to access support for mental health issues resulting in people remaining silent or 'feeling that they have nowhere to go'.

> And also there is some—we have heard some reports of people not actually wanting to seek assistance or disclose something like a mental health issue, to a community leader or someone in their own community, because of the stigma of doing so, or having a completely different understanding of what mental illness is, and so therefore they would keep silent about it or feel that they have nowhere to go. (Perth Focus Group)

The ways in which housing issues can trigger problems associated with pre-existing mental health issues or a predisposition to mental health issues were discussed in both focus groups. A participant in the Perth discussion reported that homeless refugees seeking assistance are 'extremely desperate' and can exhibit depressive symptoms and suicidal ideas. The consequences of escalating mental health issues can be dire. A case of an individual experiencing both housing and mental health difficulties was discussed in the Melbourne focus group; the situation resulted in the individual residing in a mental health facility. This individual was a former asylum seeker who had spent 14 months in detention. At the time of the focus group, he was living in a psychiatric ward.

The quote below outlines his situation:

> So, for instance, I have this one single guy who was sharing with one other person in private rental and then the friend left and so he was left with paying 75 per cent of his income on rent. So he gets behind in rent arrears [etc] and you are trying—there is no other option, he won't share, he has got really significant mental health [issues]. He has been spending some time in a psych unit in [name of facility]—he won't even shower in the hospital shower so he's not—so there is no capability of sharing. We have got a private property rental that was $20 cheaper than where he was so slightly better but not great, but they won't lend him the bond because it is over 55 per cent of his income and so that has gone down the drain. (Melbourne Focus Group)

In addition to the mental health problems, the above example includes a number of factors raised in the focus group discussions. A single male out of asylum detention was left alone at a rental property he could not afford without a house mate; rent arrears and then a spell in a psychiatric unit in a nearby hospital followed. Settlement workers attempted to assist with finding an alternative shared accommodation but this was an inappropriate solution due to his mental health issues; he could not meet the requirement for bond assistance because the rent was too high in the context of current Victorian regulation.

**Rooming houses**

Rooming houses and boarding houses are the same form of accommodation though the term differs between Victoria where the term 'rooming house' is used and Western Australia where the same type of housing is referred to as 'boarding house'. Both terms describe accommodation with communal areas such as kitchen and bathroom. The Perth focus group discussion made no reference to boarding houses, but the Melbourne focus group made several mentions of refugees using this form of accommodation. Residency in boarding/rooming houses on a medium to long-term basis is classified as a form of 'tertiary homelessness' (Chamberlain & Mackenzie 1992).

## 5.6 Current policy framework and factors determining successful assistance programs

### *5.6.1 Policy framework*

As identified in Chapter 2, the Australian Government provides assistance through the ASAS and CAS programs to asylum seekers living in the community on bridging visas while not yet having formal recognition of their refugee status and permanent protection in Australia. While housing needs have been discussed in relation to humanitarian entrants in general, both

asylum seekers in the community on bridging visas and former asylum seekers were identified as usually having more complex needs, including housing needs. Furthermore, the complexity surrounding the policy on delivery of services to bridging visa holders in the community was raised as an issue of critical importance. This has a serious impact on the ability of settlement services to deliver services that clients need. Delineations on service delivery were described as previously being clear but in the present policy environment the situation was a 'mess'. At the settlement worker level, when taking on a new client, there is uncertainty surrounding what previous services the client has received and what services they may be eligible to receive. At the executive level, in terms of running a settlement service as a 'business', the policy environment has created significant uncertainty around what services the provider is meant to supply.

> And that's why I'm saying it's a mess now. Because previously once you got your visa these are the services that were being provided and so people were a little bit more clear on what was happening. Now there is bridging visas, there's community detention there's … and so what sort of services did you get before that? Do we give them to you now, or the government department says no, they have got them there, so you don't give them that at that time. *And so in terms of being a 'business' it's really hard to know what services you are going to be providing*. (Perth Focus Group, *emphasis added*)

The service in question described finding themselves in the position of providing services 'you can't charge the government for'—that is, providing services beyond their approved funding, in effect the staff volunteering their time in order to help desperate people.

The ASAS worker who took part in the Perth Focus Group discussed this issue from the point of view of the welfare of asylum seekers and described services and support for this group as 'not always coherent or substantial'. Moreover, this was 'especially true when it comes to the attainment and re-attainment of affordable and appropriate housing'.

The ability to develop coherent and effective policy at the service delivery level is compromised when there are frequent changes in Commonwealth Government policy as to who is allowed in the country, how their visas should be processed, and which services they can receive at a given stage in the settlement process. In addition to the unpredictable and frequently changing policy environment, the ability to develop effective policies in response to the settlement needs of refugees was described as being limited due to a lack of relevant data.

> … we don't have the data. The data collection is just all over the place and it's ad hoc and everybody else has different questions and they don't answer those questions or they don't tick the boxes or … so the data are—you just can't use a lot of it. (Perth Focus Group)

### *5.6.2 Relationship between Commonwealth and state governments*

The Melbourne and Perth state agencies involved in settlement matters are the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC) and the Western Australian Government Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI). However, a representative from the OMI explained that the agencies play a secondary role when it comes to the provision of settlement services, which are the primary responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. The participant explained that they 'try to fill in the gaps' which Commonwealth policy does not provide for.

### *5.6.3 Factors determining the success of assistance programs*

The effectiveness of increasing the number of caseworkers in producing positive housing outcomes was discussed in the context of a recent pilot program focussed on housing clients in private rentals. The program ran concurrently with a DIAC-funded settlement housing program with a focus of providing tenancy information to refugees. Together the two programs developed an understanding of housing expectations and generated knowledge of the housing system for clients. They also gave them intensive support with finding private rental properties.

A key factor of the programs' success was that many additional staff helped settlement workers complete some time consuming aspects of their role, such as taking clients to view rental properties.

> … it was very [resource] intensive where you had a pool of casual workers—about 10 casual workers who could be called at the drop of a hat.

It is clear that finding housing for recently arrived humanitarian entrants is a very time-consuming process. In both Perth and Melbourne focus groups this was noted as often being at the expense of providing other settlement support such as orientation and 'the usual welfare things'.

The lack of staff to carry out the work necessary to house refugees was acknowledged. In the absence of affordable housing stock, an increasing number of dedicated settlement workers was seen as the next best option.

> I think if we can't have more affordable housing—I mean that is a much bigger and costlier endeavour—we at least need more people to help [refugees] access [housing]. (Melbourne Focus Group)

The overall message was that the services require considerable additional resources, primarily staff time in building the necessary relationships with real estate agents and property managers in finding suitable housing for refugees. More clarity and consistency of policies guiding service delivery would also reduce confusion among settlement service providers as well as refugees needing to access support.

## 5.7 Summary

Focus group discussions highlighted the extreme difficulties refugees face as they try to establish a new life in Australia, as many arrive here from very different circumstances and cultural backgrounds. With private rental being the chief viable tenure arrangement for refugees, the high cost and competitive rental markets in Perth and Melbourne were identified as increasing the challenges involved in accessing suitable long-term housing for refugees and the services assisting them.

Refugee arrivals seek formal assistance through the HSS and SGP settlement programs or through housing and homelessness programs in order to access and maintain housing, and in times of housing crisis. Representatives from mainstream homelessness programs in both Perth and Melbourne described high representation of humanitarian entrants among their clients. The focus group discussions highlighted experiences of homelessness by refugees more so than the settlement survey and the transect walks for the reasons explained earlier in the report (see Section 3.2—Focus Groups).

The increase in the number of single men presenting for assistance and the difficulties in finding suitable accommodation for them was a strong theme in both the Perth and Melbourne focus group discussions.

Informal support provided to refugees by their ethnic communities in the form of both housing support, such as a place to stay in between leases, and general support, was identified by participants to be extremely important, in spite of abuse and exploitation by self-appointed 'community leaders' sometimes occurring. The services provided through settlement assistance as well as mainstream housing and homelessness services play a vital role in helping refugees access and maintain suitable housing. Nonetheless, the incidence of homelessness, including primary homelessness, is high.

Providing settlement support was described as time-consuming and resource- intensive, especially in an environment where constant policy change results in ever-increasing confusion surrounding key service delivery issues such as eligibility of clients for certain services.

Agencies also experience problems at the executive level while navigating the shifting policy environment.

# 6 TRANSECT WALK ANALYSIS

## 6.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter 3, a 'transect walk' is an ethnographic method, a participant observation exercise, where researchers explore a local environment guided by local informants. 'Walking together' makes transect walks a hybrid method in between a 'peripatetic interview' and a more conventional ethnographic observation of any particular group of people in their 'natural' environment, while they are preferably unaware that they are being observed. The transect walks had another purpose: the observation of the built (sub)urban environment and describing how this particular environment may influence refugee resettlement (for this the guidance of locals who have lived in the area for a while is crucial); and vice versa, how refugee settlement in any particular area may influence and change the area in terms of its social, cultural, and commercial life.

Melbourne walks occurred in two different areas, Dandenong and Footscray. As mentioned above, these are areas of significant recent refugee settlement and residential concentrations of certain refugee communities, for example the Afghans and the Sudanese in Dandenong and the communities from the Horn of Africa in Footscray (the Vietnamese refugees in earlier decades). The researcher walked through each locality with two local informants from refugee communities. The transect walks in Perth took a different form with the Perth transect walks being 'virtual' rather than actual. As the area examined was too extensive to cover on foot, in place of an actual walk a 'virtual walk' occurred, where areas of refugee settlement were discussed 'across the table' with local informants, with the aid of a map.

We present the results of two transect walks conducted in Melbourne and the two walks covering the north-eastern suburbs of Perth below. Each walk, whether 'virtual' or actual, was conducted with one researcher and two members of local refugee communities over several hours. Data from the 2011 Census on the areas examined have been included to provide context to the suburbs we selected to investigate through this method.

## 6.2 Melbourne transect walks

### *6.2.1 Transect walk through Footscray (November 2012)*

The inner-western Melbourne suburb of Footscray is a refugee hub, described by Hopkins and Issaka (2012, p.7) as a 'diverse, multicultural and multilingual suburb'. The local government area (LGA) of the City of Maribyrnong is the second most ethnically diverse LGA in Victoria, after the City of Greater Dandenong. The presence of people from many nationalities is noticeable on the streets of Footscray through ethnic diversity in outfits and fashions being worn and people speaking in many different languages. The diversity is also reflected in the presence of various 'ethnic businesses', and especially African shops and restaurants. For example, specialised African barbers and hairdressers can be found in Footscray, and also in a number of Melbourne suburbs, especially in the inner-west and north. Ethnic businesses in Footscray are mainly owned by people from the Horn of Africa, and especially Somalis, we were told by our local guides. Our local informants explained that Footscray ceased to be a suburb where many recently arrived refugees actually live, because the suburb has been gentrified over the past decade and the housing has become too expensive for most people from refugee backgrounds, and especially so for recent arrivals. However, Footscray remains a key services centre in Melbourne's west, and according to a recent study by Hopkins and Issaka (2012, p.3), a 'magnet for culturally diverse groups seeking access to appropriate foodstuffs, goods and services'. Therefore, 'service provision in Footscray extends well beyond the catchment of local residents' (Hopkins & Issaka 2012, p.3).

According to the 2011 Australian Census, Footscray's socio-economic indicators are still somewhat lower than those of 'Greater Melbourne, in spite of fast gentrification (ABS 2012b).

For example, the average individual weekly income is $487 for Footscray, compared to $591 for Greater Melbourne (ABS 2012b). Unemployment is considerably higher in Footscray: 8.8 per cent vs. 5.5 per cent for Greater Melbourne. Two categories at the opposite ends of the labour market, 'professionals' and 'labourers', as recorded in the 2011 Census, are both overrepresented in Footscray, as compared with Greater Melbourne. Labourers represent 8.0 per cent of population in Greater Melbourne and 11.8 per cent in Footscray; professionals 24.1 per cent in Greater Melbourne and 27.1 per cent in Footscray (ABS 2012b). Such socio-economic polarisation is not unusual during fast gentrification, currently in progress in Footscray.

On the transect walk in Footscray, the researcher was accompanied by a Burmese woman (Mya)[15] who worked as an interpreter and an African man (Feny) currently studying towards his new qualification in aged care, although already qualified as an accountant. They were recommended by another researcher as suitable and well informed members of Footscray 'refugee communities' after consultation with our research network. They have both lived and worked in Footscray for several years and knew the local environment well. We chose to avoid seeking out the self-appointed 'community leaders' to accompany us because of the representation fallacy and sometimes intra-group controversy that surrounds them—the issues we encountered in our previous research of migrant communities (see e.g. Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2008) and about which we heard in the focus group discussions, as reported above. The researcher met with Mya and Feny at the Footscray railway station. The transect walk started with a lunch in a Vietnamese restaurant in the centre of Footscray. Over lunch, each person, including the researcher, provided a personal introduction. The lunch conversation was recorded with the consent of the two participants, transcribed, and used in the analysis below.

At the time of our study, Mya had been in Australia for five years and worked as an interpreter for DIAC and for a community agency in Footscray which provides assistance to people from refugee backgrounds. Mya moved out of Footscray because housing there became too expensive, but she works there most days and knows the suburb well. Her interpreting work takes her to many different venues and agencies and enables her to meet new people, and hear about issues affecting them almost daily. This way she learned a great deal about the refugee experience in Melbourne's west.

Mya is originally from the Burmese Chin state but she studied at a university in the Burmese capital Rangoon. She lives in a north-western suburb of Werribee with her husband and two teenage children. Her next door neighbours are Indian; she told us they sometimes share food and take care of each other's children.

Mya said it was not easy to secure a house for rent (her family was paying $1200 monthly for a three-bedroom house at the time). They used to pay in cash at the real-estate agency, but now they pay their rent through internet banking. Many Burmese people still pay their rent in cash and some have had problems with real-estate agents, as also reported by Berta (2012). Many Burmese people initially lived in Footscray but have subsequently moved to Sunshine (a suburb further out north-west) and other nearby suburbs where housing is cheaper.

Feny told us he was originally from South Africa, of Catholic background, and in Australia for four years at the time of the transect walk. He had a degree in business management from Melbourne University, but is currently studying towards a bachelor of nursing, specialising in aged care, at RMIT University. At the time we met he shared a house in Footscray with two housemates. He said paying the rental bond was a problem for many recently arrived migrants.

Over the lunch hour the two locals briefed the researcher on the prominent features of the suburb. The plan of the transect walk was made. After lunch the researcher was guided around the suburb by the two informants, who discussed places of interest for us to see together,

[15] Both names are pseudonyms.

keeping the focus of our study in mind. We visited a local fresh food market known as 'Little Saigon' (Figure 1 below). The name of the market is due to the high presence of Vietnamese people in Footscray, most of whom arrived as refugees and settled there in previous decades. Afterwards, the researcher was taken to the African shopping mall, a more recent creation (Figures 2 and 3 below).

**Figure 1: A variety of seafood at the 'Little Saigon' markets in Footscray**


Our transect walk continued in the central Footscray mall where many shops and restaurants are located. It was early afternoon of a sunny and warm spring day and we saw a considerable number of people, some of African backgrounds, sitting outdoors in cafés and restaurants. We also saw groups of African women shopping, walking the streets of Footscray in good spirits, talking loudly and laughing.

Apart from higher levels of 'visible' ethnic diversity, Footscray appeared similar to other inner-city suburbs: vibrant and busy on a working day. Feny commented that Australian authorities, and especially police, did not like men congregating and 'hanging out' in the street (apart from frequenting commercial establishments), while this type of socialising was very common in 'African cultures'. This observation also appears in Hopkins and Issaka's (2012, p.4) report, where they discuss the suspicion by which the mainstream culture meets 'collectivist gatherings' of the 'visible' immigrants, in whose 'collectivist culture', the [face-to-face] 'connectivity and relationships are vital'.

What American anthropologist W. F. Whyte (1993 [1943]) called 'street corner society' (describing an Italian slum in Boston in the 1950s) and another renowned American ethnographer H. Gans (1962), studying the same group, called 'people orientation' (as opposed to middle-class 'goal-orientation' that focuses on achievement and work, leaving little time for socialising on working days), does not necessarily fit into the usual rhythms and customs of the mainstream Anglo-Australian society. In the context of the latter, most people conform to the 'protestant [work] ethic', which largely relegates socialising to weekends and holidays. Higher levels of unemployment and under-employment (working less than full-time) in refugee communities, especially among young men, may be part of the reason for their increased presence in the street on a working day. We are not able to establish how much of this impression is simply due to high visibility of African people amidst the predominately 'white' Australian society (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2008).

**Figure 2: An African barber shop in Footscray**


Feny referred to 'African community' on many occasions. When probed about the broad concept of 'African community' most researchers avoid, he defended it: 'When you look at us, you see we're Africans first and therefore we have that sort of connection. Our culture is similar, we have the same identity.' This sense of commonality and trans-Africans connection was probably at least partly an effect of being 'black' and being recognised as 'Other' in the predominantly 'white' society. Hopkins and Issaka (2012, p.8), quoting their focus groups' participants, talk about a 'shared collectivist culture'. 'The best thing about Footscray is diversity', said Feny. 'Also, it is accessible, close to the city, also well connected with [other] suburbs. The worst thing about Footscray is stereotyping.'

**Figure 3: The entrance to the 'African mall' in Footscray**


When asked about stereotyping, Feny explained: 'Footscray is a very diverse place, and people of certain backgrounds are stereotyped, for example black Africans. I feel uncomfortable when I enter a bank, or some other public space, or a shop; on public transport, no one sits next to me, and I can see people are scared of me. There is a lot of distrust. But I am a peace-loving guy, just like you. We [Africans] want to be respected … I think local Australians, the Anglo-Saxons, are more open, are okay with us, they give us the benefit of the doubt, but some other migrant groups are quite prejudiced against us … perhaps people from

some Asian countries, the Chinese, Vietnamese …. I think it has to do with fear. That is challenging.'

'Many people have problems integrating', says Feny. 'They are traumatised, they come from war, look at the Sudanese … they need time. But I feel at home at Footscray because many people look like me [black people] … much more at home than in other suburbs of Melbourne.'

Mya listened to Feny's comments with great interest. She expressed her satisfaction about meeting Feny and hearing his concerns. 'I'm glad I've heard this, because I've never heard this before, and never considered this side of the story. I do not really have a lot of conversation with people like Feny.' 'It is true', she shared, 'many Burmese are scared of African men, because they think they may be dangerous, especially women are scared and very careful …. A friend of mine had her phone snatched from her hand while talking on her mobile here in the centre of Footscray, in a busy street, in the middle of the day. …. Also in the Burmese community, many people do not speak English, and therefore we do not mix with other Asian communities, let alone with Africans.' Mya also explained that Karen and Chin [Burmese ethnic groups] didn't mix much back in Burma because they speak different languages. But [here in Australia] children in school mix with other ethnic groups. My son [in high school] has Chinese, Japanese, Australian friends. That is good for the future.'

For Mya, the best thing in Footscray was shopping. She said she could buy everything she needed there, and it was cheap. The worst thing about Footscray was security, because people 'feel a bit insecure [fear of crime]'.

Due to gentrification over the past decade, housing prices in Footscray have gone up sharply, and many Burmese, African communities and other refugee communities shifted from Footscray further out to the north-west, to the suburbs of Sunshine and St. Albans. 'There is not enough space in Footscray, it is very congested, sort of 'house within a house' situation, and another house in the backyard … [there is] no space, no garden left, all the space is used for dwellings', Mya explained. Her account hinted towards overcrowding. The housing standards and hospitality obligations are different in refugee communities, as we also heard from housing and settlement service providers in focus groups (Chapter 5). This may lead to misunderstandings with real estate agents and landlords. Feny agreed that it was hard to secure a place for rent in Footscray. 'Real estate agents turn you down because you're African. Access to housing is a big challenge for refugees. I found a place thanks to some friends I knew', he explained.

Mya told us about the 'Out and about' project, where women from various ethnic backgrounds visit places in the Melbourne CBD, for example, the central Botanical Gardens, and the Melbourne Museum. 'We have picnics, share the food. The food is a great connector. It was good to try African food that we never tried before.'

In conclusion, the transect walk in Footscray was an eye-opening and satisfying experience for the researcher and due to generosity of her guides it lasted well beyond the planned 1.5 hours. The local informants expressed their satisfaction about being able to participate in the project and also about having the opportunity to meet each other and learn about each other's perspectives and concerns. In this respect, the transect walk had a feature of the 'action research' where not only the data are collected and 'knowledge produced', but which also has a potential to initiate some real-life changes, however small.

The main insights about refugees, housing and social inclusion to be taken from the Footscray transect walk are:

- → The rising housing costs in gentrifying suburbs are forcing many people of refugee backgrounds to relocate to outer suburbs where rents are more affordable. Families with dependants are the most affected, while individuals living in shared housing arrangements may be able to cope with the rising rents for longer.

- → The ethno-cultural diversity in the suburb makes 'visibly different' people more comfortable and 'at home' although some groups are aware they are a target of prejudice which creates a feeling of social exclusion, as illustrated by Feny's account.
- → Groups of younger men socialising in public (non-commercial) places are sometimes perceived as 'gangs' and may make residents and passers-by uncomfortable, while this type of socialising is 'normal' in their cultures. Such groups can become targets of harassment by police and other security personnel. Such instances have been recently reported in Victorian media in regards to police mistreatment of Aboriginal, African and Muslim youth.
- → Unemployment and under-employment among young males from African and Asian backgrounds may have contributed to their increased visibility in public places.

### *6.2.2 Transect walk through Dandenong (February 2013)*

On the second transect walk in Melbourne, we explored the outer southern-eastern suburb of Dandenong. The suburb is the centre of the most ethnically diverse local government area within Greater Melbourne, the City of Greater Dandenong. Over the past two decades, many international arrivals with refugee backgrounds settled there. The most prominent groups hail from three continents: Albanians, Afghanis and Sudanese.

Dandenong is a large suburb with a population of 25 000 at the time of the 2011 Census. Its population is considerably younger than the general Australian population, (respective median ages are 32 and 37 years). Young people between 25 and 35 years of age are overrepresented among Dandenong residents, due to high recent intakes of migrants and refugees who tend to be young people and young families with more children than the Australian average. Dandenong's socio-economic indicators are among the lowest in Greater Melbourne. The average individual weekly income in Dandenong is $374, compared to $591 in Greater Melbourne. Unemployment is considerably higher at 11.2 per cent, compared to 5.5 per cent for Greater Melbourne (ABS 2012b). If we look at the two categories at the opposite ends of the labour market, 'professionals' and 'labourers' (as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics), the former is underrepresented at 10.7 per cent, while the latter is overrepresented at 18.9 per cent in Dandenong, when compared with Greater Melbourne where the proportions are 24.1 per cent of professionals and 8.0 per cent of labourers in the population aged 15 years and over (ABS 2012b).

Almost 70 per cent of Dandenong residents are born overseas, the most frequent countries of birth being India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and China. The top religious denomination is Islam, with over 24 per cent of the population being Muslim (the largest Islamic group are European Muslims—Albanians) followed by the Catholic religion at 18.9 per cent, and 'no religion' at 9.4 per cent. Only 27.2 per cent of Dandenong's residents spoke English only at home at the time of the 2011 Census, which makes it the most diverse suburb of Melbourne by a considerable margin (ABS 2012b). This is clearly visible in the streets of the town centre, as well as through the presence of ethnic businesses and diverse places of worship, for example several mosques in the area, including an Albanian and a Turkish one. In terms of housing, Dandenong has a much higher proportion of units and flats among the 'total occupied dwelling': 48.1 per cent, compared with 23.6 per cent nationally. Home ownership (with or without mortgage) is lower and renting is a much more widespread tenure type in Dandenong: 51.1 per cent of occupied private dwellings are rented compared to 29.9 per cent nationally (ABS 2012a, 2012b).

On the transect walk, the researcher was accompanied by Sharif,[16] an Afghani man in his early 30s who arrived in Australia in 2002, and Joseph, a South Sudanese man in his late 20s, who has lived in the Dandenong area since his arrival in Australia in 2005. Both men were

[16] Both names are pseudonyms.

recommended by our contacts within the two communities; having lived there for years, they were well acquainted with the Dandenong area and their respective ethnic communities in the area, but none of them claimed a 'community leader' status or any kind of 'representation'.

Sharif worked as a labourer for several years, saved enough money to buy a second-hand truck and two years ago started his own wreckers business. He told us he now felt he was 'reasonably well off' and able to support his young family and pay off a mortgage—which makes him a success story in his community. His wife migrated to Australia from Afghanistan on a spousal visa three years ago. Sharif described himself as a not-too-traditional Muslim—for example, he is happy for his wife to attend an English course and learn to drive. She wears hijab, but Sharif would not like her to cover her face, as she used to do in Afghanistan. Sharif is pleased that his business is going well, as his family is growing too, now with one young child and a second on the way. Sharif told us Dandenong is a good place to live, with a large Afghani community around. Sharif used to share a rented house with three of his compatriots, also young single men, before his wife arrived, and this was 'not too bad', he said, but he was very happy and proud that they (his family) are now independent from landlords and agents and the intrusion and instability of renting. Sharif said he now liked his work much better because he was 'his own boss'; he told us he liked to be independent, able to negotiate his own deals, and make money for himself and his family.

Joseph came from South Sudan as a 20-year-old, via a refugee camp, on an Australian-linked humanitarian visa. He and his two younger brothers have extended family in Dandenong who sponsored them, but their parents are back in Sudan. The three brothers are single and share a house with a cousin, also in his twenties. Joseph completed year 12 and attended TAFE in Australia and now works part-time in a local settlement service agency and as an interpreter. He aspires to a full-time ongoing job, possibly with the government. His two brothers are in tertiary education part-time, while also working part-time. One had a brush-up with police. 'It's racism pure and simple', says Joseph. 'If three or four Sudanese boys are seen together in the street or in a shopping centre, they are instantly seen as a gang and up to no good. They are often harassed [by security personnel and police] and at one such occasion he [Joseph's brother] got too outspoken and ended up in police custody overnight. But he got a good talking to by the uncle and myself and I think he understood it is not worth risking his future … Still, it is not easy to be good all the time when you are under suspicion all the time, and you are also young and impulsive'. Joseph's account reflects a wider issue to do with African youth and police reported by Melbourne media and nationally over the recent months (e.g. *The Age* 2012).

Dandenong is relatively far from the Melbourne CBD—35 kilometres away at the south-eastern edge of the metropolitan area, and therefore far from the job-rich and services-rich suburbs. It takes nearly an hour to reach the CBD on the train, and this is also relatively expensive as Dandenong is in the public transport Zone 2. Dandenong also has a major bus interchange, but public transport remains the second best option for the suburb's residents who therefore remain car-dependent to a higher degree than residents of inner-city suburbs. Dandenong is well connected by the road network, especially by major arterial roads and freeways such as Monash Freeway and Eastlink and most people drive to get to jobs and higher educational facilities, which means a 'traffic disadvantage' for Dandenong residents.

This and other local issues were to be countered by earmarking the City of Greater Dandenong as one of Melbourne's 'major activity centres' in the *Melbourne 2030* policy (The Victorian Government's Department of Infrastructure's 2002 policy and planning document, now largely abandoned) (Victorian Government 2002). In recent years, the Victorian Government's $290 million funded 'Revitalising Central Dandenong' initiative, announced in November 2007, was intended to achieve a major urban renewal and to develop the area economically (Victorian Government 2014). This project has wound up under the current Victorian Liberal Government (The Age 2012).

**Figure 4: The Drum Theatre in the Dandenong town centre. The striking red theatre building is a 2006 'extension' of the Dandenong Town Hall, built in 1880 (visible in the background)**

To a visitor, Dandenong gives an impression of being a lively place. The Dandenong town centre is a small business district with busy streets and high-rise buildings. We came across several construction sites while walking from the railway station towards the town centre. Dandenong does not feel like a typical walker-friendly suburb, however. After a big shopping centre, the Dandenong Plaza, was opened in 1989, most small retailers gradually disappeared and the 'high street' walking areas were diminished. Over the past decade, a new wave of 'ethnic' shops and restaurants is bringing a degree of the 'walking city' atmosphere back. This is due to a large influx of new migrants to the area who are a clientele for such businesses and who strengthened the culture of walking and socialising in public places.

The Dandenong Market in the town centre builds on the suburb's diversity, advertising itself on its website as an 'urban bazaar of earthly delights, unique produce and stand out entertainment from the four corners of the globe' with an 'irresistible allure of mysterious tastes from afar'. We heard from our guides that ethnic restaurants and shops are many and varied, including those that are hard to find in other parts of Melbourne, for example several Uighur (Western Chinese Muslim minority) restaurants. In one of those we had lunch of lamb skewers, tasty vegetable 'ratatouille' Uighur-style, and rice noodles, a menu that seemed to combine Middle-eastern and Asian elements.

**Figure 5: The idea of walker-friendly 'street furniture' has been taken to a new level in the suburb of Dandenong (in front of the Dandenong Plaza Shopping Centre)**

**Figure 6: 'Ethnic' businesses in Lonsdale Street, Dandenong. Note the conspicuous absence of bicycles at the provided bicycle parking**



Over lunch, we discussed the 'best' and 'worst' aspects of living in Dandenong. Sharif and Joseph agreed that the best aspect is the presence of their 'ethnic' communities, people they knew, socialised with and 'did business with'. This is what attracted them to the suburb in the first place. At the beginning, the community support was of great practical importance, as their English was limited and they knew very little about 'how things were done in Australia'. Nowadays, the support aspect in more abstract but still important: they feel certain 'security in numbers' against the backdrop of a mainstream society's suspicion and 'arms-length' attitude. This aspect was emphasised by Joseph: 'Everyone can recognise a Sudanese in the street, and this is not to our advantage.' This was also nominated as the worst aspect of living in Australia (not in Dandenong in particular): the visibility that works against certain groups that 'stick out' from the mainstream and are associated with 'bad things' in the minds of 'mainstream Australians'. Another problem mentioned was distance from universities. Joseph's brother had to travel very far to Swinburne University, which was expensive both by public transport and by car. A lack of full-time employment for youth was also mentioned as a problem. A positive aspect mentioned is that, apart from universities, almost all other services can be found in Dandenong, including a major hospital.

The main insights about refugees, housing and social inclusion to be taken from the Dandenong transect walk are:

- The suburb has a relatively poor reputation in the eyes of 'mainstream' Australians, but this does not seem to be a concern or a factor that influences its refugee residents. Judging by what our local guides conveyed, refugee settlers are satisfied with living there and enjoying the support and social life with their compatriots. They did not mix much with other refugee communities and mostly mixed with Anglo-Australians through work (rather than socially), but this did not seem to concern them.
- Both local informants mentioned their dislike of renting, especially the short-term leases and unresponsiveness of agents/landlords when it comes to necessary home repairs. Creeping up of rental prices is also a concern.
- The same point emphasised during the Footscray transect walk: groups of ('ethnically visible') young men socialising in public places can be associated with gangs and may make residents and passers-by uncomfortable, while this type of socialising is 'normal' in their cultures (e.g. Middle Eastern and African).
- Unemployment and underemployment among youth from refugee backgrounds, especially males, is a problem: it contributes to their visibility in public places and is potentially harmful on a larger scale, and needs to be addressed via special programs.

## 6.3 Perth's 'virtual' transect walks: North-eastern suburbs

### *6.3.1 Walks with members of the Sudanese and Burmese communities*

The north-eastern suburbs of Perth have been a settlement area for refugee arrivals for a long time, and especially since the early 1990s. These suburbs comprise the north-eastern region of the City of Stirling and the south-west area within the City of Wanneroo. Geographically, Mirrabooka is a centrally-located suburb among this cluster of suburbs (see Figure 7 below) and home to one of Perth's largest and longest established Migrant Resource Centres. There is a large shopping centre in the area, as well as a host of medical services, Centrelink, a large community centre and other community venues and services, including many schools in close proximity. Considerable 'refugee communities' can be found in this area: Bosnians, various African communities and Middle-Eastern communities arrived during the 1990s and 2000s; the Burmese have settled there since the mid-2000s. Therefore, Mirrabooka was the focal point, the key locality, in the Perth transect walks.

The Perth transect walks are distinct from those conducted in Melbourne in that they were 'virtual'. Rather than exploring the local area on foot (this would have been impossible given its size), we traversed it 'virtually' on maps of Perth's north-eastern suburbs; our local guides spoke to researchers 'across the table' about their settlement experiences and pointed out areas of key importance to their communities. The walks were conducted with members of different ethnic groups to gather varying perspectives on the area. Participants were also asked to briefly discuss how their communities are distributed in the wider Perth area. Participants taking part in the Perth transect walks were Afghani, Sudanese and Burmese Chin.

As mentioned, we have selected the suburb of Mirrabooka to focus on. Results from the 2011 Australian Census reveal the majority of Mirrabooka's population (56.5%) as overseas born compared with 40.4 per cent of overseas born residents in the Greater Perth region (ABS 2013c). Top 'country of birth' responses in Mirrabooka were Vietnam, Burma, Iraq and Sudan—from where a majority of people came on humanitarian visas—compared with Greater Perth's England, New Zealand, South Africa and India as the main immigrant sources. On a number of socio-economic indicators, Mirrabooka does not fare well. Unemployment is much higher here than in the Greater Perth area at 8.3 per cent as opposed to 4.8 per cent. Income levels are much lower in Mirrabooka with the residents earning a median personal weekly

income of $399 compared with $669 earned by those in Greater Perth. Despite a mention in the Perth focus group that Mirrabooka was starting to experience gentrification, at 9.4 per cent, the proportion of professionals living in the area is low. This compares with professionals in the Greater Perth comprising 21.7 per cent of the working population (over 15 years of age) (ABS 2013c).

The first virtual walk took place in Dianella, a suburb to the south of Mirrabooka. A member of the research team met with two participants, Samir and Thura,[17] who were from the Sudanese and Burmese backgrounds. Both men were recommended to the research team for their extensive activism in their communities. They discussed their settlement experiences and identified areas of key importance on the map provided during the 'virtual' transect walk.

Samir is a South Sudanese father of six. He has a key role in his church community and through his church involvement he interacts with the South Sudanese of varying ethnic backgrounds who come together from across the Perth metropolitan areas to worship at a Sudanese Anglican church in Dianella (see Figure 7 below).

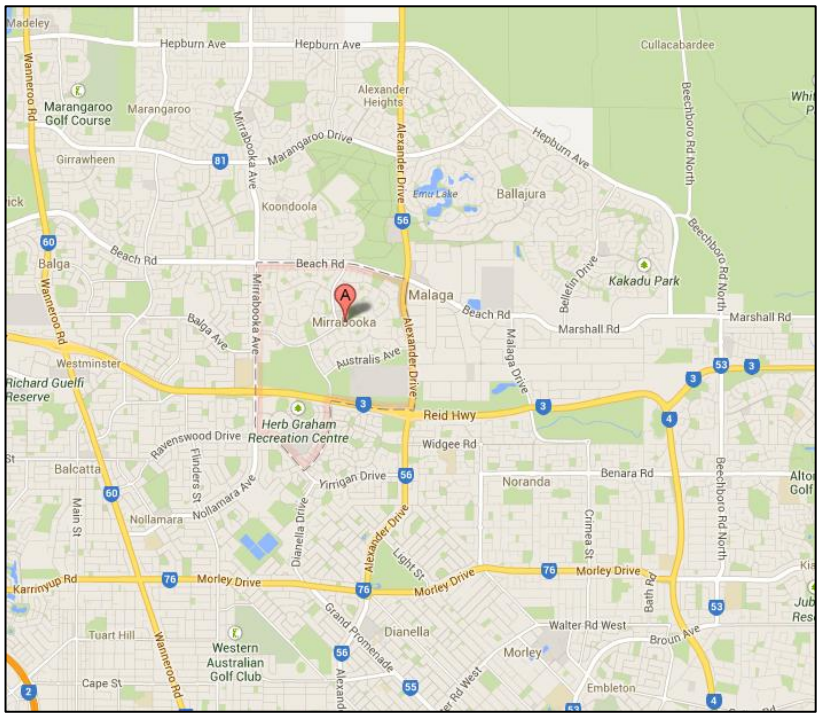
Samir has moved five times since arriving in Australia and he expressed his dislike about moving that involves financial, physical and emotional issues. Samir's current accommodation has been provided through his workplace, but he felt that his family's housing future was uncertain. He described people in Australia owning rental houses 'for business' and who could decide that they would 'like their house back' (i.e. not renewing a lease) which has frequently placed him in the difficulty of having to navigate the costly private rental market. With a large family, Samir had also found it very difficult to find suitable accommodation. Samir suggested that it would be good for the government to provide housing for refugees until they have settled, given that secure housing is a vital part of laying down the foundation of their future in Australia.

**Figure 7: Sudanese Anglican worshipping congregation, Dianella**


source: http://www.sudanese.perth.anglican.org

[17] Both names are pseudonyms.

**Figure 8: Map of Perth's north eastern suburbs, Mirrabooka is marked 'A'**




Thura is a Burmese Chin man, also active in his church community, and at the time of the 'walk' was, working as a taxi driver. Thura described his role in assisting recent arrivals from his community with the private rental application process. It mirrored the work done by settlement workers employed through government funded settlement programs (see Chapter 5). Thura helped applicants complete forms and took them to home inspections. He mentioned some of the problems experienced by members of his community with private rental properties including affordability for those on low incomes. Other problems included finding a new rental when a lease was up. When they could not find new properties on time, it was common for families to stay with friends, Thura explained.

Thura also reported problems with repairs to properties not taking place when needed. He described an experience by another Chin family who had reported a blocked toilet, which was not repaired until four days later. However, Thura mentioned that his community members sometimes do not speak up when there are problems with their properties, so real estate agents are sometimes not even aware that issues exist. Confidence with English speaking ability was one of the main reasons for this. Home ownership was highly valued by both Samir and Thura; they saw it as removing a great deal of uncertainty from their lives and providing 'peace of mind'.

Both Samir and Thura observed that they had noticed a lack of friendliness from neighbours who are often reluctant to say 'hello'. They acknowledged the cultural differences, such as 'the Western lifestyle being more private' and the very busy Australian way of life contributing to this. Thura further noted that members of his Burmese Chin community 'only belong to my community, they don't feel like they belong to the wider community'. Both men observed that children fit in better as they mix with members of the wider community at school. Interacting with general society was seen as a greater problem for older people.

Both local informants were fathers and expressed their concerns for young refugees growing up in Australia. Samir was particularly vocal on this issue and believed that programs to assist youth engagement in education and employment would help young people find a purpose and keep busy and engaged with productive activities. He believed that this would reduce levels of violence among young people in his community. He also expressed concern that without

strong foundations being laid down for young people, the benefits of living in a new country that should accrue to second and third migrant generations would not be realised.

Both men regarded sporting activities as important in engaging youth. The different sporting grounds hired by their communities for soccer matches were identified on the maps; Thura identified a sporting oval in Koondoola and Samir a sporting field in Yokine as the most frequented by their respective communities. Places for social gatherings were also identified as important, with the cost of hiring venues seen as a barrier to more community activities. In addition to sporting activities, church activities such as worship, bible study and youth groups were seen as important opportunities for the community members to connect and provide support to each other.

Samir and Thura also identified the schools in the local area. Most were public schools and both Samir and Thura expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with the quality of schooling. Thura was working very hard to put his children through a private school in the area, in order to ensure his children receive a higher quality education.

Mirrabooka Shopping Centre was identified as a major destination for refugee communities in the area. The public transport to the shopping centre was described as good with a bus station very close by.

Both Thura and Samir were invited to identify the areas in the wider Perth metropolitan areas where members from their communities have settled. Our informants reported that the South Sudanese and the Burmese Chin lived increasingly dispersed in other suburbs, outside the north-eastern suburbs, and sometimes very far from them (e.g. Mandurah which is 72 kilometres south of the Perth CBD). The suburbs identified where many communities members live are as follows:

- *Sudanese*: Mirrabooka, Alexander Heights, Koondoola, Ballajura, Dianella, Balga, Malaga, Yokine, Maylands, Hamersley, Banksia Grove, Newhaven.
- *Burmese Chin*: Mirrabooka, Girrawheen, Balga, Ballajura, Nollamara, Westminster, Beckenham, Kenwick, East Cannington, Morley, Osborne Park.

While the greater dispersion of refugee settlers is partly the matter of longer residence in Australia, in the migration literature residential concentration and dispersal are closely correlated with socio-economic background, which is in turn closely correlated with their English proficiency and income. In other words, settlers with good language skills, education and employment prospects are more likely to follow the job opportunities and housing market signals than to seek support from their ethnic communities (Morawska 2004; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2003; Colic-Peisker & Waxman 2005). People with better socio-economic outcomes are also more likely to form inter-ethnic community bonds and 'bridging social networks' crucial for employment success (Torezani et al. 2008; Korac 2005). It is important to note that based on the names of the suburbs provided, there is a tendency for refugees to live in suburbs in relatively close proximity to two of Perth's key settlement service providers located in the north-eastern suburb of Mirrabooka (Mirrabooka Migrant Resource Centre) and the south-eastern suburb of Cannington (Communicare).

### *6.3.2 'Virtual' walk with members of Afghan and Burmese communities (March 2013)*

The second transect walk took place at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre in Mirrabooka with Lala,[18] an Afghani woman residing in nearby Koondoola and Zeya,[19], a Burmese man presently living in Mirrabooka. Zeya is a member of the same Burmese Chin community as Thura, a participant in the first 'virtual walk'. As in the first Perth 'walk', the area

[18] Name is a pseudonym.

[19] Name is a pseudonym.

of interest was in Perth's north-eastern suburbs. Lala and Zeya described their respective communities as relatively dispersed throughout the Perth metropolitan area.

Lala is an Afghani woman who arrived in Perth in 2004 and is currently working for a settlement service provider in the area of family and youth support. In this role Lala runs information sessions for new arrivals about Australian culture and managing everyday life in Australia. Lala works quite a lot with Muslim women; she teaches swimming and helps Muslim women with everyday issues. Lala also works with non-Muslim arrivals. In her spare time, Lala volunteers supporting other groups and families.

Lala currently lives in Koondoola with her husband and their young child. They previously lived in Wembley Downs but decided to move as the rental apartment in Wembley Downs, though reasonably priced, was too small and the people in the neighbourhood were mainly older. Lala initially did not want to move to Koondoola because of its reputation as an unsafe suburb. However, Lala and her husband found a well-priced town house for rent with excellent security and she feels safe being at home alone with her child. In the four years that Lala has spent in Koondoola she has never had any unpleasant experiences, but she described the area as 'unsafe outside the house' and she 'wouldn't go out at night without her husband' because she has frequently heard stories of people being attacked. Her husband works as a taxi driver and knows the area, and he too believes Koondoola to be unsafe.

Zeya arrived in Perth in 1999 and has lived in a number of areas north of Perth. He has held several different jobs. He presently holds a key role with his church and has done so in the past. Zeya works part time as an HSS officer for a multicultural service provider and part time as a driving instructor. Since his arrival in Australia Zeya detailed how he had lived in a range of northern suburbs including Morley, Ellenbrook and Girrawheen. A year ago he purchased a house in Mirrabooka where he now lives. The reasons Zeya provided for settling in Mirrabooka were the lower cost of housing, the quietness of the area, and he also remarked that there was 'no stealing'.

The lower cost of housing in Mirrabooka was attributed by Lala to its distance both from the beach and the City and the fact that the houses in the suburb are older. If she were in the market for the house, she would prefer areas such as Alexander Heights, Darch or Ellenbrook where houses and parks are newer. She noted that rent is far cheaper in her suburb of Koondoola where she pays $295 a week for a three-bedroom house; a house of the same size in the nearby newer suburb of Alexander Heights would cost $400 per week. Another factor affecting affordability is the perceived safety of a suburb. Whereas Zeya felt comfortable living in Mirrabooka, Lala works in the area and, in contrast to Zeya, mentioned 'a lot of dodgy stuff' occurring in the area such as burglaries, assaults on people when walking in the area at night, and older people being victims of home invasions. Lala commented that children as young as eight to eleven years old were committing thefts in the area.

As with participants in the first Perth transect walk, both Zeya and Lala had experienced their neighbours to be less than friendly. All Lala's neighbours in Koondoola are 'Australian' and Lala has observed that in addition to not talking to her, they do not talk to each other. Lala also described being ignored by her neighbour in the shopping centre. While this neighbour saw Lala, she walked straight past without saying hello. Lala reflected that the neighbour would not have responded even if Lala had been the first to say hello first. Zeya mentioned that during his time in Australia he had lived next door to a neighbour for three to four years without getting to know them. These experiences contrasted with Lala and Zeya's cultural expectations because in their respective countries of origin people usually know their neighbours well. However, Lala did provide an example of an Australian woman who took her neighbour, a new arrival to the country, to the settlement service where Lala works so that she could receive assistance.

Lala and Zeya agreed that one of the reasons for less interaction by 'Australians' (they meant white English-speaking people) among themselves as well as with others is that Australian

culture is different [from their cultures of origin] and that Australians live fast paced, busy lives without much free time. The participants felt that the busy Australian way of life was in part due to the very high cost of living, especially in Perth, where family members have to work hard to meet the cost of living. Both Lala and Zeya have experienced these pressures themselves since their arrival. Lala also cited some additional reasons why Australians may be reluctant to speak to people of different ethnicities. She described Perth as very isolated and less multicultural than other [Australian] cities and noted that the media sometimes paints a negative image of refugees and immigrants, for example people from Afghanistan being labelled as terrorists or Taliban.

Afghans and Chin tend to move close to friends, family and churches so that they can live in a community and provide support to one another. The growth of Lala's and Zeya's respective communities over time was noted. Zeya revealed that he was one of the first of the Burmese Chin to arrive in Perth and his settlement was particularly difficult, as the Chin community was not yet established at the time. He was not able to access community support for assistance with speaking English and daily activities such as banking and accessing health care. Zeya described that there is now an established Chin community which provides a great deal of assistance to new arrivals. The community knows when there are newly arrived Burmese Chin in the area and settlement workers put the people in contact with the community. New arrivals without friends or relatives in Perth are introduced to the church community, including the pastor, who may provide assistance when required.

As mentioned earlier, Zeya belongs to the same church community as Thura, one of the local informants in the first Perth transect walk. Zeya confirmed that the church is a very important part of community life. On Sundays, the church runs Bible and prayer classes for children. A women's group meets every Saturday and the community has worship service on Sundays. The Chin also collect money to support family and church members, hospitals, missionaries and education back in Burma. The Chin community has been able to access free use of a classroom at Balga Senior High School for several hours on Saturdays, where they teach the Chin language and culture to their young people and run a youth program every second Saturday night.

The Afghani community is predominantly Muslim and there are two mosques in the north-eastern suburbs; one in Mirrabooka and the other in Beechboro. These are among a number of mosques in the Greater Perth area. Lala described how all Muslims, including Afghanis, use the mosques to worship and celebrate their holy days. Afghanis may also celebrate holy days in rented community halls or by gathering together in public parks.

Zeya and Lala noted that parking and noise complaints were common issues encountered by ethnic community gatherings. Usually the car parks of churches, mosques or halls are too small for the number of people attending an event. For large events both communities hire a hall though both Lala and Zeya agreed that hiring a community hall is very expensive. Zeya described how the Chin have borrowed money from the Baptist Union and are planning to build their own church; they have purchased the land and are awaiting planning approval.

Sport was identified as an important way for community members to connect with each other. Lala runs a swimming program that originally had five people attending and now has 40 people from different suburbs participating. The classes provide an opportunity for communication and connection between women and help combat social isolation. Lala described the program as open to women of all backgrounds who are experiencing social isolation, including Australians. Lala described the swimming classes as motivating women to get out of the house and be active and explained how the lessons bring together women from different backgrounds some of whom go on and socialise outside of classes.

Lala identified that there was no private pool in the Mirrabooka area and given the high numbers of Muslim women in the area, a private pool in the area would be of great benefit.

There is a public pool in Balga that is growing in popularity given the greater availability of high coverage swimwear designed specifically for Muslim women. However, Lala noted that there are still some women, including non-Muslim women, who are uncomfortable with using public pools and would prefer to use a private pool (i.e. where there are women only). At present, service providers must arrange transport for those living in the Mirrabooka area to use the private pools in Clarkson and Wembley as public transport to these areas is time consuming.

Zeya reported that the Chin community takes part in many sporting activities, often organised by the church community. Chin men use sporting grounds in Koondoola to play soccer, while Chin women use these grounds to play volleyball. Gym membership is expensive and Lala noted that the City of Stirling subsidises gym membership for CALD people living in the area.

Lala explained that many Afghan families gather in a Koondoola park near her house after work and on the weekend as they come together to share food and talk while their children play. Lala explained that the park is being used predominantly by new arrivals as many of them do not yet work and have more time. The local council and residents do not maintain the park very well, however. There is a lot of rubbish around and the grass is not well maintained. For that reason, Lala does not feel comfortable taking her child there.

Lala and Zeya agreed that public transport is quite good around the Mirrabooka area; buses are relatively inexpensive and run quite frequently, which is especially important for new arrivals who often do not have their own transport. However, travelling from Mirrabooka to outside areas was described as complicated and time consuming with many people, even when heading to other northern suburbs needing to travel to the Perth CBD first before heading on to their final destination. The Chin community has two buses that community members and groups can use to travel to community activities. Arranging their own transport was described as especially important for the Chin due to many Chin people living in Perth's southern suburbs.

Lala and Zeya agreed that there are sufficient kindergartens, child care centres and schools in and around Mirrabooka. There are public as well as private schools in the area, for example Muslim, Anglican and Catholic schools. Due to the expense of private schools, Zeya noted that the Burmese Chin children typically attend public schools. Zeya and his wife sometimes walk their son to school; they also have friends who sometimes collect him and take him to school.

As in the first Perth 'virtual walk', the Mirrabooka shopping centre was identified as the main shopping destination because 'everything is available in one place' and goods are affordably priced. Girrawheen shopping centre was also a destination for its inexpensive produce. Lala described how many Afghani women meet in the shopping centres for shopping and catching up over coffee or lunch.

The main insights about refugees, housing and social inclusion to be taken from Perth 'virtual transect walks' are:

- → Sporting events and church activities are important for bringing communities together. This was also a finding in a 2012 Perth study examining refugee resettlement (Fozdar 2012). Sporting grounds and parks are important landmarks for communities settling in Perth's north-eastern suburbs.
- → Home ownership was valued by participants; the primary disadvantages of renting identified during the 'walks' included the high cost of renting, short leases and the inconvenience and expense of frequent moves.
- → Ensuring that the young people receive a quality education and engagement in education and paid work were seen as very important issues that could possibly be supported through government-funded programs.

- Public transport within the Mirrabooka area was generally agreed to be sufficient but a lack of direct links to outside areas was identified as leading to time consuming and expensive travel.
- Most participants remarked on a low level of communication with neighbours and a general lack of friendliness.

## 6.4 Summary

The transect walks revealed important insights into refugees' experience of their suburbs and neighbourhoods and provided some additional insights into their housing experiences. According to the 2011 Census, the suburbs we explored fared poorly relative to the Greater Perth and Greater Melbourne areas on a number of socio-economic indicators.

A dislike of private renting was a theme in each city. Our local guides were concerned about short-term leases and the unresponsiveness of agents and landlords about necessary home repairs. The high and rising rents were also seen as a problem.

Our local transect walk participants from both cities commented on the tendency for refugee communities to socialise within their 'ethnic boundaries'. Perth participants mentioned 'mainstream' neighbours as being unfriendly more so than the Melbourne participants.

The visibility of refugee youth congregating in public places was a strong theme in both Melbourne transect walks. Our participants were concerned about refugee youth being targets of harassment by police and security personnel while this form of socialising was 'normal in their cultures'. Such concerns were not raised in the Perth 'walks', which may in part be due to the fact that an actual physical walk did not take place resulting in this topic not being prompted. Melbourne informants linked the public visibility of refugee youth to their higher underemployment and unemployment. Perth informants also expressed concerns about unemployment of young people as well as their engagement with education and the quality of local public schools.

The two female informants in the walks, Mya in Melbourne and Lala in Perth, expressed concerns about the general safety of their local areas. This echoes the greater concerns for safety expressed by women in the *Refugees Baseline Survey* results (see Chapter 4, Section 4.5.4) when compared with men. In Perth 'walks', sporting events and church activities were considered important in bringing the community together. There was a greater emphasis on church activities in the Perth 'walks', which is likely to be a result of three of the four Perth participants holding key positions in their respective church communities. There was also a greater emphasis on sporting activities bringing communities together. Innovative programs, such as the swimming program run by a local service provider were important in bringing together those at risk of experiencing social isolation, especially women outside the workforce. The transect walks, 'physical' and well as 'virtual' provided a welcome additional layer of insight into the local areas that have been favoured by refugee settlers within Melbourne and Perth metropolitan area over the recent years.

# 7 SUMMARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The present three-year research study aims to further our understanding of the housing, neighbourhood and social inclusion experiences of refugees settling in Australia. The existing literature highlights the fact that successful resettlement and integration of refugees into a host nation is dependent upon accessibility of appropriate, affordable and secure housing, and establishing a place to call 'home'.

Our study employed a mixed methods approach to gathering evidence on the housing and neighbourhood experience of refugees, which included a longitudinal survey, focus group discussions and transect walks. The baseline of the longitudinal survey *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* was completed with 85 refugee settlers participating in Perth and Melbourne. The survey was administered face-to-face by bilingual interviewers and collected quantitative as well as qualitative data. Narrative data were collected through focus group discussions with refugee settlement and housing service providers in both cities, and through transect walks in suburbs of refugee concentration in Perth and Melbourne. The latter method involved a form of mobile interview with locals from refugee backgrounds in order to gain insights into refugee experiences of their suburbs and neighbourhoods.

It is clear from the recent government-commissioned report *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals* (ASRG 2011) that private rental housing is the most common accommodation arrangement for recently arrived refugees. Results from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* support this finding, with 85 per cent of respondents residing in a private rental at the time of the survey. Only around 7 per cent of the sample had transitioned into home ownership. And, a relatively high proportion of refugees (around a fifth) were on public housing waiting lists suggesting that while the respondent group had achieved a 'beachhead' in permanent housing through the private rental market, a number were struggling with high rental costs.

Results from an 'accommodation calendar' in the survey instrument, revealed that over the previous year, most respondents had been able to maintain residence in a private rental dwelling. Results from the calendar also revealed that no respondent had experienced primary homelessness (i.e. no shelter at all) over the prior year; however, close to one in 10 had experienced secondary homelessness in the form of living with family or friends as they had nowhere else to live. This suggests that when the respondents to the survey found themselves in extreme housing difficulty they were able to get support from members of their own community who assisted them.

Experiences of primary homelessness among refugees, while not evident in the sample of respondents to the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* results, were discussed at length in focus group discussions. Examples of primary homelessness cited included refugees living in tents and cars. Melbourne discussions raised the issue of tertiary homelessness where participants reported refugees residing in rooming houses. Implicit in the ordering of the categories of homelessness; primary, then secondary, then tertiary, is the seriousness of the homelessness experience, with the most precarious of all living situations, sleeping rough, being classified as primary homelessness. Secondary homelessness, in the form of staying with friends or family due to having nowhere else to live, appears, from the focus group discussions, to be experienced quite widely in the refugee communities. However, sharing a home with people from your own ethnic background, with shared cultural norms and understandings, may in fact be far less distressing than staying in rooming and boarding houses where there is a general lack of privacy and sharing of communal areas such as kitchens and bathrooms with others where a language and cultural barrier is likely to exist.

In the focus groups with representatives from settlement service providers, housing and homelessness services and policy-makers, it was reported that newly arrived humanitarian

entrants would be unlikely to experience severe housing problems in the first six months when they are receiving intensive support through the HSS. Finding housing for refugees in HSS programs and resolving housing issues by SGP workers and workers from other services requires considerable advocacy work to be carried out on the part of settlement workers. In the second report of the series, we will be focusing on the housing careers of refugees prior to and from the point of entry into Australia as well as experiences of homelessness.

Results from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* also indicate that the majority of refugees were not currently employed (65%) and were in receipt of income support payments. At the same time, 35 per cent of respondents were employed in either part-time or full-time jobs, and for some, wage income was the main source of income enabling a transition into home ownership. Those who were not working were often engaged in education or training options.

Findings from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* on housing, employment, income and education and training outcomes suggest that refugees, who have been in Australia for more than a year but generally less than six years, are gaining a foothold in terms of housing and in terms of economic outcomes, but have not yet been able to make the final transition to their goal of home ownership. They have been very successful in sustaining tenancies in the private rental market and are generally satisfied with the dwellings they reside in. They are engaged in education and training activities and in work, but the majority have yet to make the transition to full-time employment in the main and home ownership. And it is the lack of adequate income from employment that is creating pressures both in terms of keeping up with rental costs (and so creating the incentive for a very high number to go onto public housing waiting lists) and affording to make the jump into home ownership. From a policy perspective, it is clear that settlement programs have been effective in the main in ensuring refugees access long-term accommodation. However, beyond this, the problem is not primarily a housing one but an employment and income one. A transition into full-time employment by at least one member of family households is necessary in a relatively short period to avoid current housing stresses and possibly even more dramatic housing problems and so enable a movement into home ownership.

In response to neighbourhood and social inclusion questions in the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, most respondents reported that they had been made to feel welcome in Australia, invited friends to their house for meals/gatherings and identified themselves as having strong links to their ethnic communities. These results may suggest again that support services have assisted in the immediate period of transition in Australia. However, given not all refugees access formal supports in their early settlement period, these results may also indicate an ‘over reliance’ or at least a strong dependence on their community to provide the extra support they need to settle in their new country as well as to provide the kinds of support that they may normally expect to receive from the mainstream society in their country of origin. The lower degree to which refugees had developed social networks within their local community and the extent to which they felt part of mainstream Australian social and cultural life may reflect either of these points and is an area for policy reflection in terms of post-settlement support services.

Results from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* were stratified according to a range of dimensions including location and region of origin. Some general themes that emerged from this analysis included a greater satisfaction with the quality of housing for Perth respondents when compared with respondents from Melbourne. More positive housing experiences were reported among respondents of South East Asian origin when compared with respondents from Middle Eastern or African origin. Overall, neighbourhood experiences among Melbourne respondents were more positive than for those residing in Perth.

Focus groups discussions revealed that service providers deliver assistance on a range of housing issues that are primarily related to securing private rental housing for refugee settlers.

The focus group data also suggested that the provision of settlement services is incredibly time intensive. An understanding of the needs of clients from particular groups is required to tailor information and orientation programs. The ability of newly arrived refugees to retain important information that may be critical to maintaining a private tenancy was described as far from optimal and it is clear that access to timely, ongoing support is required. Nevertheless, from a policy perspective, the results from the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* suggest that service provider assistance has been fundamentally successful in ensuring that refugees in the main access and sustain private rental tenancies in their first few years in Australia.

A key finding from the focus groups and the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey* is that a vital form of informal support accessed by refugees is provided through their own communities. Focus group discussions revealed that services attempt to house new arrivals close to their compatriots. Without housing support from ethnic communities, the incidence of primary, tertiary and certain forms of secondary homelessness (e.g. residing in a homeless service) would likely be much higher.

Focus group discussions in both Perth and Melbourne made apparent the significant energy and hard work on the part of settlement workers that goes into finding refugees accommodation and assisting with other housing and settlement issues that arise. The competitive and costly private rental market and the lack of appropriate alternative accommodation means finding accommodation is hard for newly arrived refugees, many of whom have low incomes, limited knowledge of the Australian housing system, poor English skills and come up against a host of other barriers to accessing private rental markets. It was clear from the focus group discussions that members were finding it a challenge to meet the needs of their clients, with a call for more staff to help provide housing support services in the absence of affordable housing stock. Service providers often encounter refugees who are in great need of assistance and who may have reached a crisis stage with their housing or other aspects of settlement and seek to work to help prevent the emergence and the escalation of crisis situations. Settlement services and other community services have been largely very successful in meeting these challenges.

The study's transect walks were primarily concerned with gaining insights into refugees' experience of neighbourhood by traversing suburbs with high concentrations of refugee residents with local informants. The transect walks were 'actual' in Melbourne and 'virtual', with the aid of maps, in Perth. These informants, themselves members of refugee communities, discussed with a researcher the lived experiences of themselves and/or their community in the local area. Melbourne informants noted that the visibility of refugee youth congregating in public places, though normal behaviour for them, can lead to targeting by police and security. Both Melbourne and Perth informants expressed concerns related to youth education and employment. The poor quality of schooling in some suburbs was an issue raised in Perth discussions.

In the face of difficulties interacting with mainstream society, ethnic communities assume greater importance for refugees' social connectivity, though participants in the Melbourne transect walks mentioned interacting with mainstream society through their workplaces and observed that their children, through school, 'mix better'.

Those with more complex needs require additional support. The arrivals of 'new' refugee groups (e.g. the anticipated new arrivals from Syria) will not have the same benefit of established communities to help provide them with assistance. This assistance may be in the form of community members taking on the role of settlement workers (as described by 'Thura' in Chapter 6 where he helps those from his community complete rental application forms, etc.) or a place to stay when they have nowhere else to go.

As the focus group discussions were conducted in September and November 2012, the full effects of the recent 40 per cent increase in refugee numbers are unlikely to have been felt by services at this time. Whether they have been able to manage to house the increased numbers of refugees warrants further investigation.. The likelihood that many may be from 'new' groups and therefore not have established communities to support them means that it is imperative that the government sufficiently fund settlement services to be able to provide initial support through the HSS and ongoing support through the SGP.

The next stage of the project introduces a new element in the study and involves the completion of interviews with a small sample of refugees who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The interviews will investigate their experiences of accessing housing, homelessness and precarious housing circumstances, together with their experiences of service responses.

The next round of the *Refugees, Housing and Social Inclusion Survey*, has been completed and results, together with the final round of survey results (the study involves implementation of three waves of the survey over a two-year period) will be discussed in the next report. One focus of that report will be on the housing careers of refugees from just prior to their entry into Australia and their first years in Australia. We will also be interested in whether further progress has been made in terms of transition to full-time employment and the move into home ownership.

The next report will also include findings from a range of other project activities due to take place in 2014 and early 2015. Cross-sectional surveys with those humanitarian entrants who have experienced homelessness are scheduled to take place later in 2014 as are additional transect walks and final focus group discussions in Perth and Melbourne. Roundtable discussions with appropriate government officials from the housing, community and migrant/refugee areas will also take place in 2014. In all, data collection is expected to be completed and analysed in the first half of 2015.

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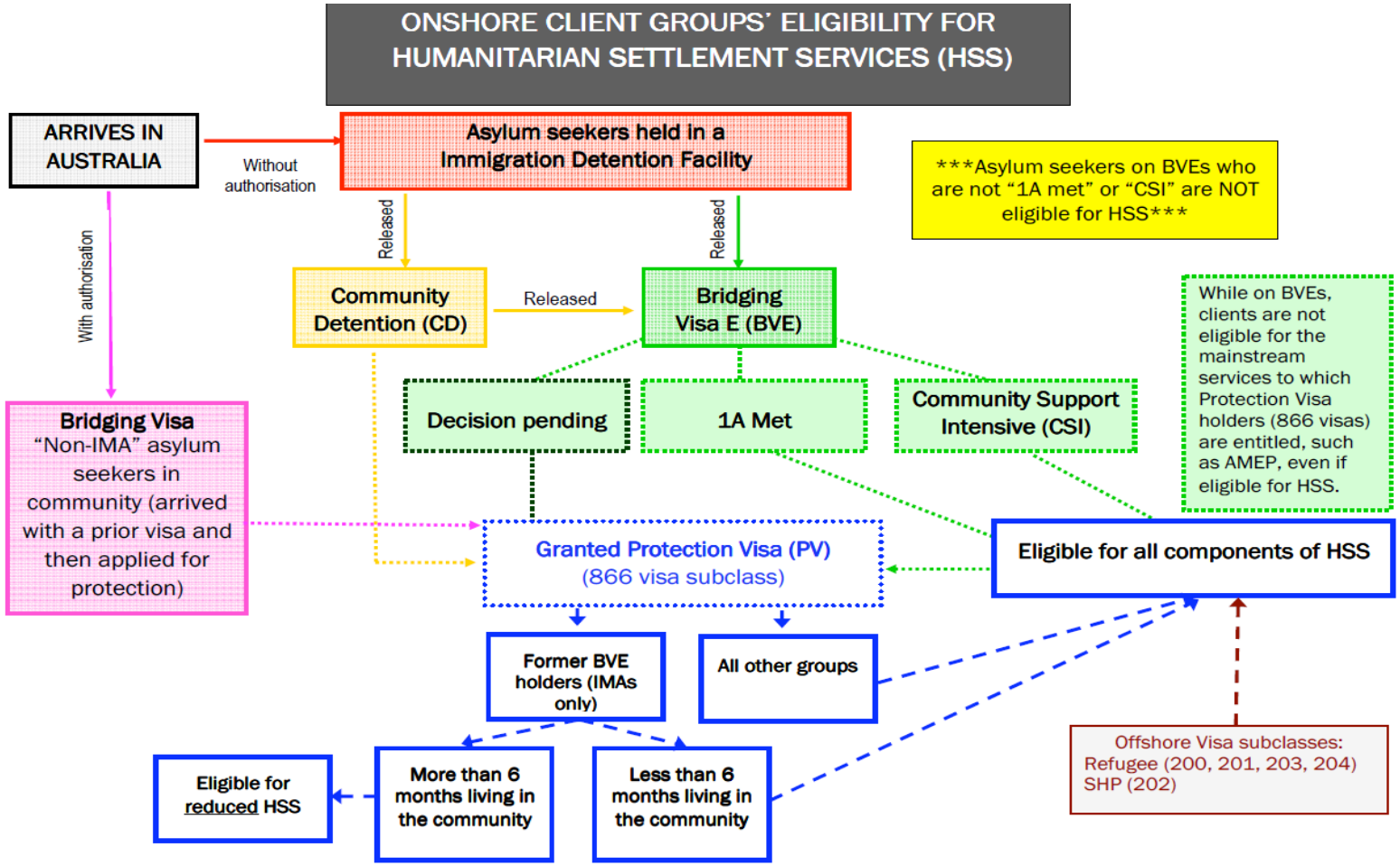
# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: SEIFA ranking of suburbs of residence of survey participants based on ABS 2006 Census results

| | | | Ranking within Australia | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Suburb | Score | Rank | Decile | Percentile |
| 1 | Balga | 866 | 564 | 1 | 7 |
| 2 | St Albans | 874 | 654 | 1 | 8 |
| 3 | Koondoola | 875 | 669 | 1 | 9 |
| 4 | Girrawheen | 884 | 829 | 2 | 11 |
| 5 | Dandenong | 888 | 924 | 2 | 12 |
| 6 | Sunshine North | 889 | 929 | 2 | 12 |
| 7 | Mirrabooka | 896 | 1122 | 2 | 14 |
| 8 | Deer Park | 903 | 1312 | 2 | 16 |
| 9 | Westminster | 900 | 1249 | 2 | 16 |
| 10 | Albion | 906 | 1435 | 2 | 18 |
| 11 | Melton | 908 | 1464 | 2 | 18 |
| 12 | Altona North | 913 | 1628 | 2 | 20 |
| 13 | Sunshine | 917 | 1775 | 3 | 22 |
| 14 | Maidstone | 926 | 2095 | 3 | 26 |
| 15 | Reservoir | 929 | 2212 | 3 | 27 |
| 16 | Nollamara | 943 | 2725 | 4 | 33 |
| 17 | Dandenong North | 945 | 2809 | 4 | 34 |
| 18 | Embleton | 955 | 3227 | 4 | 40 |
| 19 | Footscray | 957 | 3312 | 5 | 41 |
| 20 | Marangaroo | 958 | 3382 | 5 | 41 |
| 21 | Kilsyth | 977 | 4228 | 6 | 52 |
| 22 | Avondale Heights | 986 | 4609 | 6 | 56 |
| 23 | Morley | 988 | 4685 | 6 | 57 |
| 24 | Tuart Hill | 994 | 4928 | 6 | 60 |
| 25 | Mill Park | 1002 | 5222 | 7 | 64 |
| 26 | Seabrook | 1014 | 5630 | 7 | 69 |
| 27 | Mooroolbark | 1019 | 5815 | 8 | 71 |
| 28 | Dianella | 1038 | 6352 | 8 | 77 |
| 29 | Narre Warren South | 1040 | 6416 | 8 | 78 |
| 30 | Yarraville | 1042 | 6455 | 8 | 79 |
| 31 | Caroline Springs | 1050 | 6630 | 9 | 81 |
| 32 | Noranda | 1051 | 6644 | 9 | 81 |
| 33 | Mitcham | 1054 | 6738 | 9 | 82 |
| 34 | Ashburton | 1090 | 7418 | 9 | 90 |

## Appendix 2: Onshore client groups' eligibility for humanitarian settlement services (HSS)




Note: This figure has been reproduced from the National Settlement Policy Network Teleconference Report 2012, *Asylum seekers in the community: Policy and practice implications for settlement services* (NSPN 2012).[20]

[20] Following the change of government, in September 2013, most holders of 866 Permanent Protection Visas became ineligible for HSS support and 1A-met BVE holders became ineligible for HSS referral.

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