Australian Mosaic

The magazine of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA)

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Welcome to the Summer edition of *Australian Mosaic* magazine, with the theme and title of *Breaking Barriers: A strength based approach for a just society*. This edition offers a rich and broad discussion of what is a highly relevant and far-reaching theme. There are various barriers—yet also avenues—to achieving a socially cohesive and just society for our culturally diverse population. In this edition, through the considered writings of over 15 contributors, we explore this theme from a myriad of angles, from government sector, academic and community perspectives.

From Mr Paul Botrill, of the House of Welcome, Ms Nadine Liddy, of the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, Professor Fethi Mansouri of Deakin University and Mr Michael Easson, Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration, we hear about how particular groups of CALD Australians—community-based asylum seekers, young people and skilled migrants—can face barriers to the most basic of necessities and opportunities, like housing and employment and education. And Ms Tricia Flanagan of the Department of Human Services outlines the significant action the Department is taking to ensure that its services, which are fundamental for Australians, are accessible to and appropriate for its CALD clients.

We also know that particular groups face particular barriers. We hear from Mr Christian Astourian about the barriers facing CALD Australians with disability and, together with Dr Jeff Harmer AO, Chair of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Advisory Group, we hear about how the National Disability Insurance Scheme will work to overcome some of those barriers. We also hear from FECCA’s own Mr Bruce Shaw and Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon. Mark Butler MP, about the barriers facing CALD older people and the aim of the upcoming CALD Aged Care Strategy to ensure an equitable and culturally relevant path into ageing for this group.

The edition also explores mechanisms through which to create avenues for participation. We hear from Mr Patrick Skene of Red Elephant Projects as well as Mr John Wylie, Chair of the Australian Sports Commission, about initiatives to increase CALD participation in sports and the power of sport to assist CALD Australians to settle and gain a sense of belonging in Australia. And we hear from Ms Maryam Rashidi about the role of art and art collaboration projects in closing divides and as an avenue for expression.

Ms Yvonne Yoke Yin Chan and Mr James Wight’s thought-provoking articles explore cross-cultural understanding and the notion of having culturally competent service providers, respectively, areas which are important elements of the conversation about breaking down cultural barriers in Australian society.

Racism is unfortunately an enduring inhibitor of social cohesion. Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Helen Szoke, offers a discussion of the way in which racism can work as a structural and systemic barrier against full and equal participation. The media has the power to feed both positive and negative currents running through society and can thus work to build up or break down barriers. Ms Julie Posetti offers a case-study of how, through media, attitudes can change and understanding can be built. And Dr Georgie McLean of SBS offers an insightful look at the way in which media has the power to create either a distorted image of society or truly reflect it, and how the SBS works to create inclusion and participation for CALD Australians.

FECCA sees huge value in opening up dialogue and identifying ways to address issues through thorough and wide-ranging discussion. We hope this edition does just that. We hope that by exploring the barriers impacting on the ability for CALD Australians to access, in an equitable way, and experience, in a culturally relevant way, all elements of our society, we have provided a multi-layered yet fuller picture. And that, from here, we can overcome more and more barriers.
From the CEO’s Desk
Dr Loucas Nicoloau

I am pleased to introduce this issue of FECCA’s Australian Mosaic, Breaking Barriers: A strength based approach for a just society. This issue includes a broad range of perspectives on the barriers facing CALD Australians—from racism to media—and the sectors where these barriers can be strongly felt, like housing, education and employment.

It is with deep concern that I note that the issues facing FECCA’s constituency today are as broad and all-encompassing as they were more than 30 years ago when I was first involved with FECCA. At that time, I had hoped that employment services and housing, as discussed in the following pages, for example, would soon become equally accessible by people from all backgrounds.

It is clear from the articles in this magazine that there is still great need for an organisation such as FECCA to listen to and advocate on behalf of CALD Australians. The greatest strength of FECCA is our grass-roots links through our Multicultural Communities’ Councils/Ethnic Communities’ Council and Regional Council network. I have recently returned from leading aged care consultations around Australia, which FECCA Senior Policy Officer, Bruce Shaw, has described in more detail in this issue of Australian Mosaic. It was clear from listening to the organisations and consumers that people have some great ideas for how CALD people’s needs could be met in the Government’s upcoming Aged Care Strategy. We have forwarded these ideas to the Australian Government, via the Department of Health and Ageing, and look forward to the release of a strategy that incorporates robust measures to address the needs of CALD older people.

FECCA is also undertaking other projects that seek to identify ways to break down barriers for CALD people, for example, in the workplace and in accessing government services. FECCA’s Harmony in the Workplace project seeks to identify ways in which organisations talk about and use cultural diversity to the advantage of individuals as well as their organisations. It is encouraging to have the support of the Department of Immigration & Citizenship, the Diversity Council of Australia and the expertise of Professor Santina Bertone to advise us as this project continues into the new year.

Similarly, our Cultural Competency project will describe the cultural competency training and related activities that Government agencies are undertaking. You will find an interesting perspective on cultural competency later in this magazine. I would also like to draw your attention to the Access and Equity consultations that FECCA is facilitating at different parts of the country. By the time this issue goes to print we will be near to completing our consultations in Auburn and Cooma. We will also be visiting Perth and Geelong to obtain consumer views on the provision of wide-ranging Government services and are hoping for wide participation in these consultations.

I thank this edition’s authors for their contribution to Australian Mosaic, and I thank and congratulate all who work to break down barriers hindering CALD people’s full participation in Australian society. This edition provides some examples of NGOs doing excellent work in this area, for example in the housing and sporting fields, which I find greatly encouraging. I recommend all of the following articles to you, and encourage you to share them with your friends and family. ■
Barriers to Access and Engagement for Community-Based Asylum Seekers

Mr Paul Bottrill

Paul Bottrill is the Executive Officer at the House of Welcome, a local non-government organisation providing housing, financial assistance and other supports to community-based asylum seekers and refugees in Sydney. Paul has lived and worked throughout Asia and Africa for the past 23 years. As well as developing and overseeing programs serving at-risk youth, sex workers, people living with HIV/AIDS and various ethnic minority groups, he has pastored churches in Hong Kong and Australia for both English and Chinese speaking congregations. A native of South Australia, Paul has recently returned to Sydney from Hong Kong where he managed Christian Action’s Service Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Immigrants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face many challenges in becoming active participants in the social, political and economic life of Australia. Often the first and most formidable challenge is that of language, but among other things they also face adjusting to a new culture, climate and education system, and new legal frameworks. Australia has many supports in place for those fortunate enough to arrive on its shores through regular immigration channels, but what for those who arrive desperately in need of the benefit of our humanitarian values? Unfortunately, there are significant structural barriers to societal inclusion facing an oft forgotten group of arrivals to our shores—community-based asylum seekers.

Our media is awash with news, discussion and debate regarding asylum seekers and how we as a country should respond to their desire to seek protection within our borders. Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMAs), or ‘boat people’ as we hear them referred to, take up most of the column inches and airtime in the media, but the majority of asylum seekers in Australia arrive by plane (55 per cent). This group, referred to as community-based asylum seekers, receive almost none of the supports available to IMAs. Some would say that community-based asylum seekers have a distinct advantage over IMAs in that they are not mandatorily detained and they have the right to work. While we must never underestimate the significant detrimental impacts of being detained in one of Australia’s many detention centres, we must not, at the same time, naively overstate the benefits of living in the community with work rights. As an example, significant numbers of community-based asylum seekers will at some time experience homelessness and destitution and a vast majority never find employment, subsequently becoming completely dependent upon independently funded non-government organisations (NGOs) with limited resources. This experience, while not comparable to indefinite detention, has significant impacts on the mental health and well-being of community-based asylum seekers.

The House of Welcome provides essential services such as housing, financial assistance and community support to community-based asylum seekers living in Sydney. We see myriad structural barriers preventing access and engagement for community-based asylum seekers in the Australian community, but here our focus will be on two key areas:

1. access to sustainable income; and
2. access to affordable housing.
Access to Income

We look at this area first because a person’s ability to access income will impact upon every area of their lives. Significant structural barriers exist that prevent asylum seekers from accessing the income necessary to support themselves and their loved ones.

Firstly, asylum seekers are ineligible to access Centrelink unemployment benefits, the financial safety net that exists for all other Australian residents. A portion of asylum seekers will be eligible for the Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme (ASAS) administered by the Red Cross, a full payment of which is equivalent to about 89 per cent of the Centrelink unemployment benefit. Not all are eligible for this payment and it is removed upon rejection of a person’s first appeal. If someone is ineligible for ASAS their alternative options are to find gainful employment or to apply to one of the small, independently funded NGOs in the community that administer financial assistance programs. These programs are of course limited by the size and resources of the organisations and are generally only available to someone for a set period of time, between three to six months, depending on the organisation.

The Government’s answer to the financial plight of community-based asylum seekers is to give them the right to work. While on the surface this seems both a noble and generous provision, in reality it is simply a way for the Government to shift the burden to someone else. Of even greater concern are the barriers the Government then places in front of asylum seekers to prevent them from entering the workforce.

Secondly, while many asylum seekers are educated and hold professional qualifications these qualifications, for the most part, are not recognised in Australia. Universities and TAFE colleges offer bridging courses that could bring these qualifications up to Australian standards but asylum seekers cannot access any of the subsidies for studies available to permanent residents. Very few, if any, are able to pay full tuition and are thus further prevented from entering the work force. Doctors, lawyers, architects and engineers, people able to make significant contributions to our society, remain unemployed or underemployed due to unnecessary inequity.

Thirdly, there are inherent weaknesses in bridging visa policy. Upon submission of an application for protection, asylum seekers are issued with a bridging visa with work rights that, in theory, is valid for the duration of their refugee application process. The reality, though, is that these work rights can be removed at any time. Many employers are aware of this and are understandably hesitant to take on the expense of recruiting, hiring and training someone who could at any time either lose their right to work or be removed from the country.

The House of Welcome receives no Australian Government funding and is thus reliant upon the generous donations of the public, trusts and foundations, religious orders and the corporate sector. As such, we have clear limitations on the financial assistance we can provide. We provide a small living allowance, up to $90 per week for an individual, to a limited number of our clients. In most cases this is inadequate to cover housing, food, clothing, transport and other necessities, so many will live rough, couch surf, or seek further assistance from other agencies or individuals. The House of Welcome also offers a limited amount of no-interest empowerment loans for the purposes of vocational training courses, study, licenses, and rental bond for those able to transition to private housing. Our focus is on empowering the individual to be self-sufficient. Besides enabling us to keep our expenditure under control, more importantly it enables the asylum seeker to regain a sense of control, self-determination and dignity.

Access to Housing

Affordable housing has been a politically and socially significant issue in Sydney for a while, cutting across multiple socio-economic groups. Every few weeks another taskforce is launched, a workshop is advertised, or a politician preaches the need for concerted action. What is sadly missing
in all these forums, though, is the willingness to address the issue of access to housing for asylum seekers who have been systematically excluded from all mainstream-housing services.

As noted above, most asylum seekers have limited access to stable income, and what little they get is insufficient to cover market rent in most suburbs in the Sydney metropolitan area. As with access to income, government has also created significant roadblocks to affordable housing. Earlier this year Housing NSW changed its policies on Emergency Temporary Housing and Temporary Housing. Asylum seekers can no longer access either of these services, without exception, removing one vital option in the fight against homelessness for this group. There have also been changes made to the RentStart allowance. Firstly, it has been changed from a grant to a loan, and secondly, asylum seekers are not eligible for the program until granted a protection visa.

These two factors alone represent significant challenges for asylum seekers hoping to find shelter for themselves or for their families. The Federal Government, through its policies, has created an environment in which an already marginalised group is marginalised further and essentially blocked from obtaining what most will acknowledge as one of humanity’s most basic needs, that of safe, secure shelter.

The House of Welcome is the largest provider of temporary and transitional housing in NSW. We currently manage 19 properties across the Sydney metropolitan area with the capacity to house between 70 to 80 people, both individuals and families. On average, people will stay in our housing for about 10 months either rent free, or paying a small amount calculated according to their income. We see housing as being one of our most essential services, providing not only shelter, but a sense of safety and stability for people experiencing extreme instability and fear of the unknown. Furthermore, our housing program offers the opportunity for a stable first home, providing time for and support in acquiring assets such as rental history and knowledge of how to navigate the housing system and its laws.

For the first nine months of 2012, 58 per cent of the referrals received at the House of Welcome were for housing, with 30 per cent of those referred being homeless or at risk of homelessness.

If we are to hold ourselves up as a just and equitable society we must remove these and other barriers that prevent community-based asylum seekers from being active participants in our society. Addressing the issues of sustainable income and affordable housing by ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities at a policy level is not only socially just, but is also necessary to achieve better societal engagement outcomes for one of Australia’s most vulnerable populations.

We see housing as being one of our most essential services, providing not only shelter, but a sense of safety and stability for people experiencing extreme instability and fear of the unknown.
Multicultural Young People in Australia: Exploring structural barriers to education and employment

Ms Nadine Liddy

Nadine Liddy is the National Coordinator of the MYAN—the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia), having worked in the youth and multicultural sectors for over 20 years. She has worked as a caseworker with refugee and newly-arrived young people in the areas of torture and trauma, education and training, and the housing and homelessness sectors. She has also worked extensively in policy and sector development.

Young people from multicultural backgrounds demonstrate high levels of strength, resilience, resourcefulness and understanding. However, this group of young people face particular barriers to accessing services and opportunities in Australia. These barriers include language, culture, unfamiliarity with Australian systems, navigating the developmental tasks of adolescence alongside the challenges of settlement, and structural factors, such as service delivery frameworks, guidelines and funding models, lack of cultural competency or commitment to access and equity policies at an organisational level, and often underlying racism and discrimination. These factors can place this group of young people at social and economic disadvantage within Australian society, which in turn can place them at higher risk of social isolation and disengagement. This article will explore some of the structural barriers that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people, particularly those from newly arrived backgrounds, face in the areas of education, employment and housing.

Education
Access to appropriate education is commonly noted by young people and service providers as the most significant issue for newly arrived young people and those from refugee backgrounds. Young people are often required to learn a new language in an unfamiliar educational or learning environment, and for many young people from refugee backgrounds, this is compounded by limited, interrupted or no formal schooling prior to their arrival in Australia. Some of the structural barriers that young people and their families face in accessing and remaining engaged in education and/or training include:

- Limited and varying resources for intensive English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as an Additional Language (EAL) support across Australia, particularly for young people from refugee backgrounds with significantly disrupted education

There is currently no national framework to oversee or guide funding allocations for ESL or EAL support across Australia. Under the new National Education Agreement, states and territories have the sole responsibility for determining and directing education funding, including ESL resources. The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia) (MYAN)
understands that there is no requirement or funding imperative to report on how funds are allocated to support ESL/EAL students (or students of the English as a Second Language – New Arrivals (ESL-NA) program) and ensure that the objectives and outcomes of the National Education Agreement are achieved.

In the absence of a national framework, this system results in (i) significant disparities between states/territories in the level and nature of funding for these programs, (ii) inadequate allocation of funding for specialised ESL/EAL support for newly arrived young people, and (iii) inadequate recognition of the needs of particular groups, e.g. young people with highly disrupted or no formal education prior to settlement in Australia.

The MYAN Australia supports the need for nationally consistent definitions, measurements and cost structures in order to factor in the particular cost of students with ESL/EAL needs, especially those from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds. Such definitions, measurements and structures are critical to address current barriers to educational achievement and, support improved educational outcomes for this group of young people.

- Lack of targeted support for the transition from intensive English Language Schools/Centres into mainstream schools secondary schools and/or into training

Educational outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are greatly enhanced by programs that provide support to ESL/EAL students in their transition from intensive English language settings into mainstream education. These programs are currently delivered in an ad hoc manner but are often of great value in supporting refugee and migrant young people in remaining engaged in school and achieving effective outcomes.

- Lack of flexibility and resources in schools (both intensive English-language and mainstream secondary schools) to cope with and respond to the literacy levels and needs of young people from CALD backgrounds, including the disjuncture in the education system between a young person’s age, English language proficiency and school year levels

This barrier is similarly affected by the fact that there is currently no national framework to oversee or guide funding allocations for ESL or EAL support across Australia and the type of system this results in, as described above.

It is vital that newly arrived young people have access to appropriately targeted and consistent educational and vocational support throughout settlement. Without adequate intensive English language support, refugee and newly arrived young people will leave the formal education system with insufficient literacy and language skills to participate productively in the workforce or pursue further education and/or training.

**Housing**

Young people from CALD backgrounds experience barriers that prevent their equitable access to adequate housing and housing support.

These include:

- Lack of social capital, including unfamiliarity with Australian housing and homelessness systems—both conceptually and practically. Most young people who are newly arrived in Australia have no substantive knowledge of our complex housing system or the broader service system (for example, advocating for housing needs, leases and tenancy rights) as there is often no equivalent in their countries of origin. This often results in an inability to navigate the housing and homelessness service system.

- Limited resources and lack of cultural competency (for example, in assessment and support provision) of workers and organisations within the mainstream housing sector—for example, in identifying risk factors for this group of young people, assessing them as homeless and providing culturally appropriate support to negotiate the housing and homelessness system.

- Implications of current homelessness policy and practice frameworks (that shape funding guidelines and service delivery models) for refugee and newly arrived young people. This includes limitations of the term ‘homelessness’ for accurate data collection, assessment and early intervention support programs. By definition, young people from humanitarian backgrounds have been ‘homeless’ for many years prior to arrival in Australia and as such often do not fit common definitions of early intervention.
• Discrimination related to age, culture or ethnicity in the private rental market, as well as lack of a rental history and/or employment status.

**Employment**

Similar issues also exist for young people accessing and remaining engaged in employment, including: limited social capital in terms of networks for career advice and employment opportunities, lack of familiarity with employment services and Australian systems in relation to searching for and securing paid employment (for example, job applications, interviews, developing a resume), limited knowledge of Australian workplace culture and expectations and, sometimes related, experiences of racism and discrimination in looking for work and in interview and selection processes. The MYAN Australia welcomes the possibilities under the Compact with Young Australians (including the “earn or learn” framework) for young people to achieve higher qualifications. However, we are concerned that this framework does not take into account the particular needs of young people from newly arrived backgrounds regarding education and training and the subsequent need for more flexible and responsive service delivery models in mainstream programs.

In an effort to address these barriers, the MYAN Australia supported the recent *Brisbane Youth Employment Forum* convened through a successful partnership between refugee services, the Multicultural Development Association (MDA) and the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, and their youth leadership group, Youth Voice, as well as the South East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce and Local Member of Parliament, Ian Kaye. This forum was the second of its type this year and brought together more than 75 young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and 11 Employers to highlight the strengths and challenges faced by CALD young people in finding employment and discuss ways in which young people can demonstrate their skills and attributes in a competitive work environment. This was a youth-led initiative that builds on the enthusiasm and interest of young leaders working with other young people to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence to find work. Immediately following the event, young people have followed up with employers and sought assistance with job preparation from MDA or their school teachers. Plans for the next Forum in regional Queensland are underway.

The MYAN Australia believes that a targeted response at both the policy and service delivery levels is essential to address structural barriers and support young people’s sustained participation and engagement in Australian society. We welcome the Australian Human Rights Commission’s recently launched National Anti-Racism Strategy and hope that this goes some way in addressing racism and discrimination that often underlies structural barriers.

A targeted response at the service delivery level must include improved cultural competency and the implementation of access and equity policies at an organisational level. It should also include recognition of the particular circumstances, needs and barriers facing multicultural young people, and a willingness to adapt service delivery models to ensure young people access the support they need. Additionally, fundamental to any policy and program response, is recognition that young people have unique experiences and knowledge and should be supported to articulate the issues impacting on their lives and identify appropriate solutions.

For a full list of references, please contact Nadine Liddy at nliddy@emy.net.au.
Structural Barriers Facing CALD Youth in the Education Field

Professor Fethi Mansouri

The lives of young people are representative of wider social, cultural and economic experiences of all societies, which are increasingly affected by the processes of globalisation including technological advances and economic developments, as well as natural disasters and conflicts. Young people at present face more complex circumstances than ever before as they encounter socio-cultural and economic challenges as well as health and security risks. The current socio-political climate, which is characterised as being high risk and unpredictable, requires individuals to have the capacity to both make the right choices and be resilient in the context of rapid change at local and global levels. At the same time, there are new opportunities available to all citizens, as a result of technological and educational advances and global transformations. This is especially the case for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people who have the potential to be agents for social change. Yet, they remain highly vulnerable individuals whose life chances can be shaped by education, as well as broader societal structures.

This brief paper focuses on structural barriers that impact upon the processes of providing inclusive education programs, as well as on wider societal policies that have the potential to engender social marginalisation and cultural alienation among CALD youth.

Pedagogical approaches as key factors in CALD youth education achievements

The 2011 ABS census data shows that Australian society is increasingly diverse with more of its citizens born overseas, and in a greater variety of countries, than was the case even two decades ago. Indeed over a quarter of the population was born overseas and for well over forty per cent of Australians at least one of their parents was not born in Australia. This multicultural nature of Australian society is reflected in our schools, as students’ diverse cultural backgrounds and unique learning styles are demanding a fresh approach to school management, curriculum design and teaching practice.

Sadly, current pedagogical approaches still lack the basic ingredients for achieving genuine inclusion and representation, in particular for CALD youth. There is still an urgent need for flexibility in the conceptualisation, practice and management of cultural diversity in education underpinned by the following core objectives and framed by the transformative concept of ‘multicultural education’.
Indeed, multicultural education allows students to explore the meaning of culture and how culture operates, share their cultures with each other, and explore that which is common across cultures. Thus it promotes an ‘awareness and appreciation’ of the students’ own cultures as well as the cultures of others. Such multicultural education will also help to promote an understanding of, and a sense of belonging to, the various types and levels of communities in which CALD youth live including at the local, national and global level.

This understanding brings with it a greater awareness and opens up the possibilities of engaging with other communities through meaningful cross-cultural communication. As such, multicultural education values the experiences and backgrounds of all students, staff and families, and draws upon these in a positive manner as a learning resource. This also deepens a sense of belonging and social cohesion. Further, multicultural education affirms the right of all students to access effective learning strategies and resources, as well as broader social resources, and promotes the ability of all students to contribute both to the school community and to society. In doing so, it provides an educational framework that is relevant and responsive to all students bearing in mind their varied experiences, backgrounds and sense of identity. And finally, multicultural education uses cultural diversity as a positive learning resource to develop in all students the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to participate actively as a member of society locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

Therefore, and unless such pedagogical and institutional approaches are proactively adopted, education will hinder rather than facilitate the inclusion and upward social mobility of CALD youth. But education experiences can also be impacted upon significantly by wider socio-economic processes, in particular the socio-economic status of youth.

**Socio-economic conditions as key barriers to CALD youth social inclusion**

Education involves a range of factors beyond the content of a school curriculum. In addition to curriculum learning, assessment, and feedback, education can also provide opportunities for social engagement and extracurricular activities, through informal and formal dialogue encompassing teachers, students, families and communities and through sports training sessions, music and artistic activities. Any transformative approach to multicultural education must consider the many dimensions that make up a student’s educational experience, and should allow a multi-dimensional perspective to influence each of these. An exclusively curriculum-focused model, for example, may have limited effect on the other dimensions of education, and thus, little positive impact on overall CALD youth outcomes.

This intersecting relationship between individuals, schools and society forms an important part in enriching the educational experience of CALD students and in building social confidence. This can be achieved through relationships on three primary levels: relationships with the wider education establishment; relationships with school leadership and related structures; and, relationships with community organisations.

There is no doubt that material pre-conditions and socio-economic stratification are important determinants of educational attainment and social integration among CALD youth. Furthermore, negative social experiences that result from marginalisation, stigmatisation and lack of access to culturally appropriate support services can translate into an increased risk of poor educational outcomes, anti-social and even self-destructive behaviours.

**Conclusion**

Schools are sites that have the potential to either perpetuate, or challenge societal prejudices and barriers. Key functions of education, therefore, should be to ensure full engagement of students and parents of all cultural backgrounds and to thereby contribute to shifting unbalanced power relations between people of different cultures in our society. Creative strategies to ensure greater participation need to be developed and pursued vigorously, particularly in light of the socio-economic disadvantage exhibited by many CALD youth. A re-negotiation of the role schools play in engendering improved social and race relations is essential in working towards an environment that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all.
Structural Barriers Facing Skilled Immigrants

Mr Michael Easson AM

Mr Michael Easson is the Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration. Mr Easson serves on the boards of ACTEW Corporation, the ING Group Real Estate Group in Australia and Telstra Stadium. He was Secretary of Labor Council of NSW from 1989–1994, and Vice President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and Senior Vice President of the Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch). Mr Easson was inaugural Chair of the NSW Urban Taskforce, an adjunct Professor of Management at the Australian Graduate School of Management from 1994–98 and served as senior vice president of UNICEF Australia from 1998–2002. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Mr Easson is the Executive Chair of EG Property Group and is Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration.

Introduction

There are estimated to be more than 214 million immigrants in the world. They make up about 3 per cent of the world’s population, a figure that has remained steady over the past few decades.

Despite increasing globalisation and transnational mobility, choosing to live and work in another country still remains a major decision in people’s lives.

As in business, these decisions are based on rational approaches, with potential immigrants factoring in living costs, employment prospects, a new way of life and the attitudes and tolerance of our society. For skilled immigrants, the decision to migrate requires a degree of optimism, personal drive and entrepreneurial spirit.

These factors, along with their skills and qualifications, mean that each skilled immigrant has the potential to be a fantastic asset for Australia. A list of leading Australians in any field inevitably includes people who chose to immigrate here to achieve success.

This potential, though, is always at risk of being stifled by the challenges and barriers some face adapting to our society. We know of the success stories but most of us also hear anecdotes, or know first-hand, about newly arrived skilled immigrants who end up driving taxis or stacking shelves just to make ends meet.

The question of whether this is symptomatic of a policy failure, employer discrimination or a reflection of short-term adjustments is worthy of further exploration.

Skilled immigration to Australia: A brief history

Skilled immigrant selection policies are a critical element in making sure these barriers can be avoided. Australia has welcomed more than 7 million immigrants since the Second World War. Over this period, the nature of our immigration programs has changed significantly.

The large nation-building programs that characterised the 1950s and 1960s gave way in the 1970s to smaller programs focused on family immigration. This continued until the 1990s when permanent immigration to Australia took on a predominantly economic focus. The large nation-building programs that characterised the 1950s and 1960s gave way in the 1970s to smaller programs focused on family immigration. This continued until the 1990s when permanent immigration to Australia took on a predominantly economic focus. This latest phase in our immigration story has coincided with a period of sustained economic growth for Australia.

Today, Australia is the fourth largest recipient of skilled immigrants after the US, the UK and Canada, and just ahead of Germany.
The Australian Government states it aims to select skilled immigrants based on their capacity to meet Australia’s skill needs. To achieve this, it has established selection processes that are designed to be responsive to the changing needs of business and the wider economy. The result of this approach should mean that those selected for skilled immigration have a good opportunity to make use of their skills in Australia.

**How do new skilled immigrants fare:**

**Labour outcomes**

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship gathers information on the labour force outcomes of Australia’s recent immigrants through the Continuous Survey of Australian Migrants (CSAM).

The survey data shows superior labour force outcomes among skilled immigrants when compared with the average Australian. These results illustrate why countries around the world are increasingly interested in skilled immigration. It shows that skilled immigrants have a very low dependence on government welfare payments. Furthermore, they are likely to be in skilled, productive employment, where they make a significant contribution to the country’s prosperity.

When one considers that these immigrants are selected on the basis of their capacity to undertake skilled work in Australia, this result should be expected.

Immigrants to Australia also perform well when compared to immigrants in other developed countries. After Israel, Australia has the lowest immigrant unemployment rate of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. This data suggests the selection policies for skilled immigrants work reasonably well.

Nevertheless, skilled immigrants still confront hurdles in becoming full participants in the Australian workforce and in society at large.

For instance, recent DIAC data shows that among the relatively few recent skilled immigrants not employed, the main obstacle was a lack of Australian experience, with around a third citing this as a problem.

The next most common reasons cited were insufficient job opportunities and not enough experience in their chosen field.

These problems are likely to dissipate over time. Labour force outcomes for skilled immigrants improve during the first 12 months in Australia as skilled immigrants acquire experience and become more marketable. DIAC’s survey data provides the reassuring news that very few immigrants identified a lack of English or a lack of qualification recognition as major employment barriers.

In terms of skills recognition, the Australian media reported this year that Australia is leading the world in removing barriers for skilled immigrants. Australia’s skills assessment and recognition arrangements for overseas credentials has been commended as “radical in global terms”, by Professor Lesleyanne Hawthorne from the University of Melbourne, a consultant to the OECD on immigrant labour to meet global skills shortages.

While this is an encouraging assessment at a time when we face increasing competition to attract skilled immigrants, there is still much work to be done in this area. The effectiveness of skills recognition arrangements vary across different industries. Government and business need to pay attention to this issue, to ensure skilled immigrants have every chance of achieving success in Australia.

The issue of employer discrimination is more complex.

In terms of finding work, it does not appear to be of major concern with only four per cent of skilled immigrants who are seeking work identifying ethnic discrimination as a barrier.

However, while securing a job is a major first step, in the longer-term it is better for immigrants to obtain work commensurate with their skills. In this regard, there is evidence that some groups of skilled immigrants are not reaching their potential. This is particularly a problem with former international students who obtained a skilled visa after graduation—after
12 months only six in ten of these immigrants have a skilled job. There is also empirical evidence from the Census that in terms of earnings, returns on higher education are less for immigrants than Australian-born residents. Furthermore, the wage-gap between the Australian born and immigrant workers from non-English speaking countries has been increasing between 1986 and 2006. Ensuring that we have a better understanding of these underemployment issues is essential if we are to realise the potential of skilled immigrants.

**Role of the MACSM**

Getting the balance right in skilled immigration requires careful, ongoing attention. The formation of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration (MACSM) demonstrates the Government’s commitment to a balanced approach which draws upon independent advice built on real-world experience.

The MACSM met for the first time in July this year and its terms of reference cover such areas as the impact of skilled immigration on the Australian economy and labour market; the level and composition of the annual immigration program and the operation of the temporary skilled worker visa program.

The Council has already discussed the issue of skills recognition and is slated to discuss skills assessment requirements and arrangements at our next meeting in December this year.

**Conclusion**

Skilled immigration has played a big part in making Australia what it is today and will continue to have a major role in our ongoing prosperity. Making sure structural barriers do not prevent skilled immigrants from fully participating in the workforce is critical from both a social justice and economic viewpoint. Skilled immigration complements the work to skill more Australians, improve domestic labour mobility and remove barriers such as disjointed trade licensing arrangements. All play an important role in helping individuals reach their potential while supporting ongoing economic growth for the benefit of all Australians.

For a full list of references, please contact Kevin White of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship at kevin.white@immi.gov.au.
Human Services Strives to Break Down Barriers

Ms Tricia Flanagan

Tricia Flanagan is the National Manager of the Multicultural Services Branch in the Australian Government Department of Human Services. Over the course of her career, Tricia has worked with culturally and linguistically diverse customers across a broad range of areas including community housing, capacity building, settlement, refugee determination, family assistance and policy areas.

Trained as a Social Worker and in Business Administration, Tricia has worked in the community sector and for local, state and federal government.

Understanding your entitlements, your rights and your obligations is essential to accessing the wide range of payments and services delivered through the Australian Government Department of Human Services. Our staff need to hear and understand our customers so that they can provide the best service possible. This two-way communication can represent a significant barrier, which can be compounded by cultural and linguistic differences.

The fundamental need to communicate and to overcome this barrier led us to put in place a range of language services for our customers. Our services for people who speak a language other than English have evolved over the years. In the last financial year alone we have undertaken:

- 70,508 pre booked on-site interpreter appointments;
- 16,549 pre booked phone interpreter appointments;
- 134,060 ‘on demand’ phone interpreter requests;
- 2,762 translations of customers’ personal documents needed to complete their business with the department;
- 3,500 hours of on-site interpreting work; and
- 887,000 calls from customers in our multilingual call centre.

Currently, more than one in five of our customers comes from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

It is with this in mind that we strive to improve our effectiveness in providing equal access to our services and payments. We build the capacity of our staff to deliver services respectfully and appropriately—for example, through cultural awareness training. In service delivery we consider the cultural obligations of our customers, such as restrictions during Ramadan or expectations on families to travel overseas for major family events. Our Guide to Ethnic Naming Practices helps our customer service officers not only record names correctly, but also address our customers appropriately and respectfully.

This article outlines the framework we use to develop and improve our services, how the Department has responded to the changing nature of service delivery and our customers, and some of the challenges that lie ahead as we address the communication barriers in the new services that we develop.

The integration of the Department

The Department of Human Services includes Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support and CRS Australia, incorporating over 36,977 staff in over 500 locations across Australia. The department is responsible for delivering a range of services and makes over $144 billion in payments annually to over 22 million Australians.

Since the Department integrated in July 2011, work has focused on one key outcome—our mission to provide “the service you need, when you need it.”
Like most organisations, we face a number of challenges in achieving this outcome. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and enhance the services we provide to those most in need—whether newly arrived in the country or from a longer established community.

Feedback on how we’re progressing is an important part of our growth and development. Using feedback to put in place improvements adds significant value to our services.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) recently completed an audit of Centrelink’s Multicultural Servicing Strategy. The results were encouraging—the ANAO endorsed current practices and acknowledged them as highly effective. The ANAO highlighted the effectiveness of balancing national priorities while maintaining local flexibility to meet the needs of customers from diverse backgrounds.

The ANAO findings also illustrated the importance of working collaboratively with community and third party organisations. These strong relationships are integral to our success.

**Delivering Services to Multicultural Australia 2012-2016**

Strong alignment between all levels of activity—from strategic to operational—is key to addressing structural barriers.

We are committed to providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to customers at every stage of their journey. This is why in August 2012 we launched our multicultural servicing strategy—*Delivering Services to Multicultural Australia 2012-2016*.

This strategy aligns with and supports the Government’s multicultural policy, *The People of Australia*, as well as its Access and Equity Strategy and Framework, which underpins service delivery to all Australians. The strategy has five key focus areas:

1. reflecting customer needs;
2. developing appropriate communication;
3. having culturally skilled staff;
4. engaging and consulting with our stakeholders; and
5. improving access and outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse customers.

Through the implementation of this strategy, we are committed to making our multicultural objective of ensuring that “our services are responsive to the needs of customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds” a reality, not just a slogan.

**Refugee servicing—breaking down barriers for the newly arrived**

An example of how the strategy is providing strong, tangible results is the Refugee Servicing Network. We set up this network to provide refugee customers with access to specialist services, delivered by staff who are trained in the complexities of new arrivals and settlement.

Staff in the network help provide timely payments, referrals, assessments and ongoing support, including:

- helping customers receive the financial assistance they need;
- providing interpreters and translations;
- organising a Medicare card;
- liaising with Humanitarian Settlement Service providers and/or proposers; and
- delivering information seminars on payments, services and what customers need to do.

**In your language**

As outlined above, in the financial year ending June 2012 we had over one million interactions with customers in a language other than English, using interpreters or bilingual staff.

We have also been successful in breaking down barriers using translated products. Tailored communication products for multicultural customers improve access to information about services and payments. For example, we:

- maintain a dedicated web page that contains all our translated products;
- provide translated brochures, fact sheets and newsletters in more than 65 languages, and a range of audio and audio-visual products;
- provide regular information on the SBS radio network and community radio stations nationally in up to 15 languages; and
- provide translated media notices to ethnic newspapers throughout Australia.
We translate publications such as the *Australian Pension News*, which is available in thirteen languages and distributed to an audience of over 75,000 recipients of Australian pensions, many of whom live overseas. This ensures that our multicultural seniors remain connected and engaged with our services.

**Indigenous languages**

Customers who speak Indigenous languages at home face many similar barriers to customers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We are leveraging our experience in providing interpreting services for international languages to further build Indigenous interpreting services. We have encountered some hurdles in providing a comparable interpreting service, including, for example, the large number of languages, poor telecommunications in remote locations, and the lack of training and accreditation in Indigenous languages.

We made recent improvements in services through an agreement with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the Northern Territory. The agreement includes providing face-to-face interpreting in our offices and on our trips to remote locations. We continue to work with both government and community stakeholders to improve access to services for these customers.

**Working in partnership with the community**

Community engagement and consultation is important to our relationship with our partners. Forums such as the National Multicultural Advisory Group and multicultural advisory committees at the local and State levels, provide invaluable opportunities to discuss service delivery, issues and importantly, solutions. Everyone’s suggestions are welcome.

*The Journey* is an online national newsletter distributed to over 1000 multicultural community organisations and stakeholders. It provides relevant and topical information about our payments and services for customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It also showcases the good work and commitment of staff, particularly Multicultural Service Officers (MSOs).

The Multicultural Service Officer program plays a crucial part in identifying barriers and helping to eliminate them where possible. The MSOs do this by having close relationships with multicultural communities and supporting service delivery to multicultural customers. They work with community agencies and government departments to:

- promote payments, programs and services;
- attend community forums;
- build community and inter agency networks; and
- offer support, advice, information and training to staff.

**Digital plans for the future**

Transforming service delivery and overcoming the digital divide are two things that we are determined to achieve. Giving people options about how they access services is important.

We continue to work on improving and streamlining self-service options for customers using a variety of devices. We are looking at options to reach customers through ‘smart phone’ applications and using SMS. We are exploring ways to use the capacity provided by the national broadband network to link customers, community organisations and interpreters with departmental staff to understand complex situations and to respond effectively.

Changing technology and further innovations in service delivery provide an opportunity to reduce barriers. We continue to address issues and eliminate barriers as they are identified. Collaborative work with community partners and customers are critical to making this happen.
A Just Society For All Australians? 
A disability perspective

Mr Christian Astourian

Christian Astourian is the Chairperson of the FECCA Disability Advisory Committee. Christian is a strong advocate for the rights and welfare of ethnic people with disability. Over the years he has held various positions on government and non-government community sector boards and committees.

Currently, Christian co-ordinates a self-advocacy program for CALD people with disability called Diversity and Disability through the Migrant Resource Centre in St Albans.

He is currently the Chair of the FECCA Disability Advisory Committee. He is also a board member for Scope Victoria, sits on the Victorian Government Disability Service Board with the Victorian Disability Service Commissioner and he is a member of the Melbourne City Council’s Disability Advisory Committee, among other appointments.

Australia is one of the richest countries in the world with an economy that has been growing for 21 years now. According to a report from Credit Suisse published in October 2012, Australia has the world’s wealthiest people on a median basis and the world’s second wealthiest people behind Switzerland on an average basis.

According to a report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released in November 2011, more people with disability in Australia are living in poverty than any other developed country that is part of the OECD, and we are ranked in the bottom third with regard to employment of people with disability. Clearly, if we compare the two reports above, we can see the level of disparity within Australian society and that redistribution and creation of wealth in Australia does not include people with disability. The reason for this situation is that the system is not working and needs a complete overhaul.

Let’s start with some statistical data on the Australian population. There are about four million people with disability in Australia according to the Australian Bureau of Statistic’s Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) (nearly 20 per cent of the population) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) estimates that of those, one million come from a non-English speaking background (NESB).

People with disability from a NESB are more likely to live in isolation and poverty, less likely to receive services, get an education or be employed when compared to other people with disability.

According to data published by NEDA in 2011, people born in a non-English speaking country with disability are approximately four times less likely to receive accommodation support services than people born in English speaking countries, two and a half times less likely to receive community support and access services, three times less likely to receive respite services and two times less likely to receive employment services.
When it comes to cultural competency, one issue is the way that organisations and service providers promote their services, and what this could say about their level of competency. Most service providers’ ads, brochures and leaflets include pictures of people who appear to be of ‘Anglo’ backgrounds, and this makes it very clear at whom they are targeting their services.

Apart from cultural competency in relation to promotion, services also need to provide interpreters, respect cultural differences in people and develop a relationship of good communication and trust with service users. Many people with disability from a NESB and their families have never received support in their lives and people who immigrated to Australia in the last few years may not even be aware of which services are available or what services can do for them because they come from countries where there are no services at all. In such cases, family becomes the main, and, in a lot of cases, the only, support available to people with disability. Over the years this situation becomes exacerbated by parents becoming older and no longer being able to support their son or daughter with disability. Also, imagine in this situation how a person with disability would feel about starting to be supported by other people after 40 to 50 years of support received only by his/her family with no opportunity for skills development, community participation or life experience.

The example above is a typical situation where governments, service providers and families have failed to provide opportunities to the person with disability to achieve full participation in society and have the same opportunities as everyone else to have a fulfilling quality of life. Better levels of communication between all parties involved and developing a relationship of trust with the family and the person with disability would have a huge impact in improving this situation.

If we look from a more general perspective, society has a disempowering and inactive
approach towards changes for people with disability. There is still a common attitude within society that people with disability are not going to get a high level of education or employment, or contribute to society—because of their disability. This attitude needs to be completely changed to one in which people with disability are seen as active contributors to society, by having the community, private sector and all levels of governments work together to provide opportunities to people with disability, with benefits spreading across the whole community. So far there has been an expectation that governments should deal with disability and create all the opportunities. In actual fact, people with disability are much more likely to get an education in a public school and be employed in government jobs than to receive a private education or get private employment. This is not a sustainable system into the future and does not provide inclusion of people with disability within society, nor does it provide them with opportunities and full control over their own lives to achieve their life goals.

If we look at opportunities for education and employment for people with disability, we know according to the SDAC that only 30 per cent of people with disability in Australia complete year 12 and only half of people with disability are in the workforce, compared to 65 per cent for the general population.

One way to improve things in Australia for people with disability is to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which will provide funding and support to all eligible Australians who were born with disability or have acquired disability in their lifetime, support which is not currently covered by any other scheme. The level of funding available will depend on each individual’s needs and the level of support required in his/her everyday life. The person with disability and their family will be able to spend the funding on the services needed to support the person with disability. The funding will go directly to the person with disability, and his/her family, or sit within a brokerage agency, depending on the circumstances. This system will empower people with disability to have more control over their lives and will allow them to choose the services they require with far more flexibility and accountability than we have seen so far in this country.

Moreover, it is important to make sure that such a system is sustainable into the future and covers all people who are eligible, which is something we have never seen with the current underfunded system. This new funding system will need to be culturally competent in providing the funding to people with disability from a NESB and their families, by, for example, providing an interpreter service when needed without affecting funding packages in terms of cost. People who have never received any services in their lives will need support and empowerment to use and make the most of this new system.

Still, we do not know who is going to be eligible under this new system and what is going to happen to those who are not. We also do not know if this system will be funded through the Federal Government’s consolidated revenue as suggested by the Productivity Commission or whether there will be a Medicare Levy increase to cover the cost of this scheme. We do know that state governments are going to contribute but that education will not be covered by this scheme, which is a concern in regard to education opportunities for people with disability.

Moreover, it is important to make sure that such a system is sustainable into the future and covers all people who are eligible, which is something we have never seen with the current underfunded system. This new funding system will need to be culturally competent in providing the funding to people with disability from a NESB and their families, by, for example, providing an interpreter service when needed without affecting funding packages in terms of cost. People who have never received any services in their lives will need support and empowerment to use and make the most of this new system.

We are looking forward to and anxiously awaiting the start of the NDIS from July 2013, but this system is not going to solve all the issues that people with disability are facing in their everyday lives. Until there is commitment and investment to make public transport, buildings and shops accessible to everyone in society, we will never achieve full inclusion nor create opportunities for every Australian to be part of and contribute to society.

I hope one day I can stop dreaming about a just society for everyone and say this is the society I want to see for every Australian.
A National Disability Insurance Scheme

Dr Jeff Harmer AO

Dr Jeff Harmer has been the Secretary of two large Australian Government departments—the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Department of Education, Science and Training. Prior to that, he was Managing Director of the Health Insurance Commission (now Medicare Australia). His 34 year career in the Australian Public Service included senior positions in the departments of Finance, Housing and Regional Development, Community Services, Health, and Social Security.

In 2008–09, Dr Harmer led a review of the adequacy of the Aged Pension and Disability Support Pension in Australia. He was also a member of the panel, chaired by Dr Ken Henry, to review Australia’s Future Tax System. In 2009, Dr Harmer was the inaugural Australian Institute of Chartered Accountants Australian Government Leader of the Year. In 2010 he was appointed as an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO) for the significant achievements in his public service career, particularly his leadership of key policy initiatives such as programs for housing assistance, child support, mental health, disability, health insurance reform and initiatives for Indigenous Australians.

He is the current Chair of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Advisory Group.

In August 2011, I was appointed as the Chair of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Advisory Group, by the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. The Advisory Group was established to help steer the development of a National Disability Insurance Scheme by providing advice on progress with the foundation reforms required to improve the system of care and support for Australians with disability and their carers.

The Advisory Group was also tasked with ensuring that people with disability are involved in the scheme design. I know that understanding and addressing barriers to social and economic participation experienced by people with disability, their families and carers, is crucial to the advice we provide, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. In formulating our advice to the Australian Government we have considered that the barriers faced by people with disability from CALD backgrounds are often compounded by the interaction of issues related to ethnicity and impairment.

Over the last 12 months, the Advisory Group has been engaging with people with disability, their families, carers, advocates and service providers to ensure their views are heard and considered in our advice to Government. We are also working closely with the Australian Government and other key stakeholders to ensure the needs of people with lived experience of disability are considered in the design of the scheme.

To assist in this work, four expert groups have been formed under the Advisory Group to provide advice on specific design elements of a scheme including: disability workforce and sector capacity; a national approach to control and choice;

As part of their remit, the expert groups are considering the particular needs of people with disability from CALD backgrounds.
eligibility and assessment; and quality safeguards and standards. As part of their remit, the expert groups are considering the particular needs of people with disability from CALD backgrounds.

While work continues to finalise the design, the July 2012 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that the first stage of an NDIS would be launched from the middle of next year in launch sites across Australia. This means that people with disability in Tasmania, South Australia, the Barwon area of Victoria, the three local government areas in the Hunter in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory will receive support as part of the first stage of an NDIS.

An NDIS will make it possible for people in these launch locations with significant and permanent disability to get the necessary care and support they require and for the people who care for them to have their own needs taken into account. The support provided to scheme participants will be personalised, based on a plan that reflects their goals and aspirations.

COAG also agreed to four high level principles to guide the design and implementation of an NDIS. The first Principle is that an NDIS should be needs based and provide people with disability access to individualised care and support. As part of this, an NDIS will also ensure equity of access by addressing the needs of people in regional and remote Australia and people from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds. Under an NDIS, people will have more control over the services and supports they receive, and the flexibility to explore and choose from a wider range of options and providers. Safeguards will also be in place to support people in exercising choice and control, and to help them make informed choices.
An NDIS will ensure people are no longer “shut out” from opportunities and from independence by providing the appropriate and necessary supports that allow people with disability to reach their full potential, regardless of their cultural background, where they live or how they acquired their disability.

The scheme will nurture and sustain the support provided by families, carers and friendship groups—the very communities of support that are critical to improving the lives of people with disability. It will also include a comprehensive information and referral service to help people with a disability gain access to mainstream, disability and community supports.

The NDIS is being designed to take a lifelong approach to providing care and support for people with disability who have long-term care and support needs.

An online engagement forum called ‘NDIS Your Say’ has been established on the www.ndis.gov.au website, which is hosted by the Advisory Group. Several forum discussions have been hosted on the site which have addressed important design questions including: qualities people look for in a disability worker or service provider; approach to ‘Eligibility’ and ‘Reasonable and Necessary Supports’ under an NDIS; and the features of successful planning. Feedback provided to this forum will help inform the advice that the Advisory Group provides to government on key design issues.

Alternatively you can email comments to the NDIS enquiries inbox at NDISenquiries@fahcsia.gov.au. Feedback received will inform emerging themes and key design and implementation issues.

The Australian Government has funded the National Disability and Carers Alliance to lead grass roots engagement across the country through forums with people with disability, their families, carers and service providers on the design of the NDIS. The Alliance has undertaken engagement in all states and territories and will be conducting targeted engagement later this year and into 2013. For more information about the Alliance and how to get involved, please visit www.disabilitycareralliance.org.au.

The NDIS Launch Transition Agency, which has overall responsibility for implementing the first stage, has planned a number of activities to seek feedback from people with disability, their families and carers, service providers and the disability sector about the proposed operation of parts of an NDIS.

One of these activities is a series of co-design workshops. Co-design is a process that allows government and stakeholders to work together so that the translation of policy can be shaped by what is desirable for people, what is possible for technology and what is viable for business. It is anticipated that co-design sessions in launch locations will reflect local demographics.

The Launch Transition Agency will also be developing a range of information materials for the launch locations and these will be available in a variety of languages to ensure that people from different cultural backgrounds have a full understanding of the NDIS in their region.

Further information on the progress of the NDIS is available on the www.ndis.gov.au website and I encourage you to visit this site and register to receive updates. We want to make sure your voices are heard. I encourage you all to get involved and have your say!
Linguistic and Cultural Isolation:
Structural barriers faced by CALD Australians seeking access to high quality, culturally appropriate aged care

Mr Bruce Shaw

Bruce Shaw is the Senior Policy Officer, Aged Care, at FECCA. Bruce has a Master of Public Policy from the ANU and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Queensland.

Bruce has a long involvement at a national leadership level in health and aged care with a range of organisations including Aged Care Association Australia (ACAA), Palliative Care Australia (PCA), the Australian Medical Association (AMA), UnitingCare Australia (UA), Merck Sharp & Dohme Australia, and the Consumers’ Health Forum of Australia (CHF).

Bruce brings a strong track record of establishing and developing effective strategic relationships with partners and stakeholders, and a commitment to ensuring that Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and multicultural issues, are included in the aged care reform agenda.

This article refers to some of the key barriers faced by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Australians seeking access to high quality, culturally appropriate aged care, and how FECCA is working with the Government and other stakeholders to address them.

As FECCA’s CEO stated in a recent presentation to the Council on the Ageing Australia (COTA),

“A challenge for FECCA is to influence and work with others to integrate culturally and linguistically diverse perspectives into the overall aged care and health delivery frameworks so that ageing people from CALD backgrounds have access and equity to a full range of appropriate aged care services, and are empowered and confident in accessing it” (November 2012).

FECCA’s aim is to help develop an aged care system where access and equity is integral to every aspect.

**Barrier: linguistic and cultural isolation**

Linguistic and cultural isolation perhaps best expresses overall barriers confronting ageing people of CALD backgrounds seeking access to high quality, culturally appropriate aged care.

This is especially pertinent in the case of locational diversity, where small CALD communities exist in rural, regional and remote locations, and where the children and grandchildren have often left for the city.

Linguistic and cultural isolation is accentuated when already isolated ageing people speak distinct dialects, are illiterate in any language, or are losing their English because of cognitive impairment due to dementia.

Funds are available from the Australian Government’s Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) for residential aged care providers to engage translators and interpreters, yet most available funds for interpreting and translating services have not been spent, partly because many CALD organisations who work in aged care are not aware of the availability of these funds.

As part of its **Living Longer, Living Better** aged care reform package, the Government has committed to raising awareness of this program, and to expand the service to home care as well as residential.

**Barrier: lack of cultural competency**

Different cultures have differing cultural attitudes to a range of key issues around aged care, including palliative care and dying.

The aged care system needs to be able to work with different community attitudes.

A key barrier to people’s willingness to even consider
seeking the care to which they are entitled is the failure to recognise that spiritual, religious and race issues are a vital component of culturally appropriate aged care.

There is common misbelief that cultural competency deals with a particular culture, when in fact it is about using the cultural intelligence model to provide culturally appropriate care to everyone.

A key part of the solution is to use community organisations to help disseminate information. Not all communities currently have this capacity. Through the National Aged Care Strategy for people from CALD backgrounds, FECCA seeks to assist communities to enhance their skills and resources to be able to assist their members, and to build on partnerships.

**Barrier: access and equity**

Currently, fewer people from CALD backgrounds access the range of aged care services, especially residential aged care, than do other Australians.

While there are several reasons for this, including a preference for the family to care for their elderly members, there are barriers around the lack of cultural inclusiveness of many (but not all) generalist aged care providers.

The solution to this barrier is to ensure that all aged care providers (across generalist, multicultural, and ethno-specific, and residential, home care, respite, palliative care, carers, etc) are required to be linguistically and culturally inclusive, and supported to achieve this.

A major element of the overall aged care reform package that will be introduced from 1 July 2013 is *consumer directed care*, initially in home care (formerly called community care).

Consumer directed care might enhance choice but the information needs of the consumer will increase; giving consumers rights is important, but an essential pre-requisite will be the understanding of older people from CALD background of what the options are.

The current aged care system can be very difficult for older people, their families and carers to understand. The sources of information available are wide and varied, often difficult to access and understand and do not support informed decision making. This is especially the case for people from CALD backgrounds.

In an attempt to address this barrier (for all older people), a key feature of the overall aged care reforms from 1 July 2013 will be the *Gateway*. It is hoped that the Gateway will create a clear pathway into, and through, the aged care system and make it easier for older people, their families, and carers to access information on available, and appropriate, ageing and aged care services.

However, one problem with the Gateway proposal is that it will not have, in itself, a face-to-face component, but instead be a phone-based call centre, with assistance from a new *My Aged Care* website. This in itself will create an additional barrier for older people with little or no English.

FECCA is represented on the Aged Care Gateway Advisory Group which has been tasked by DoHA with assisting to develop the framework and guidelines for the Gateway.

FECCA is seeking to persuade this Advisory Group, and the Government, that the Aged Care Gateway must have the capability to accommodate the cultural, linguistic and spiritual diversity and literacy skills among CALD people and communities.

To help ensure that Gateway services have the expertise
to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services, FECCA is proposing the idea of contracting out a face-to-face Gateway service to appropriate CALD organisations. These organisations would need to be trained and accredited in some way—and resourced adequately.

**Barrier: aged care workforce**

Another major barrier is the dearth of bilingual and culturally competent staff and volunteers working in aged care for ageing CALD people.

It is important to build CALD community capacity by developing a workforce with the skills and knowledge to deliver culturally, linguistically and faith-appropriate aged care services.

To this end, FECCA and Health Workforce Australia have started initial work on a workforce development strategy.

**Barrier: inadequate research and knowledge base**

There is a lack of both data about, and of primary research into, the aged care needs—and use—of older people from CALD backgrounds, their families, carers and representatives.

FECCA is working with the CALD community, and in partnership with other stakeholders including the Government, to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve CALD research and data collection mechanisms.

**The road ahead**

Part of FECCA’s strategy is to build strong links with the whole aged care sector in order to help ensure that all stakeholders recognise the need for all future aged care policy and programs to be culturally and linguistically inclusive.

A FECCA Healthy Ageing Reference Committee has been established to advise and provide oversight to FECCA’s strategic activities and to support our work to ensure that Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and multicultural issues, are included in the aged care reform agenda.

We have had initial meetings with Alzheimer’s Australia, Carers Australia and COTA towards establishing bilateral working relations with both their national and State/Territory offices.

FECCA is pleased to have been accepted as a member of the National Aged Care Alliance (NACA), the peak aged care umbrella body. FECCA is already playing an active role, and is participating in the NACA Home Care Packages Working Group, Aged Care Gateway Advisory Group, Specified Care and Services Reference Group (looking at residential care), and Ageing Expert Advisory Group. All these committees are looking at detailed aspects of implementing the aged care reform agenda, and report directly to Minister for Mental Health and Ageing the Hon Mark Butler MP.

**National Aged Care Strategy for people from CALD Backgrounds**

Very importantly, FECCA is assisting the Australian Government, through the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) with detailed consultations to develop a national CALD Aged Care Strategy, a Government strategy designed to inform the way Government supports the aged care sector to deliver care that is appropriate and sensitive to the needs of older people from CALD backgrounds.

FECCA co-chairs the Steering Committee to oversee the development of this Strategy. FECCA has convened a round of consultations around the country which have been very important in informing this Strategy.

The aim is for the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing the Hon Mark Butler MP to launch this Strategy by the end of 2012.

The Strategy will be a significant enabler of CALD empowerment in the aged care system.

It will greatly assist capacity building among CALD people and community organisations by ensuring that the *Living Longer. Living Better* aged care reform package, as well as all future aged care policy, is culturally and linguistically inclusive. It will enable CALD communities and organisations, and service providers working in partnership with CALD communities and organisations, to develop innovative programs and projects to address CALD needs through the Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants Fund.
A New Strategy to Support All Older Australians

The Hon Mark Butler MP

The Hon Mark Butler MP was elected to Federal Parliament in 2007 representing the electorate of Port Adelaide. In 2009, Mark was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Health and, in 2010, was appointed Minister for Mental Health and Ageing. On 14 December 2011, he was appointed as Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Minister for Social Inclusion, and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform.

Mark holds a First Class Honours Law degree, an Arts degree and a Masters degree in International Relations.

Before entering Parliament, Mark worked for 15 years in the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (LHMU) including 11 years as State Secretary. During that time, Mark served as a member of several government and private sector boards.

In 1997/1998, Mark served as President of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in South Australia, and has been a Member of the ALP National Executive and National Executive Committee since 2000.

Mark was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2003 for services to trade unionism.

Mark lives in Woodville Park with his wife and two children, and is a keen supporter of AFL team, Port Power.

In April, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and I launched one of the defining initiatives of this Labor Government: Living Longer Living Better—a $3.7 billion aged care reform plan.

The plan outlines how the Government will bring the aged care system into the 21st century, building a better, fairer, more sustainable and nationally consistent aged care system.

It was a statement of our determination to meet the social and economic challenges that come with a population that is ageing.

We are living longer as a result of advances in medical science over many years, advances which continue today. Illness and diseases which would once have been fatal are now successfully treated. A century ago, 60 was considered a good age, today it is almost youthful.

So we are living longer, but are we living better?

This is the true challenge that governments face in the 21st century. To make sure people are ‘living better’ in old age, we need to provide more support for older Australians who want to live in their own homes, better access to residential aged care for those who want and need it, greater recognition of the work of carers, and support for those suffering from dementia.

We know that many people seeking access to aged care services have special needs and preferences that cannot be addressed by a one-size-fits-all approach. They include members of the many ethnic groups that make up our multicultural society. In discussions with seniors and
their families across Australia, I have been told of the difficulties people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds sometimes have in accessing information and services that are sensitive to their circumstances.

In order to better meet the challenges in this area, I announced at the Cultural Diversity in Ageing 2012 Conference in June that there would be a strategy focusing specifically on the needs of people from CALD backgrounds.

The National Aged Care Strategy for People from CALD Backgrounds will be supported by the Australian Government’s investment of $24.4 million over five years to improve the skills and knowledge of aged care providers working with people of diverse backgrounds, but more can and must be done.

The Strategy will be developed by the end of this year and will provide the blueprint to guide future activities and priorities and assist the Government in implementing the Living Longer Living Better reforms to serve the needs of CALD communities.

I asked the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) to coordinate targeted consultations in each capital city and various regional centres. These consultations will be essential to the success of this project, and I look forward to hearing from FECCA about these consultations.

The first consultation was held in Canberra on 12 October. This meeting, and all of the subsequent meetings, have brought together key members of the local CALD community and aged care sector to discuss the critical elements that need to be included in the strategy.

I would like to thank FECCA’s Chair, Pino Migliorino, and Chief Executive Officer, Loucas Nicolaou, for their efforts in making this process so inclusive and successful.

The development of this strategy is an important project in the Government’s commitment to improve culturally appropriate aged care services. It is building on the work we already do, including funding projects with CALD communities through the Healthy Ageing Grants Fund.

I am committed, and the Gillard Labor Government is committed, to making the later years as happy and productive as possible and I am delighted that FECCA is a partner in this task.
From Barriers to Bridges:
CALD communities and sport

Patrick Skene has over 10 years’ experience in multicultural sport engagement and is the Director of Sport and Media for Red Elephant Projects (www.redelephantprojects.com; @redelephantaus), a specialist social consultancy involved in fan development, talent, media, marketing, education and participation programs for indigenous and multicultural communities.

Red Elephant Projects aims to create shared value for its partners using sport, music, arts and technology to build an integrated and vibrant Australian community.

Patrick’s areas of expertise include research, strategy, program design and building, media, community engagement, evaluation, mentoring and program sustainability.

Patrick has worked with most of the major codes in Australia including Football Federation Australia, the Australian Football League, the National Rugby League, Basketball Australia, Cricket Australia and Netball Victoria.

The 2011 ABS Census of Population and Housing results confirmed the increase of Australia’s multicultural diversity through the skilled and humanitarian immigration program.

For the sport industry, this social and demographic transformation has created challenges and opportunities in engaging participants and fans from a complex range of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Participation in structured sport provides the repeated social interaction that builds personal networks, which enable social and economic mobility and increased quality of life. It is also one of the key planks of Australia’s social inclusion agenda, building the sense of belonging and civic pride that is critical for integration.

The barriers to CALD community participation in sport have been widely documented and include lack of awareness and understanding, cost of participating, time, clashes with studies, transport, uniform cultural sensitivities, communication and language barriers, non-inclusive club environments, culturally inappropriate food, racism, violence, parent behaviour, lack of confidence, safety/physical contact, lack of modified versions, and access to facilities.

Some immigrant communities are isolated, alienated or marginalised from the mainstream community whereas other communities are large, established and thriving, and so they face very different barriers to participation and hence different strategies are required to address the barriers.

A review of the different programs, approaches and models to facilitate CALD community sport participation shows some great successes by a range of stakeholders and great potential for future co-operation to create a multilayered, strategic and customised engagement model.

View from the peak: Government programs

As the peak statutory body in Australian sport, the Australian Sports Commission has developed the All Cultures program, providing “useful information to coaches, trainers and volunteers delivering sport and recreation programs for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.”

The All Cultures resources work in harmony with the national Play By the Rules resources developed “to build the capacity
and capability of sport and recreational clubs/associations to prevent and deal with discrimination, racism, parent behaviour, harassment and child safety issues in sport.”

In future, the sector looks forward to the Australian Sports Commission’s continued leadership to enable sporting bodies, relevant government departments, associations, clubs, schools, local councils and managed programs to build their capacity to engage with CALD communities.

At a state level, the VicHealth Everyone Wins program is undertaking some ground-breaking inclusive sport development in Victoria by working with state sporting associations and clubs to initiate organisational change in structures, processes and attitudes relating to CALD community engagement.

Through the program, funded organisations are overcoming a range of barriers through activities such as club grants programs, inclusion capacity building, cultural competence workshops, welcome officer programs, school programs in communities with high CALD populations, translated collateral, shared learning workshops and community engagement events.

With rigorous evaluation and a focus on sector wide collaboration, the VicHealth program and its funded sports organisations will continue to develop strategies to overcome participation barriers and build an evidence based template for other states to follow.

Another state pilot program ripe for a national rollout is the KidSport pilot grants “voucher” program managed by the Western Australian Department of Sport and Recreation. This grants program allows CALD parents of low socioeconomic communities to select a sport and club for their child and receive a $200 contribution to club fees, which is paid directly to the accredited and trained participating KidSport club.

The KidSport program also allows club volunteers to actively engage and attract CALD community parents and children with the removal of cost as a barrier.

Local Governments also play a crucial role in enabling structured participation by improving access to facilities including subsidised council buses to overcome the transport barrier.

**Top down: Sporting associations**

National and State Sporting Associations are the key bodies to overcome barriers to sustainable structured sport participation for CALD communities. Their role includes setting inclusive culture, policies and procedures, creating pathways, securing program funding, supplying role models and facilitating club education and training.

The leading national multicultural engagement program is the AFL’s Multicultural Program, an integrated program linking participation and fan development to engage with CALD communities across Australia. AFL Clubs are key partners of the program, with dedicated multicultural development officers who build understanding and awareness by running customised schools programs for over 300 schools with high levels of CALD students nationally.

Other program activities include organisation-wide cross cultural competence training, role model development through its player ambassador program, ‘Welcome to the AFL’, a ‘first touch’ fan development program, and a number of new talent development pathways, including CALD community academies and representative teams.

At the state level in Victoria, a number of programs have developed to specifically address CALD community underrepresentation in sport, including Football Federation Victoria’s United Through Football, Netball Victoria’s Netball for All, and Cricket Victoria’s Harmony in Cricket.

The United Through Football program has engaged a community-specific Horn of Africa community development officer, a role established to overcome communication barriers, and a $100,000 per annum grants program for 40 clubs to directly address the barrier of cost.

**National and State Sporting Associations are the key bodies to overcome barriers to sustainable structured sport participation for CALD communities.**
United Through Football

Program Manager, Nick Hatzoglou, has a program philosophy built on the following principles: “We always consult with our target groups. It’s the right thing and it’s a respect thing. You can’t be prescriptive with a one-size-fits-all approach as community needs differ greatly. It is critical to build program sustainability through a collaborative approach. You can’t do it on your own.”

“Our major grants program addresses the cost, access and equity barriers to participation by identifying underrepresented groups and working on solutions so they can participate in what many Australians take for granted. It also acts as a stimulus program as the money goes directly to our clubs who get a reward for taking the time and effort to engage.”

Cricket NSW recently launched its Mosaic Programs to address a number of barriers, including changing the perception of the sport’s player base as predominantly Anglo-Celtic and raising awareness and understanding of the sport. Another key program pillar is providing alternative pathways to existing schedule and modified structures to overcome cultural, lifestyle and education barriers.

Program Manager, Sam Almaliki, is optimistic about the program. “We have a great game and a story to tell but we need to deliver it to immigrant communities in a customised way. This includes a program in schools with high CALD demographics, building awareness through our festival engagement strategy, free modified Sunday cricket programs to cater for Saturday students and workers, and role model and cultural liaison development through our Player and Community Ambassador program.”

Some sports have also chosen to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers by allocating resources to employ community-specific development officers, including David Lakisa who served as Pacific Community Development Officer for NSW Rugby League for four years and Ahmed Dini, current Horn of Africa Community Engagement Officer, for Football Federation Victoria.

Bottom up: Community sporting leagues and clubs

A little known but fascinating part of Australian history is that from 1892-1896 there was a Ballarat goldfields Chinese Aussie Rules league created for the Chinese mining community to build leaders and heroes and strengthen the community. Today, the tradition of CALD community-based leagues continues, strengthening communities and developing leaders with confidence through experience. These leagues and clubs also provide security and facilitate the development of key lifelong networks of friends and service providers. They also assist in countering loss of culture which can be dangerous and leave immigrants trapped between communities and alienated.

In the community league and club model, effectiveness of programs is maximised because the program managers have an intimate understanding of the specific communities they are serving.

The Australian Chinese Basketball Association (ACBA) recently celebrated its 16th year running competitions for the Asian community in Western Sydney. The Association has 65 teams across six divisions and overcomes the physical contact barrier by providing the Asian community with a structured but lower contact version of the game than played at association level.

Boon Tan, the head of the ACBA Association, is astonished at the growth of his Association. “We have over 1000 members and are now a major group in the community. Once our players retire they get involved in management which has built our sustainability and grows our community family every year.”

He added: “We now have over 20 different nationalities represented, a new Under 18 program and we have a hero building representative team called the ACBA Dragons, which has an annual tour to Asia or America. Most of these guys would not play if it were not for the inclusive and culturally friendly environment our Association provides.”

Examples of other community-based associations include
the India Sports Club, African Nations Cup, Bangla Gold Cup, Indonesian Students Soccer Association, the Melbourne Chinese Soccer Association and the Australian Chinese Soccer Association.

Sutha Siva is the head of NSW Tamils, which has, for the past 25 years, used cricket as a platform to link new immigrants from Sri Lanka with the existing diaspora community. The Club currently has 10 Cricket NSW registered teams across the Parramatta region and they have a very clear mandate: “We assist with new immigrant transition by providing an ‘arrival lounge’ to avoid social exclusion and we often subsidise fees to ensure there are no barriers to joining our club. Through the platform of cricket we mentor them into settling into the Australian lifestyle and getting a job and career, and they are grateful to the Club and in return provide us with a committed long-term pool of volunteers.”

Examples of registered community clubs serving as a culturally contextual access points for CALD communities include the Auburn Tigers for the Lebanese Australian Rules community, Heidelberg Stars for the Somali Football Community, Melbourne Hellenic Cricket Club for the Greek Cricket Community, and the Southern Dragons Australian Football team for the Melbourne Asian community.

Michael Nguyen of the Southern Dragons said that his club has different barriers to other communities. “Our club regularly brings the community together around football and by providing the environment we do we bring a whole new generation to play the game who ordinarily would not have. A lot of our barriers are about time—clash with studies and work so we have to make it fun and make people feel part of something bigger.”

The Big Bang: Community national and state championships

Community national championships have a long history in Australia of providing a gathering point to strengthen communities, bring leadership together, celebrate cultural diversity and overcome barriers to participation by providing a sport experience customised for the community’s worldview.

The longest surviving national championship is the Maclean Scottish Highland Games gathering, which this year celebrates its 109th Games featuring traditional games including Caber Tossing, Highland Log Wrestling and the Kilted Dash.

The event links 4th generation Scottish Australians with modern Scottish immigrants, building networks and keeping culture and traditions alive by providing access to the organised games.

Other national championships include the 25th Annual Sikh Games, the 18th Maccabi Games for the Jewish Community, the 15th annual Ethiopian Australian Soccer Championships, the Australian South Sudanese Basketball Championships, the Pacific Netball Championships, the Australian Somali Football Championships and the National Maori Rugby League Championships.

These events are vital tools to develop community leaders and volunteers, identify talent and build a community around positive role models.

They are also important because communities are driving the initiatives themselves which makes the events more sustainable.

There are a number of community competitions that have transitioned into registered clubs with examples including India Sports Club and
NSW Tamils, who are now both registered with Cricket NSW.

The Specialists: Managed programs

A number of community specialist programs are in place to address the barriers to sport participation in CALD communities. Their work assists in building towards the long term goal of sport as a settlement service in which playing structured sport is treated as an essential service for every immigrant and is subsidised accordingly.

Managed programs include Sports Without Borders, the Centre for Multicultural Youth, Helping Hoops, the Rugby Youth Foundation and Football United, which aim to build capacity of communities and improve the life skills of program participants.

Football United released its research report ‘Playing for Change’ in October 2012 and Program Manager, Anne Bunde-Birouste, said “programs need to meet the individual needs of the community, offer something beyond playing opportunities and provide a safe, supported and structured environment for participation in sports within schools.”

These programs are often focused more towards the ‘sport for development’ continuum and require a large amount of money and resources to be sustainable and maintain impact.

The road ahead

In the last five years, significant progress has been made in overcoming the barriers to sport for immigrant communities through a variety of models and programs.

As the changing demographics begin to impact sports in different ways, those who adapt their programs to align with immigrant cultural and lifestyle preferences and address barriers directly will grow their base of players, volunteers and officials.

As a key engagement tool with refugee and new arrival immigrant communities, structured sport participation will in time evolve to being classified as a ‘frontline’ settlement service or become a formal social inclusion program that is government funded.

For more established communities, service delivery organisations will need to develop a more sophisticated and targeted engagement strategy. This will mean moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach, which lacks the nuance to respond to individual CALD community circumstances and enable them to take advantage of natural opportunities.

Without this segmentation process to clearly identify the specific target groups and their needs and barriers, programs can risk being too broad and unwieldy without the deeper engagement required to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Organisations that will achieve the greatest success in enabling CALD community structured sporting participation in the new demographic paradigm will be those who overcome barriers by building sustainable, long term, vertically integrated programs based on genuine community engagement and leveraged partnerships.
Sport Reflects Society’s Evolution

Mr John Wylie AM

Mr John Wylie AM was appointed Chair of the Australian Sports Commission in September 2012. The Brisbane Boys’ College student was awarded a Bachelor of Business/Commerce with first-class honours at the University of Queensland and a Masters of Philosophy at Oxford University, England. He is Chief Executive Office for corporate advisory and investment firm Lazard Australia, MCG Trust Chairman, Library Board of Victoria President, and Rhodes Scholarships Australia Chairman. His other business credentials have included being a director of CSR as well as both Chairman and Managing Director of Credit Suisse First Boston Australia. He has also been the Victorian Olympic Foundation Committee Chair, the MCG Redevelopment Commonwealth Games Chair, Florey Neuroscience Institute Honorary Treasurer, and has been on the Finance Committee of Melbourne Grammar School. The Brisbane-born businessman is married with four children and lives in Melbourne. The 51-year-old is an avid fan of the Collingwood Football Club.

Introduction

My aim as Australian Sports Commission (ASC) Chair is clear. It’s the same one all Commission staff share. Simply, it is about enriching the lives of all Australians through sport, from grassroots to the world’s best levels. This intent is also reflected in the ASC’s commitment to the national collaborative initiative ‘Play by the Rules’. Play by the Rules highlights what all sporting environments should be: safe, inclusive and fair.

Whether it is watching my boys play junior cricket and football, barracking for my beloved Collingwood at the MCG, or witnessing Australia’s elite athletes performing at their peak, mutual respect for others is paramount.

Creating a fairer, more responsible and safer sporting environment for all Australians has been one of the Commission’s goals since it was formed in 1985. Reducing barriers to sports participation for all Australians, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds through programs, working with National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and funding sport at all levels is an important part of Australia’s cultural evolution.

Breaking down barriers

Many sports are leading the way in using common values of sport to build communities. The Australian Football League (AFL) is a prime example of how sporting organisations have been able to bring about real change when it comes to inclusion. The AFL, through its diversity programs, has been a strong proponent of moves against racism, homophobia and sexism. It could go a long way to explaining why 50 per cent of the fans who now go to games are women.

The AFL also achieved major steps forward in helping Indigenous players being widely accepted into the league. A pinnacle moment came in 1993 when St Kilda player Nicky Winmar was racially abused and the majority of football administrators, fans, and players realised that enough was enough when it came to racism in sport. The league became one of the first sporting bodies in Australia to adopt procedures to tackle racial and religious vilification with new governance structures in 1995.

Almost 20 years later, players such as the Magpies’ Harry O’Brien, who is an ASC participation-in-sport ambassador and the first
Brazilian-born player in the league, and Richmond's Bachar Houli, who is renowned for being the first devout Muslim to pull on an AFL jumper, are continuing to advance racial and religious equality. They are a new generation of Australians using the power of social-media tools, like Twitter, to bring a new understanding about their cultures and backgrounds to a wider audience.

Many would say we still have a way to go to reduce racism and remove barriers to participation in sport. A significant concern is that there is a big gap between the sports participation rates of English-speaking people born in Australian and those from CALD backgrounds. After all, participating in sport could be a low priority for immigrants facing more pressing difficulties in fully participating in their community. Yet many CALD communities have indicated sport can create greater access to wider society. It also highlights these barriers must be dismantled to make sport accessible to all Australians.

**Participation rates**

The importance of sport to Australians' identity is evidenced by recent government figures showing that 82.3 per cent of people aged 15 years and over participate annually in sport and recreation with two thirds of children also participating. As a nation, we spend over $8 billion on sporting goods and services each year. The participation rates are impressive figures that the Commission continues to strive to improve upon, but some of those statistics are less flattering when it comes to CALD communities.

ABS figures from 2010 show about six million Australians were born overseas and research highlights that many people from non-English speaking backgrounds want to play sports that are not traditionally played here. ABS figures from 2006 showed males born in Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest participation rates at 72 per cent, while women born in North Africa and the Middle East had participation rates of just 19.5 per cent.

These contrasting figures show that we still have work to do regarding participation rates for all Australians, let alone those from CALD backgrounds.

**Creating structures**

The ASC is committed and has structures and programs in place to help NSOs and community groups encourage more people from CALD backgrounds into Australia's sporting landscape. These initiatives are helping to ask the

A significant concern is that there is a big gap between the sports participation rates of English-speaking people born in Australian and those from CALD backgrounds.
questions of what sports CALD communities want to play and how they want to participate in them to improve accessibility and inclusion.

These questions were also raised at a multicultural sports roundtable event last year. The forum identified three key areas that organisations need to focus on to increase participation in sport by people from CALD backgrounds. The key areas included understanding and engaging with service providers, information sharing between organisations and having structures to promote participation.

The ASC keeps these three areas in mind as it works with CALD communities to operate within the frameworks of *The People of Australia – Australia’s Multicultural Policy* launched by the Australian Government in 2011. Several key initiatives, described below, have been part of this framework and the ASC’s work.

1. The Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program—some 13 projects have received grants between $5,000 and $50,000 to help young people from CALD backgrounds to participate in sport and physical activity in their communities in 2011-12. In 2012-13 another $300,000 will be provided through this grant program.

2. The All Cultures website—this website provides free information to assist sports organisations to be inclusive of people from CALD communities. More information can be found at www.ausport.gov.au/participating/all_cultures.

3. The All Cultures Webinar Series—over 200 people took part in three webinars this year, which helped to inform the sporting sector and explored ways to increase participation by CALD communities.

4. Supporting participation funding to NSOs—Aussie rules, badminton, cricket, netball, rugby league, swimming, table tennis and tennis were among the sports to receive funding to promote participation programs for CALD participants.

5. The Game On: Cultural Diversity in Sport forum—Relationships Australia, supported by the ASC, facilitated forums in 2010 and 2011 to bring together multicultural groups and organisations, including police, local councils, Centrelink, and school principals to discuss CALD communities and their needs.

6. The Active-After School Communities program and the All Australian Sporting Initiative—more than 21,000 participants, or 14 per cent, in the after-school program are from a non-English speaking background.

These initiatives are making real differences at grassroots levels. For instance, participation funding for NSOs has seen the creation of the AFL 9s, with the *Bachar Houli Cup* played between Islamic schools and an AFL 9s female multicultural carnival in Victoria this year.

Cricket Australia’s *A Sport for All* resource is available in 25 languages and witnessed a staff development program of diversity education for 120 staff. Table Tennis Australia has helped organise the Bennelong Cup incorporating a schools-based competition during a tournament held between players from China, Korea and Australia. Football Federation Australia has also launched anti-racism and pro-CALD strategies to promote participation from the wider community.

**Conclusion**

Australia is often referred to as a nation of immigrants and Australians often promote the ideals of a ‘fair go’ for all. These ideals must flow into the sporting arena for Australia to be a truly inclusive society. As evidenced above, there are many examples that show NSOs are actively embracing inclusion. As we look to the future, the ASC’s programs and partnerships are also focused on achieving increased participation rates for CALD communities.
From Expression to Collaboration:
The role of art in fostering participation and social inclusion among CALD communities

Ms Maryam Rashidi

Maryam Rashidi is currently completing a PhD in Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Studies at the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. She investigates the ways in which contemporary collaborative art practices can be used as a model for collaboration in society at large. The scope of the research is international, and she has collected data on collaborative practices taking place in Australia, Ireland, England, Austria, and Canada. Maryam has presented some of the outcomes of this research in various academic and non-academic contexts, most notably: the FECCA-sponsored Teaching Democracy Workshop (The Freilich Foundation, ANU, 2012); annual conference of Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (Sydney, 2012); and the 5th World Summit on Arts and Culture (Open Sessions; Melbourne, 2011). She has been a Research Assistant on two Australian Research Council Discovery projects, Rugs of War (2008) and Contexts of Collection (2009), both at ANU.

When Mr Pino Migliorino, Chair of FECCA, kindly invited me to contribute an article to this issue of the Australian Mosaic, he suggested that I draw on my PhD research on the role of collaborative art practice in effecting social change. He specifically asked whether these practices could be instrumentalised to address barriers to CALD youth participation and engagement at school and in society. In response, in this article I will weave a story about my personal journey from my home country of Iran to Australia as a young ‘overseas’ student of visual arts, with a case study from my current PhD research on collaboration in society through arts.

This will enable me, firstly, to highlight the importance of the arts for engaging CALD youth socially. Secondly, it will allow me to address some of the broader themes of this issue of the Australian Mosaic magazine through the lens of collaborative art practice, for instance, the structural barriers confronting CALD communities; the impact these barriers have on equal access and engagement in various areas of public life; and how these barriers and their negative effects can be mitigated.

1. **Personal journey: From the art of “absolute silence” to the aesthetics of social relations**

I left Iran in 2004 and moved to Australia as a 21-year-old ‘overseas’ student of an undergraduate degree in visual arts. My move was simply based on a personal choice: I wanted to travel the world; art was always my passion; Australia appealed to me from afar ... and so, here I came.

Believe it or not (given the current negative political hype against Iran in Western countries), I never went through a ‘culture shock’ upon my arrival in Australia. Quite to the contrary, I found many similarities between people’s everyday lives here and what I was used to back home, and I began to love Australia for that reason. There were differences, of course, but those were not too difficult for me to adjust to. Nevertheless, I gradually became aware that I was morphing into a different person, a person of both worlds, who, at the same time, felt she belonged neither (any longer) completely to Iran nor (yet, or ever) entirely to Australia.

Departing home, settling into a new country, not fully belonging to either world yet having to live the realities of both worlds simultaneously; in the scholarly literature on immigration, this is known as a diasporic experience. I was introduced to this concept in the early stages of my undergraduate studies, and it resonated with me. I was living in diaspora, in the
sometimes not-so-comfortable psychological limbo between Iran and Australia, and I needed to make sense of this experience. To do this, I found refuge in experimenting with different artistic forms and mediums. These artistic explorations peaked in an exhibition that comprised of one monumental installation artwork called “...in my absolute silence…”

The installation consisted of an old, rusty and bare metal bed-frame, with a generic-looking blanket placed on one side of the bed and a bunch of small and colourful soft toys on the other side. These were installed in a corner of a gallery room, the walls of which I then covered with the notes I had taken out of my personal diaries. I spent a day or two, handwriting the notes in Farsi (my mother tongue) on the white walls in the fragile medium of charcoal. They reflected the feelings of displacement, anxiety and loneliness I sometimes had from being in a foreign land, despite having found wonderful new friends.

The bed and the blanket were metaphors for my experience of living in temporary university accommodations, but also of living in a friendly country that was nevertheless not yet my home. These were ‘spaces’ that I could inhabit temporarily but did not own. I could only claim ownership over the things with which I had personalised these spaces: the decorative toys and my thoughts and writings in my moments of ‘absolute silence’.

Over time, the anxiety of living in a ‘space that I didn’t own’ has worn off. I have been an ‘overseas’ student for most of my time in Australia, and I have mostly lived in residential halls in the universities where I have studied. They always provided me with safer, more convenient, and more immediately sociable environments than living off-campus perhaps would have.

Every year or two, I have had to change rooms or residences or witness the departure of roommates or neighbours who became my token family for the time we lived together, and then left for other destinations.

Gradually, I grew to love the idea of living in a constant state of transition. The university accommodations became for me compact microcosms of intellectual and cultural diversity, within which encounters with strangers sometimes turned into long-lasting friendships and opportunities for professional partnerships, or otherwise ended when either my neighbours or I left the residence. Finally I began to feel I was becoming the ‘traveller of the world’ that I wanted to become.

My artistic explorations also gradually became more ‘extrovert’. I started investigating the aesthetics of social spaces, such as sports fields and communal kitchens in the residential halls. The content of my art changed to the ways in which people of diverse cultural backgrounds lived and worked together on a daily basis regardless of their differences. These investigations led me to the research I am currently completing on the ways in which artistic practices can be used to model and facilitate collaboration in culturally diverse societies.

2. Collaboration through art

In the past two decades, the field of contemporary art has undergone a social and collaborative ‘turn’. This means that the focus of many artists has shifted away from mere production of art objects (such as painting, sculpture, etc.), to creative facilitation of social relations, dialogue, and collaboration.

The artist’s main role is redefined in these practices in terms of production of social hubs and networks. The artist creates temporary spaces where strangers can meet, do something together if they wish, and then leave without necessarily any commitment to further engagement. Like the above-mentioned example of residential halls, these creative spatial constructions provide opportunities for social experimentation, that is, for ‘modelling’ different (hopefully better) ways of living together in society. It is not just the physicality of the constructed spaces that make these practices effective, but rather the ways in which these spaces are isolated from the pressures of official workplaces and everyday procedures.

Alternatively, an artist may work over a period of time with disadvantaged communities and engage them directly in generating a creative process that helps ameliorate their living conditions. In this process,
the artist may have to rely on assistance from local authorities, councils, or governments. There are numerous examples where such collaborations have had very positive effects for the communities. For instance, temporary or permanent housing and mobile medical services have been provided for the homeless; women subjected to domestic violence have been consoled; or communities marginalised based on their ethnic, religious, or other identities have been given channels to express their passions for and pride of their cultural traditions.

I will conclude this article by a case study that demonstrates the stakes and impacts of both of these modes of collaborative art practice.

In the year 2000, the Austrian artists group “WochenKlausur” was commissioned by local authorities of the city of Nuremberg (Germany) for the period of eight weeks to develop an art project in line with a major urban development plan (“Networking Greater Nuremberg”) that aimed to bring three regions of the city together. These were regions reputedly occupied by people and organisations with very different and at times conflicting ideological, religious, and political worldviews.

At the outset of the project, WochenKlausur carried out research along with representatives of these organisations in order to identify exactly what the extent of these tensions were. They discovered that some of the conflicting parties were so hostile to their opponents that they were even unwilling to have any direct contact with them, let alone conversation. So, WochenKlausur conceived the project with the goal of bringing the conflicting parties together simply to “sit down and talk.” They built platforms for conversation in all the three regions, and invited professional mediators to mediate the talks. They widely advertised their project through mainstream media to attract participation, but made sure the conversations would remain private and inaccessible to the media.

64 conflicting parties came together and had conversations. Most of them could ultimately put down their guards and agree to meet up again in the future. But some others could not, and left the conversations incomplete before reaching any agreements. Overall, the project was evaluated so positively by the majority that Nuremberg Society for Mediation agreed to sponsor the continuation of this program of conversation for a year.

The group counts the following factors as crucial to the success of the project: the isolation of the conversations from everyday settings and official procedures; assuring the participants of the privacy of the conversations; ensuring the participants of their freedom to choose the extent of their participation; and ensuring them of the right to agree to disagree if need be. (see http://www.wochenklausur.at/projekt.php?lang=en&id=15)

**Conclusion**

In this article, I have argued that the arts in general, and collaborative art practices in particular, can play an important role in providing CALD communities with invaluable opportunities to express their personal experiences of adjustment to cultural diversity. The transitional, temporary, and experimental nature of collaborative art practices can offer opportunities for assessing important social issues without the pressure of having to come up with agreements and decisions.

Finally, if collaborative art practices are aimed at fostering social engagement in CALD communities more extensively, it is better to begin ‘collaboration’ with an enquiry into *shared interests* rather than with the assertion of a *shared identity*. Focus on shared interests and mutual benefits can bind diverse individuals and groups regardless of their specific identities.
Understanding and Working with Chinese Families in Early Childhood Settings

Ms Yvonne Yoke Yin Chan

In early childhood we know that parents are children's first teachers, so it is important to understand and collaborate with families to successfully help their children learn.

**Respecting diversity within the curriculum**

I have had the privilege of volunteering and working in different centres in Australia while doing post-graduate early childhood study here. This has provided me with many valuable insights into the significance of celebrating the diversities of families. Respecting diversity within the curriculum means valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators learn to accept and value the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child-rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. As the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) identifies, they also learn to value children's different capacities and abilities, and to respect differences in families' home lives.

**Understanding beliefs and practices**

Growing up in a Chinese family I have been influenced by both traditional practices and heritage and also by ancestral knowledge. I have been shaped by the experiences, values and beliefs of my family and those in my community.

I remember vividly how on one occasion in an early childhood setting in Australia, my upset colleague asked me why a particular Chinese parent was so annoyed over her child being given cold milk to drink after reminding staff constantly not to give the child cold milk. I explained to the staff member that cold milk was believed to cause young children with low body resistance to develop coughs.

Steven Covey said that we should “seek first to understand.” By that he meant we should stop and listen carefully, ask questions using non-judgemental language, to make sure the essence of the other person’s point of view is clear to us. There are many variations in how families interact with their children. However, there are some values which many Chinese families share. Here are some of the
more consistent values or beliefs among Chinese families, and the likely implications these have for early childhood practitioners. Keep in mind though that there are many individual differences among Chinese families.

**Some commonly shared values**

Value of education—Chinese families generally believe in the Confucian concept that “He who excels in learning can be an official.” Some parents in early childhood settings may appear to be anxious about what their child is learning. This is especially true for those who are new to early childhood education in Australia. They may need more time to understand the value of play and how children learn in these settings.

Value of respect for others—Chinese families value the importance of respect for authority, elders and families. Parents generally hold teachers in high regard. Likewise, when communicating with someone who is more mature in age, due respect is given to them for their life experiences. Seeking opinions and advice from the more experienced is a sign of acknowledging their wealth of experience and knowledge in the subject matter. Early childhood practitioners wanting to share constructive feedback with mature parents of their learners in those settings need to do this with tact and respect while being objective. Seeking parental insights and inputs about those situations may also be helpful.

Beliefs about the food we eat—Chinese families believe in the concept of yin and yang in the food they eat. It is believed that certain foods have a heating or cooling effect on the body and some foods are perceived as being unsuitable for certain individuals. For example, foods such as watermelon or cold milk are cooling for the body, whereas too much fried food or too many biscuits are warming food for the body. This is especially relevant for very young children with weak immune systems and those recovering from an ailment. Early childhood practitioners being requested to make special arrangements for these children may find the additional request unfair or unreasonable, but to the concerned parent of the child it may be a real worry for the wellbeing and development of their child.

Being open about our views—another important Chinese value is the cultivation of self-restraint and good conduct. Chinese parents are generally modest and quite reserved in sharing their frank opinions or unhappiness publicly. To encourage them to be able to share their views constructively, trust must be gained over time. Practitioners can build a rapport with families by communicating informally with them.

Above are just a few examples of possible concerns that Chinese families may have as a result of their values and beliefs. Educators, therefore, need to think critically about opportunities and dilemmas that can arise from such diversity. These opportunities can help practitioners to, as DEEWR describes, “...learn about similarities and difference and about interdependence and how we can learn to live together.” When in doubt, referring to guides such as DEEWR’s *The Early Years Learning Framework* or Early Childhood Australia’s *Code of Ethics* may be helpful in guiding practitioners in making professional judgments in these situations.

For a full list of references, please contact Early Childhood Australia at eca@earlychildhood.org.au.

The Varied Expression of ‘Cultural Competence’: Findings from an exploratory study with health and human services practitioners

Mr James Wight

Located in Melbourne, Victoria, James is a Social Worker employed with the New Hope Foundation Settlement Services team. He is involved in casework, community work and the coordination of a Youth Mentoring Program. Stimulated by Social Work, Health and Human Services practice and the remodelling these undergo through client-practitioner-agency interaction, he has an abiding interest in dialogue related to culture, cross-cultural practice and diversity.

Introduction

The presence of ‘cultural competence’ as an expression for cross-cultural practice has advanced in health and human services. Engaging the idea that a dialogue on cross-cultural practice is intrinsic to one on structural barriers, here, I review the notation and consider how having ‘culturally competent’ service staff might assist clients from CALD backgrounds. In doing so, I draw upon the qualitative findings of a study I conducted in 2009/10 as part of La Trobe University’s School of Social Work Honours Program. This was an exploratory attempt to investigate how local practitioners understood, and related to, the construct of ‘cultural competence’. As part of this study, interviews were conducted with a group of experienced practitioners within mainstream and CALD specific services who illustrated their support for a complex and reflexive understanding of cross-cultural practice. This contrasted with the more common and, what the project viewed as, ‘modern’ and minimal constructions of ‘cultural competence’. Prompted by these ideas, I reason that whilst the expression in any of its varied formulations may have practical uses, continued review of its operations is essential.

‘Cultural competence’ rising?

The proposition that health and human services remain ‘adept’ in cross-cultural practice seems a key pretext to engaging with structural barriers faced by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Although various expressions of this intent exist, the currency of ‘cultural competence’ has ascended in Australia over the past few years. Neatly packaged, ‘competence’ has an almost muscular resonance. Perhaps there is an attractiveness here that presents symbiotically to ‘best practice’.

However self-promoting, there is a proliferation of cross-cultural training and professional development courses on offer, most of which flag a reward of ‘cultural competency’. It appears like ‘buzz word(s)’ within tendering guidelines, policy documents and service brochures. Peak professional bodies have adopted it too, for example, the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW) now has it embedded within their ‘Code of Ethics’. Presented as an integral doctrine for Australian social work practice, this is significant, especially given its influence over education.

The presence of ‘cultural competence’ as an expression for cross-cultural practice has advanced in health and human services.
So what does ‘cultural competence’ look like?

Originating in the U.S.A., interest emerged around ‘cultural competence’ following the 1989 text by Terry Cross and his colleagues, *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care*. There is now a league of publications promoting the expression, most referencing their definition below:

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The word culture is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. The word competence is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively.

Yet despite its apparent popularity, some commentators have raised concerns with ‘cultural competence’ and its corresponding literature.

Establishing a qualitative discourse on culture and cross-cultural practice

As part of La Trobe University’s School of Social Work Honours Program, over 2009/10 I undertook an exploratory qualitative research project that sought to review how health and welfare practitioners, if at all, related to the notion of ‘cultural competence’. The project’s scope allowed for a modest sample where the aim was to learn from, rather than critique practice. In order to access the views of local practitioners, a carefully composed, semi-structured questionnaire of five articulated sub-sections was developed. These pertained to culture and cross-cultural practice and concluded with the presentation of two vignettes that, in particular, served as a point of reflection and further elaboration around dialogue raised throughout the interviews.

Transcripts from these interviews were examined and discussed extensively with the research supervisor prior to the transposing of interview data into (i) a set of case-by-case summaries coded in terms of the schedule’s five interview sub-categories, and (ii) a spreadsheet that represented this data comparatively.

Results from the analysis of this material presented four clear findings:

(a) the sample was atypical given it only comprised experienced practitioners;

(b) all except one of the participants rejected the idea that culture could, or should, be identified solely with ethnicity and race;

Yet despite its apparent popularity, some commentators have raised concerns with ‘cultural competence’ and its corresponding literature.
(c) more grounded in notions of ‘cultural sensitivity’ and ‘critical self-awareness’, none of the sample were particularly familiar with, or were specifically enthusiastic about, ‘cultural competence’ as a frame per se; and

(d) notwithstanding this relative lack of engagement, all participants were generally comfortable with the expression in so far as its definition and operations aligned with the principles of practitioner curiosity (‘not knowing’) and self-monitoring, of client respect and the establishment of a ‘relational’ connection.

Whilst emphasising the importance of practitioner skills in areas such as interpreter use, including access to appropriate language support, this group of experienced local practitioners supported a complex and reflexive understanding of cross-cultural practice that was broadly consistent with what the study’s literature review identified as the ‘post-modern’ and critical sense of the expression. Participants did not abandon the idea that practitioners engage with information sources, albeit prescriptive, about individuals and groups. However, the risk that this becomes a prime focus was of especial concern. This iteration clearly contrasted with the minimal, more modernist conception of ‘cultural competence’.

Seeing (through) ‘competence’...

The term ‘cultural competence’ has considerable rhetorical and intuitive cachet—who, after all, could argue that practitioners should not be culturally competent? Nevertheless, the frame was not in any way a primary reference for those in this study’s sample. Acknowledging that the study’s intent was to learn from rather than critique practice, analysis of interview data alongside the literature indicated that without careful scrutiny, expressions of ‘cultural competence’ can undervalue important relational and critical practices that were articulated by practitioners.

Integral to any cross-cultural frame should be the promotion and development of active self-monitoring amongst practitioners, including an ongoing critique of their culturally-influenced professional practice. This should not be a solo ambition, rather it is the engagement of respectful curiosity with others which can act as facilitator, that is, a point of reflection. For this to occur, practitioners need to feel comfortable expressing a level of ‘not-knowing’ with their clients in addition to disclosing what they consider to already know. Some practitioners and clients alike could find this practice (culturally) unfamiliar, yet conducted with respect it may activate exploration, shared learning and meaning-making.

Divulged in the project’s interviews and as highlighted through a review of the literature, these ideas are not new. Without them, the frame of ‘cultural competence’ does little more than perform as a convenient slogan and, regretfully, as a hollow form of cross-cultural practice.

Conclusion – Diversity as requisite

In closing, it seems important to emphasise a final proposition, an idea that arose directly from the overall findings of the study. That is, whilst there may be practical uses that ‘cultural competence’ (in any of its formulations) may offer—as a guiding framework for health and human services practice, as a motif or ambition, as a criterion for the evaluation of services, and so forth—there is the problem that this frame can be used in a way that, as was indicated throughout the research, constructs culture in purely ethno-specific terms. This represents an issue that should be addressed, at least for those who intend on expanding use of the construct into the future.

The importance here is twofold. First, where use of the notation ‘cultural competence’ acts to define and prescribe culture as a strictly ethno-specific phenomenon, this, by default, essentialises culture and the groups to which it is assigned. Secondly, this action elides the many, and important, non-ethno-specific dimensions of culture: organisational culture; middle class culture; techno-consumerist culture. Such dimensions need to be acknowledged. To have these rendered invisible or, at best, opaque strikes the author as counter-intuitive to cross-cultural practice. Exploring diversity includes the cultural engagements of agency and practitioner which, however complex, cannot be separated from the challenge of addressing structural barriers within health and human services.

For a full list of references, please contact James Wight at jamesw@newhope.asn.au.

*My thanks to Dr Mark Furlong (Deakin University) who was Supervisor to this project completed within La Trobe University’s School of Social Work Honours Program and, of course, the practitioners—incredibly generous in sharing their precious time and insights.
When we talk about racism, we often think about it as a harm impacting on the individual, or as ugly messages or scenes. Too often we forget that racism, like other forms of discrimination, can be structural and systemic and is often part of the institutionalised DNA of our practices, policies and procedures. Just as we talk about unconscious bias when we look at gender equality, we need to talk about the unconscious bias around race.

Racism is a structural barrier for many who seek to participate equally in the community. We need to think about addressing racism and promoting racial equality in our communities. We also need to look to address both the structural barriers of racism and those preventing racial equality, just as we look to treat and prevent illness in the health sector.

The Agenda for Racial Equality 2012-2016, which was launched at the National Press Club at the end of August 2012, identifies some ways to tackle this. Part of this Agenda is the National Anti-Racism Campaign, Racism. It Stops with Me. There are three main drivers of the Agenda’s definition of issues—all of which help us identify the structural and institutional barriers within which racism exists.

**Discrimination and Disadvantage**

The first driver is the link between discrimination and disadvantage. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two. Research shows that racial discrimination contributes to social and economic disadvantage, and, likewise, that social and economic exclusion can exacerbate experiences of racial discrimination.

This link means that identifying where discrimination and exclusion happen, and eliminating them, benefits both the individual and the whole community. There is no benefit to us as a community in having some people marginalised and left out of our social and economic life. This is why we need to focus on ensuring strong economic and social outcomes.

There are many examples, for instance as shown in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s 2011 publication on the settlement outcomes of new arrivals, of groups representing particular waves of immigration, who have faced great difficulty in finding work or accessing education, and as a consequence have found themselves and their families in deep economic disadvantage.
This sets the stage for inter-generational poverty—an easy trap to slide into, and a wicked problem to get out of.

**Systemic Discrimination**

The second driver of the Agenda is an awareness of the **systemic barriers** that prevent people from different racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds achieving equality. The Agenda looks at various forms of systemic discrimination.

Systemic discrimination is hard to identify and understand. However, when we look at outcomes that are disproportionately bad for particular groups in our community, we can see that there is often a particular racial or ethnic feature in play.

Systemic discrimination is often the barrier to realising real diversity in employment. We’ve been talking about diversity in workplaces for a long time. Up until now, though, this discussion has mostly focused on gender diversity, and even with that focus, real and lasting change has been hard to come by.

Identifying barriers to equal participation in employment, including the racism created by unconscious bias, is important even for those workplaces that already have comprehensive diversity programs. We know that to recruit for diversity is one thing, but to filter for racial barriers in institutional practices and procedures, or in requirements for roles, is another. Just as we ask the hard questions about the gender filter, we have to do so around the cultural ‘glass ceiling’.

There are good reasons for businesses to address this

**We know that to recruit for diversity is one thing, but to filter for racial barriers in institutional practices and procedures, or in requirements for roles, is another.**

**Human Rights**

The third driver of the Agenda derives from the wisdom of those from across the world who helped us identify **human rights** after World War II, and who gave us the tools and frameworks that we need to protect them.

Internationally, our ratification of the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* provides a solid foundation for pursuing equality. The Convention provides standards that make specific human rights breaches very clear. It gives us tools to address systemic issues and a way to understand equality as a community in which people are able to contribute independently and productively.
Working within a human rights framework also gives us the tools that can help us to resolve situations when rights compete. For example, we have recently grappled with understanding the racial hatred provision of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, which make public comments that cause offence, insult, threat and intimidation based on race, unlawful. The case of Eatock v Bolt is a recent example of what these provisions are about and which also demonstrates how poorly understood they are.

The recent ‘Aboriginal memes’ page on a popular social media site, in which images of Aboriginal people were published with highly derogatory captions, illustrates the importance of getting the balance between freedom of speech and freedom from racial hatred right, and preventing harm and hurt to a particular racial group.

A question I have been asked in my capacity as Race Discrimination Commissioner is “where do you draw the line” and make such behaviour unlawful, as opposed to simply treating it as in extremely poor taste?

The provisions against racial vilification were carefully drafted to balance the right to freedom of expression with the right to protection of individuals and groups from harassment and fear because of their race. Most human rights are not absolute; they involve a fine ‘balancing act’ of the rights and freedoms of different people. The general rule of thumb is that one person’s rights and freedoms should not infringe on the rights and freedoms of others. This is particularly so in relation to freedom of speech.

I know from the number and tenor of the complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission, that those who make use of the protections afforded by section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act do so to help them feel safer and more secure as they go about their daily lives.

We should be mindful of the importance of legal protections against behaviour that creates a climate of fear, a climate in which discrimination can thrive, and a climate in which violence can take place. Such a climate also creates a barrier that prevents people from exercising their freedoms and rights.

If we succeed in removing structural barriers, this is what it will look like:

We will recognise the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to our nation’s prosperity and richness.

We will recognise the legacy of treatment of our First Peoples, and advocate for the implementation of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We will acknowledge and maximise the contribution that successive waves of immigrants have made to our country.

We will also recognise that, as a community, we have been highly successful in evolving in response to the benefits and challenges presented by different cultures.

And finally, we will recognise that along with rights, all Australians have responsibilities to abide by the laws of this country and to work towards building a cohesive society.

Only by achieving racial equality, can we can ensure that every individual is given the opportunity for full participation in our social and economic life.

And that is good for all of us.

For a full list of references, please contact Australian Human Rights Commission’s anti-racism secretariat at antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au.
Reporting Refugees

Ms Julie Posetti

For the past 15 years, racist and xenophobic political memes have dominated public discussion of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, with asylum seekers who arrive by boat demonised as threatening aliens by politicians whose divisive messages are fanned and fed by inflammatory headlines and tabloid TV.

In this climate, and on the back of involvement in a substantial national research project on the reporting of multiculturalism (which led to me theorising about the potential transformative impact on journalists of encounters with minorities) in 2011, I decided to embark on a public journalism project with my final-year University of Canberra broadcast journalism students.

The end result was a two hour ABC radio program that gave a much-needed voice to refugees, a better understanding for the public of the complicated issues surrounding them, and important lessons for those of us working on the project.

#ReportingRefugees was built on partnerships that I forged with 666 ABC Canberra; Canberra Refugee Support (CRS), a community organisation which works with asylum seekers and refugees; OurSay, an innovative online start-up; and the School of Music at the Australian National University.

I made my first approach to CRS, and their initial response reflected the impact of xenophobic political campaigns and media stereotyping: they were reluctant to get involved. But I persisted, pursuing meetings and arguing the merits of interventions in journalism education and public journalism approaches in tackling problematic reporting of marginalised communities. The proposal was for CRS to facilitate contact between student journalists and asylum seeker/refugee clients, and provide advice on relevant policy and community programs, with the aim of minimising any potential harm to vulnerable interviewees and assisting in the development of culturally intelligent reporting on a complex and often poorly reported issue.

Ultimately, CRS agreed to participate. “The judgment of the CRS board was that the potential return on this project far outweighed the risks and (we) decided to proceed,” Co-ordinator Geoff McPherson said, reflecting on the project at its conclusion.

By contrast, the ABC was keen to be involved from the outset. They were even prepared to hand over two hours of airtime to the students, allowing them (under joint ABC and academic supervision) to report, produce and present a radio special devoted to #ReportingRefugees which was scheduled for

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Julie Posetti is an award-winning journalist and journalism academic who will join the University of Wollongong (UoW) Journalism School in 2013. She has been a national political correspondent, a regional news editor, a TV documentary reporter, and a presenter on radio and television with the ABC. Ms Posetti was awarded the 1996 Australian Human Rights Award for Radio in recognition of her ABC reports on Indigenous issues and an investigative series on the abuse of children in state care in NSW. She was also the recipient of a 2007 Carrick Award for excellence in teaching and learning. Her academic research centres on journalism and social media; reportage of race, culture and minorities; and media representation of Muslim women post-9/11. She is currently writing her PhD dissertation on ‘The Twitterisation of Journalism’ at UoW. Ms Posetti is the Australian correspondent for the US website PBS Mediashift and can be followed on Twitter @julieposetti.
broadcast on November 27 2011—three months from the start of the project.

Jordie Kilby, ABC 666 Canberra content director, explained the ABC’s motivation for involvement: “We hoped for an insightful look at the local community of refugees living in the Canberra region; we wanted to build on our relationships with local refugees and asylum seekers and the community groups that help and support them. We also hoped the project would give us an opportunity to look at some future journalists and their ideas and work.”

By this stage, my ANU School of Music collaborator, Jonathan Powles, had agreed to offer his students the opportunity to produce original scores to accompany my journalism students’ stories. Apart from being an interesting cross-disciplinary education collaboration, the provision of original music for the planned radio program meant that the ABC would also be able to podcast the show. (Copyright laws in Australia prevent the podcasting of commercial music broadcast on radio.)

Finally, I decided to approach OurSay—a Melbourne start-up that partners with media organisations, universities and non-government organisations to crowdsourcing questions designed to address the “citizens’ agenda”. They jumped at the chance to be involved, and we launched the project’s OurSay page which asked the public to identify the questions they most wanted answered by a panel of experts on asylum seeker and refugee policy during the ABC broadcast.

OurSay’s CEO, Eyal Halamish, explained the role of the platform in the project: “Especially on such a contentious issue as that of refugees and asylum seekers, where the mainstream media latch onto sensationalist, short-termist news instead of taking a broader view, a social tool such as OurSay can help set the agenda more effectively and help express what the public feels about an issue, as sourced from their own questions and comments.” It worked like this: over the course of a month, OurSay users were asked to submit the questions they most wanted put to the panel, and the top five questions were selected by popular vote on the site.

Trying to balance learning outcomes and university assessment policies against real-world media deadlines is always tricky. But doing so on a project seeking to break new ground through multiple public journalism partnerships, on a complex and sensitive reporting assignment, proved to be the most challenging teaching project I have ever been involved with. Fortunately, it also emerged as the most rewarding experience of my journalism education career. That was in part due to the excellent working relationship I had with my tutors Ginger Gorman and Phil Cullen, both of whom are also experienced ABC broadcasters.

The major assessment required students to work in reporting duos on original, long-form audio or audio/video stories about refugees and asylum seekers (or policies and programs pertaining to them) that would compete for selection in the final radio program. Additionally, they had to produce images and text to accompany their stories for online publication. They were encouraged to speak with, not just about, refugees and asylum seekers, and to explore personal stories and angles that the mainstream media had largely overlooked. Some reporting duos were assigned to particular refugee or asylum seeker families and community services facilitated by CRS, while others independently identified stories and sources.

The final assessment involved publication of an academically grounded reflective practice
The project required the students to critically analyse the project, their involvement in it and their experiences of it, with reference to their own attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees.

So, what did the students think of the project at the start? Many have admitted they were daunted by the theme and the workload when they first heard about it. One, Ewan Gilbert, conceded he was initially a tad perplexed: “I went into the assignment thinking it was all a bit over the top.” But Gilbert, now a cadet journalist with the ABC, clearly understood the project’s purpose in retrospect: “I think one of the biggest barriers people face when it comes to understanding refugee issues, is that most Australians have probably never met one,” he blogged. “Putting a face to an issue was so important to helping my understanding of the problems. You learn to treat the issue with humanity. You learn to see refugees as people and quite often extremely vulnerable people at that. If the whole refugee debate didn’t have any relevancy to me before, it certainly does now.”

Another student, Grace Keyworth, who was already working in the Canberra Press Gallery as a videographer with AAP when the project began, wrote that #reportingrefugees was an important and timely intervention.

“I have been present at countless press conferences this year where the discussion of asylum seekers and refugees was completely dehumanised. There was a lot of talk of numbers, figures and ‘processing’ them like they’re a piece of meat, but hardly any of names, occupations or their reasons for leaving their countries,” she lamented. “It shows that as a society, we haven’t progressed beyond the racial discrimination towards immigrants that has plagued our country since federation.”

The students were encouraged to openly reflect, through their social media activity, on their pre-conceived ideas about the refugee/asylum seeker issue as they worked on their stories. They had to navigate very complex issues, such as balancing the need to avoid re-traumatizing refugee interviewees who had survived torture, against the need for editorial transparency and independence. Many encountered significant obstacles, from paternalism within some organisations which led (inappropriately) to one service provider refusing its refugee clients permission to speak, to nervous interviewees backing out of stories close to deadline. But in every case, these experiences delivered important learning outcomes about the need for sensitivity and informed consent in reporting on refugees and asylum seekers.

Ultimately, the students broadcast two hours of moving, human radio with a focus on personalised stories, situational reports on community programs such as a psychological service that treats traumatised child refugees, explanatory journalism that unpacked highly complex and sensitive themes, and an intelligent panel discussion, featuring the former Commonwealth Ombudsman and the UNHCR’s representative in Australia, and which addressed the questions crowdsourced via OurSay in a way that allowed misconceptions to be powerfully countered.

As the program aired, students, listeners and ABC staff participated in a lively Twitter discussion triggered by the stories, aggregated by the #ReportingRefugees hashtag.

Additionally, the ABC website continues to host a bundle of additional student reports produced for the project, along with a podcast of the radio special, serving as valuable educational resources.

This quote from international student, Linn Loken, sums up the value of the project and makes my own very substantial investment in time, energy and effort in its execution seem worthwhile:

“Knowing a few refugees now, this is not just a word to me anymore. When I hear the word ‘refugee’ mentioned, I think about the people I talked to during this project and I can see their faces.”

*This is an edited version of an article first published online by US public broadcaster PBS.*
Media influence and impact are among the most powerful and intangible forces in contemporary societies—difficult to measure, but felt keenly by us all. Media shapes the ways we think about each other and understand the world. In a culturally diverse society like ours, media can either make us feel we belong or prevent us from feeling so. This has real material consequences in a society in which access to social resources is uneven. Australian Bureau of Statistics data on social wellbeing tell us that, still, in our multicultural society, “factors of language and culture can limit social participation in life in Australia.”

Media influence and impact are among the most powerful and intangible forces in contemporary societies—difficult to measure, but felt keenly by us all. Media shapes the ways we think about each other and understand the world. In a culturally diverse society like ours, media can either make us feel we belong or prevent us from feeling so. This has real material consequences in a society in which access to social resources is uneven. Australian Bureau of Statistics data on social wellbeing tell us that, still, in our multicultural society, “factors of language and culture can limit social participation in life in Australia.”

Participation and citizenship are not only economic or political concerns. Cultural citizenship, described by Toby Miller as “the right to know and to speak,” is crucial to the ways we engage in society. Access to good information and the informal ‘common knowledge’ shared by media audiences is a crucial foundation to participation in the public sphere. Accessible, relevant and trusted media are essential to social inclusion and equity in contemporary democracies.

Individuals need to feel media is ‘for’ them in order to access these resources. Unfortunately, many Australians experience the representations of Australia through the relative monocultures of Summer Bay or Ramsay Street or, worse, relentlessly negative portrayals of their communities, as alienating and exclusionary.

Australia is now one of the most diverse countries in the world. Almost half of our population have at least one parent born overseas and a quarter of today’s Australians were born overseas themselves. Sadly, amidst this vibrant diversity, Australian newsroom cultures have tended to hang onto an image of Australia, and Australian audiences, that is stuck somewhere in the 1950s. The ‘common sense’ often employed in Australian newsrooms rarely takes into account the perspectives of Australians of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

The role of SBS, as Australia’s multicultural national broadcaster, is to challenge this outmoded self-image by reflecting our multicultural society and promoting social inclusion. This is still a crucially important role, as recent Ipsos Mackay research on attitudes and media uses of immigrants who have been in Australia between two and ten years reveals. The report describes how a lower level of trust in relation to mainstream media impacts on the ways they participate and interact:

New migrants considered the ABC and SBS to be the most trusted sources of news and current affairs... There were complaints from Somali participants about the way some newspapers had presented their community to the public. Another key
criticism from new immigrants of local media was a perceived tendency towards bias, stereotyping, exaggeration and inaccuracy when it came to the portrayal of their homelands in coverage of international news... There was very little evidence that new immigrants took advantage of the various channels for media interaction available to them. Only a few participants in the affinity groups seemed to interact with the media in this way. New immigrants questioned the point of interaction but more importantly doubted if anyone cared what they thought. Some immigrants worried about persecution if they made their views known in public.

Clearly the participants in this study felt ambivalent about what the mainstream Australian media offers: while the report found that there was use of commercial news and current affairs, alongside the public broadcasters and homeland news sources, the impact of the kinds of coverage they saw on the commercials created greater distance between them and longer-standing Australian audiences, rather than offering them avenues for inclusion and participation. Rather than embracing the new world of audience participation, these recent Australians were holding back, bemused and confused by the parochial worldview represented in much Australian media and feeling that their position in society was marginal and, more worryingly, precarious.

The incredible diversity of the stories on SBS platforms offers a welcome counterpoint for these audiences. They express support for SBS’s role in informing the ways our audiences think about local and international issues. Combined with sensitivities in approach developed over thirty-five years of operating as the “voice of multicultural Australia,” SBS offers an important resource in informing the ways Australians relate to cultural diversity and each other. The participants in the Ipsos study saw SBS as the “great translator”; making sense of Australian cultural diversity and the local norms and news that they did not fully grasp in other local media.

SBS seeks to be “the catalyst for Australia’s conversations about multiculturalism and social inclusion” and provides resources for belonging and participation in public life for Australians of all backgrounds. As a public institution with a remit to “contribute to meeting the communications needs” of Australia’s diverse communities, we broadcast, in over sixty languages, the seven billion stories of the world’s humanity on screen, online and on radio. We also seek to improve practices around media and cultural diversity. A new initiative within this objective is the series of SBS CQ: cultural intelligence forums—formed debates bringing together media practitioners, community representatives, commentators and researchers to discuss hot issues around diversity and media practice (all available at www.sbs.com.au/cq).

At SBS, we also think differently about who should tell Australian stories. SBS is working with partners to improve pathways into employment for students of CALD backgrounds through mentorships, new opportunities and training. We believe that an important way to improve media practice is to improve diversity in our newsrooms, productions companies and editorial decision makers, to bring new sensibilities to the fore in storytelling about contemporary Australia.

We see our role as a public broadcaster with a multicultural charter as extending to an influence on other Australian media: to encourage them to do better in the ways they engage with cultural diversity.

In 2010, SBS took part in the Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria (ECCV)’s Spotlight on Stereotypes media forum to discuss issues of fairness in reporting. The forum was
organised in response to findings by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) that all three Melbourne commercial TV stations had breached their Code of Conduct in their reporting of an incident related to the Sudanese community. ACMA found that the reporting had “…created an unfair presentation overall of Sudanese people as being particularly prone to commit violence and crime.” ACMA required all of the stations to offer cultural training to their staff.

The *Spotlight on Stereotypes* forum highlighted some key issues around news reporting, including:

- unfairness and stereotyping in news and current affairs reporting—particularly in the commercial media—and the negative impact this can have on identity formation;
- the lack of diverse media faces as TV presenters and actors in TV dramas; and
- the perceived lack of a reasonable number of young media graduates from diverse backgrounds getting a start in the media.

As a result of these findings, the ECCV approached SBS to be involved in a mentorship program aimed to provide support and better career pathways for students of diverse backgrounds. SBS has since launched the SBS Media Mentorships for media students of CALD and refugee backgrounds with Deakin University in Victoria and Macquarie University in New South Wales.

Along with our partner universities and the ethnic communities’ councils in both states, we have developed a dynamic mentoring program for the students. The NSW group have already had access to SBS cadets training, including Codes of Practice and Editorial Guidelines training, and voice and presentation skills development, and have been supported to go on outings to the Sydney Writers’ Festival and write restaurant reviews. They are preparing to present back to us at an end of year event before being matched with SBS mentors in year two of the program. The Victorian participants have just been selected and are in line for induction and training before the end of the year.

This program seeks to develop a strong cohort amongst the students, intended to increase retention rates in the media courses of CALD students, and also assist them to learn to ‘walk the walk’ of media professionals through exposure to a media workplace. It will also assist them to develop their career plans, provide networking opportunities and facilitate pathways to careers in media.

We’re excited by the energy and enthusiasm of these students and know that the SBS mentors will also learn a great deal from them.

Outside the newsroom, SBS supports emerging talent in the Australian film and television industry through attachments to our major factual series and an Indigenous TV mentorship award. These programs have seen Maria Tran, a young Vietnamese filmmaker involved with ICE (Information Communication Exchange) in Western Sydney, work with the production company Northern Pictures on *Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta* and early-career Indigenous filmmaker Darlene Johnson build industry contacts and knowledge through attendance at conferences, individual mentoring and legal training at SBS.

These opportunities and points of access are invaluable to those commencing or developing their careers in the media industry. Media can be a tough game, with high stakes, quick turnarounds and significant levels of investment and risk. On-the-job training provides crucial insights and experience amongst the norms, jargon and ongoing practices of media professionals which can, to the uninitiated, feel daunting.

SBS has always had a role in providing opportunities for media professionals from non-dominant cultures, from our earliest days of putting different faces on Australian screens and the many informal internships and mentorships. We have now formalised these arrangements with like-minded partners to build ongoing commitments in a changing media sector.

We hope to encourage new stories, perspectives and approaches to Australian media practice through these programs—we believe that Australian media, and Australian audiences, will reap the benefits for many years to come.
Australian public life has been dominated by parliamentary antics not seen for many years, although quite common in the rough years around Federation a century ago. This is despite the much higher levels of education and even basic literacy of voters today. Politicians seem obliged to reproduce those pioneering attitudes, even while Australia becomes more urbanised, more middle class and more multicultural. True, our parliaments have not yet descended to the fisticuffs common in Taiwan or Japan, which are also well educated. Most of our state parliamentarians are less artificially homespun than in the United States. But you sometimes wonder “wherever did the parties find these people?” One answer is that they do not find them among the quarter of the population that was born overseas. With mainly British exceptions in Western Australia and South Australia, one qualification for selection, whether by Labor, Nationals or Greens, is to be born in the local electorate. Julia Gillard is our first overseas-born Prime Minister since 1923, when Welshman Billy Hughes was displaced by his conservative allies. She is also, of course, our only female PM. Women have done better in state politics, as have immigrants. Perhaps more important is the increasing trend for candidates to have “lived off politics” as staffers to existing politicians, and trade union and party officials, working their way up through offices rather than the community as a whole. While this is most obvious for the ALP, it is also quite common for the conservatives. Such candidates build the necessary contacts to influence those who select them, rather than having broad experience. This benefits those born and bred in Australia, even to a greater extent than in Canada or New Zealand.

One of the worst results of this inbred selection is that so many have come up in youth or student politics, often factional and corrupt, if on a modest scale. As Henry Kissinger cynically remarked “university politics are so brutal because the stakes are so small.”

Paul Keating, Tony Abbott and Julia Gillard all rose by this tortuous route. While it is a sign of progress that most politicians now have university educations, this too cuts them off from their constituents, especially in rural and industrial districts. Some go on behaving like undergraduates long into middle life. A central problem in democracies, and not just in Australia, is that elections do not bring to power those like the electors. Britain is an excellent example of this, with both the conservative Prime Minister and the Mayor...
of London being old Etonians. The leader of the Labour Party is the son of a (Marxist) university professor. Britain’s only female prime minister also came to prominence through Oxford University politics, while Bob Hawke had some of his rough edges polished there, if not too many.

The trouble with the kind of parliamentary behaviour we have recently seen is that it caters to the mass media, which prefers scandal to the boring routines of legislation. Hence the invention by Rupert Murdoch’s The Australian of “class warfare” and “gender warfare”. Class warfare arose, apparently, because one or two Labor ministers criticised the super-rich owners of Australia’s mineral wealth. The gender war arose because of the measurable fact that Julia Gillard is preferred by women and Tony Abbott by men. Otherwise these two “wars” are complete inventions and simply distort voters’ understanding of politics.

The contradictions between politicians and their public are clearest in the many systems which are unstable and liable to overthrow. The stakes are much higher and the economic and social problems much more acute. In some, women have done better than in our old fashioned parliamentary systems. But that is almost always because they come from aristocratic families, like leaders in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia or the Philippines, all of which have had female national leaders. It is not “gender” that decides leadership so much as “class”. Nor are uneducated leaders any more progressive than the educated. Stalin and Hitler were both without higher education, while Stalin spent a few years at an Orthodox religious seminary. Both consolidated their power by killing their rivals—a road not open in our system, though political back-stabbing certainly is.

While academics may generalise about roads to power or types of elites, there are always surprises in unstable or newly established systems. This is especially relevant to much of the Muslim world at present, not because it is Muslim but because it is breaking out of long periods of conservative rule and a lack of civil rights. However, that does not mean that parliamentary liberalism is just around the corner. Hopeful promises of immediate freedom come especially from the United States, as it commits its forces to reforming Afghanistan or Iraq and supports the Syrian, Egyptian and Libyan revolutions. But the results are questionable to say the least. Egypt has already held a national election for the first time in over thirty years. But the winner has been the Muslim Brotherhood, suppressed by generations of Egyptian dictators, but not for its democratic aims. Tunisia has had a similar election result. Closer analysis of Libya and Syria shows that ethnic minorities (including not just Christians but also Muslim sects) are more likely to be persecuted than they were before the revolution. Former underground movements like the Salafists, the Khilafat, the Brotherhood and the Taliban, have flourished in the new democracies. They are not liberal democrats.

One lesson from these recent events is that Australian politicians and journalists, and many public servants and policy advisers, lack the educational and cultural experience to understand such puzzling events. Some fall back on schoolboy abuse and intrigue, cheered on by the shock jocks and the popular media. Serious issues require serious consideration. Currently we, the public, are not getting that. Many do not want it.

In other news, Australia’s election to the United Nations Security Council recognises our importance in the Asia-Pacific region and as a founding member of the United Nations. We should congratulate those responsible for this result, including Kevin Rudd, Bob Carr and Julia Gillard, as well as many hardworking public servants behind the scenes.
On *The Virtuous Citizen*

Professor Geoff Gallop AC

Dr Tim Soutphommasane’s book *The Virtuous Citizen: Patriotism in a Multicultural Society* was published in August 2012 by Cambridge University Press.

After attending school in Geraldton, Professor Geoff Gallop studied at the University of Western Australia, as well as Oxford and Murdoch Universities.

From 1986 to 2006 he was a Member of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly. Professor Gallop was a Minister in the Lawrence Labor Government from 1990 to 1993, the Leader of the Opposition from 1996 to 2001 and the Premier of Western Australia from 2001 to 2006.

After retiring from politics he was appointed Professor and Director of the Graduate School of Government at The University of Sydney, a position he still holds. He chairs the Australia Awards Board for the Commonwealth Government. In 2008 he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia.

**Speech to launch**

*The Virtuous Citizen: Patriotism in a Multicultural Society* by Dr Tim Soutphommasane  
25 September, 2012, Sydney

It gives me great pleasure to be invited to launch *The Virtuous Citizen* by Tim Soutphommasane. He is an academic working at the cutting edge, where values come into conflict with each other and theory becomes practice. He is a realist rather than a utopian but a progressive rather than a conservative. Who would think to sub-title a book “Patriotism in a multicultural society”? Aren’t the two ways of thinking and acting completely opposed to each other? Tim thinks otherwise and makes a strong case for his view.

We all know, of course, that there is plenty of politics in such an argument. That’s why the British Labour Party is taking such an interest in his book. Indeed he is, to quote George Eaton in the New Statesman, “shaping the Labour leadership’s thinking on patriotism.”

Here in Australia, as opposed to the UK and Europe, things are more settled on the multiculturalism front. However, there are issues still to debate and Tim’s view that the left and centre-left shouldn’t leave that territory to the right and centre-right is very well made.

It is true, of course, that the nation-state and nationalism are challenging concepts if you believe in human rights and international solidarity. On this point the English scholar John Gray is critical. “Violence and exclusion,” he says, “are not incidental features of nation-building.”

However, Gray’s further claim that “some liberal states have managed quite successfully without having a single overarching national culture of the sort he [that is, Tim] advocates” misses the point. It is that concept “overarching national culture” and the way we have become used to thinking about it. Tim demonstrates that it can have a more complex meaning built around liberalism, democratic deliberation and multiculturalism. This is a most important contribution to contemporary thinking about politics and culture.
There is also, I think, a methodological point here. Do we see the world in terms of either/or (for example, patriotism or multiculturalism) or do we approach it more dialectically and as a “unity of opposites”? On the one hand we have the universality of liberalism and on the other the particularity of the nation-state and culture. This allows for variations on a theme or as Heraclitus (ca. 535 - 475 BC) put it:

“Cold things grow hot, a hot thing cold, a moist thing withers, a parched thing is wetted.”

It is all there in the mix—part history, part technology, part politics, and part ideology. We inherit and we change. We dive in or we stop to reflect. To assume away a part of this “real” world when analysing and/or proposing is bound to leave an argument short.

What we need to do then is explore The Virtuous Citizen and see how the connecting threads work to make a case for a particular approach to political theory and practice. In reading the book five questions come to mind.

Is liberalism still the foundation stone on which to build a good society? However much we may see the need to go deeper and wider, is it not the case that both multiculturalism and patriotism need to be built around a liberal conception of politics if they are to be progressive in their real-world manifestations?

Secondly, why is it necessary to talk of “patriotic” deliberation and not just deliberative democracy? Indeed some may say that deliberation needs to take on an interest-free or at least interest-neutral character to be “reasonable”.

My third question relates to the concept of national culture and the conclusion that it “cannot be viable unless politicised.” What do we mean when we say the nation-state should “integrate” and “educate”? How is this different from “assimilation”, and, indeed, from “the tyranny of collective opinion” about which John Stuart Mill spoke?

My fourth question takes us back to Australia. Tim has said in an interview that the Rudd-Gillard Governments have “lacked a nation-building project.” What is meant by this? How might the whole question play out in the next national election?

Finally, is the argument about the unrealism of a liberalism devoid of patriotism (what we might call a “real world” argument) or is it about the principle of patriotism? If it is the latter, how do we respond to the call to compassion embodied in the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

Let me conclude with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: “I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my houses as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.” Note the implications of what he says—yes we do have and need a “home” within which we can—and should—consider what “others” think and say. He is speaking of a grounded and relational liberalism rather than an abstract and disconnected one. On this I think Tim would agree.

Mr Paul Power

Paul Power has been Chief Executive Officer of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), the national umbrella body for organisations and individuals working with refugees and asylum seekers, since 2006. Paul leads the organisation’s policy development and public education on refugee issues and its advocacy with the Australian Government, international networks and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He chairs or co-chairs RCOA’s member networks on asylum policy, refugee settlement issues and international refugee policy. Since 2008, Paul has served as a member of the Australian Government’s Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council.

Prior to joining RCOA, Paul worked in the non-government sector as a media officer, trainer, researcher and manager, after a 12-year career in the newspaper industry as a journalist and editor. Through his work in non-government organisations, Paul has been involved with projects in international aid, community development, mental health support, volunteer training, social research and advocacy.

During 2012, while Australia’s political leaders have been debating how to stop asylum seekers entering Australia by boat, nations in the Middle East and Africa have been keeping the borders open to allow hundreds of thousands of people to escape persecution and conflict in their home countries.

In the first nine months of the year, more than 675,000 asylum seekers were received by Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso from the conflicts in Syria and Mali.

Viewed in the international context, the Australian debate about asylum appears myopic and mean-spirited—and quite divorced from global realities.

Unfortunately, the report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers released on 13 August this year added to the belief in Australia that our nation can somehow insulate itself from international flows of people seeking a place of safety from persecution. The report did emphasise the need to develop a regional system to protect refugees and asylum seekers in the Asia-Pacific region, but in the same breath advocated policies which deflect Australia’s responsibilities towards asylum seekers, punish people based on how they arrive in Australia and undermine international law.

The Panel’s 22 recommendations were adopted in principle by the Australian Government on the day of the Report’s release. At the time of writing, eight of these recommendations have been fully or partially implemented. Some of the changes have been positive, for example, increasing Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program from 13,750 places to 20,000 places in 2012-13 and boosting funding for capacity-building initiatives in the region by $10 million. Others, however, have been far less constructive.

At the heart of the Expert Panel’s report is the “no advantage” principle, which stipulates that asylum seekers who seek to enter Australia by boat should not gain an advantage over those who apply through “regional and international arrangements”. The Panel recommended that those arriving by boat should

Viewed in the international context, the Australian debate about asylum appears myopic and mean-spirited—and quite divorced from global realities.
be taken to offshore processing facilities in Nauru and Papua New Guinea and, if found to be refugees, should wait for resettlement for the amount of time they would have waited had they applied through “regional arrangements”.

Currently, there is no “managed regional system” in the Asia-Pacific region through which asylum seekers can apply for protection. The Government has taken the supposed “regional arrangements” to mean the resettlement process managed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and claims that it will look at regional benchmarks for resettlement to determine a fair “waiting time” for resettlement out of Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

There are two key problems with this approach. Firstly, people are prioritised for resettlement based on needs, not on how long they have been “waiting”, so a model based on time spent in exile is largely meaningless. Secondly, access to resettlement varies so dramatically across the region that selecting an appropriate benchmark is likely to be impossible.

For example, over the past five years, an average of around 13,800 people have been resettled out of Thailand annually, compared to around 126 each year of Pakistan. If these trends continue, a registered refugee in Thailand (which currently hosts just under 90,000 refugees) may have a reasonable chance of being resettled over the next decade, while the majority of the refugees in Pakistan (currently numbering 1.7 million) will die waiting. That’s assuming, of course, that the refugee population in each country remains stable. And that resettlement places don’t continue to decline, as they have over the past two years. And it doesn’t take into account the unregistered refugee population, estimated at around 54,000 in Thailand and one million in Pakistan.

By any measure, the “waiting time” in Nauru and Papua New Guinea is likely to stretch into years, leaving refugees and asylum seekers struggling to cope with the physical and mental impacts of indefinite exile in remote island territories, uncertain of their ultimate fate, isolated from community support and separated from their families.

Family separation also remains a constant source of frustration and anguish for refugees and humanitarian entrants settling in Australia. In recent years, the issue has become even more fraught due to pressures on the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). The SHP allows a person or organisation in Australia to sponsor people facing human rights violations overseas for resettlement, and is primarily used by refugees in Australia to reunite with their family members.

The SHP is numerically linked to Australia’s onshore protection program, which means that every time an asylum seeker is recognised as a refugee and granted a Protection Visa, a place is deducted from the SHP. The increase in successful asylum applications lodged in Australia over the past few years has drastically reduced the number of SHP places available, creating a backlog which is expected to take years to clear.

The Panel argued that the SHP backlog and consequent delays in reunification increased the incentive for family members to risk their lives in search of protection. This was seen under the Temporary Protection Visa regime, which denied access to family reunion as a disincentive to boat journeys, but had the practical effect of triggering a spike in the number of women and children arriving in Australia by boat.

Paradoxically, the Panel’s proposed solution to this problem was to make it even more difficult for refugees who arrive by boat to reunite with their families.

Paradoxically, the Panel’s proposed solution to this problem was to make it even more difficult for refugees who arrive by boat to reunite with their families.
One of the key problems with the “no advantage” principle is that it posits resettlement as the most viable alternative to boat journeys. While the increase in Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian program to 20,000 places will help to provide more opportunities for resettlement, it will not address the ten-to-one gap between global resettlement needs and available places. Resettlement cannot provide a solution for the majority of the world’s refugees. We need to start focusing more of our attention on securing alternative solutions for refugees who do not have access to resettlement.

This is where regional cooperation comes in as the most viable long-term solution to protection issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Australia must continue to work with other states in the region to improve protection for refugees and asylum seekers in areas such as access to registration and status determination, protection against detention and deportation, living conditions and livelihood opportunities.

The increase in Australia’s resettlement intake and initial boost of $10 million for capacity-building initiatives is a good start, but these positive steps are being undermined by Australia’s punitive approach to asylum seekers arriving by boat.

Australia is the only Western country and the only Refugee Convention signatory to have a policy of mandatory detention for asylum seekers who arrive without visas. It is the only resettlement country which deducts a place from its resettlement program each time an asylum seeker is recognised as a refugee. In the same year that the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Italy had breached international human rights law by pushing back asylum seeker boats to Libya, the Australian Government is sending asylum seekers to be processed in countries where protections for people fleeing persecution are minimal at best.

In line with the Expert Panel’s recommendations, Australia is also set to become the first country in the world to excise its entire landmass from its own migration zone to deter people arriving by boat to seek asylum. It will be difficult for Australia to successfully negotiate with other countries in the region to improve protections and broker solutions for refugees and asylum seekers, while simultaneously eroding its own protections for people who seek asylum in Australia.

Additionally, Australia’s new policies set a damaging example of differential treatment and lower standards of protection for refugees and asylum seekers who arrive without authorisation or who undertake risky journeys in search of protection. Given that the inability to secure travel documents and the imperative to undertake risky journeys are realities for hundreds of thousands of refugees in the Asia-Pacific region (and worldwide), this is a particularly dangerous precedent. If all countries in the region were to adopt Australia’s current approach to dealing with asylum seekers, the results would be disastrous.

In the 1970s, the Borrie and Galbally reports paved the way for positive reforms in refugee policy, bringing to an end the White Australia Policy, embracing a multicultural future for Australia and building humanitarian settlement services that are now among the best in the world. In many ways, we remain a leader in refugee protection.

Australia should use this position of leadership to model the policies which, if copied by our neighbours, would not undermine protection but improve it, thereby offering genuine alternatives to dangerous boat journeys. Australia is well-placed to spearhead regional cooperation on refugee protection—but we have to start by cleaning up our own backyard.
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About FECCA

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We provide advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism.

FECCA’s membership comprises state, territory and regional multicultural and ethnic councils. FECCA has an elected executive committee and a professional national secretariat implementing policies and work programs on behalf of its membership and stakeholders.

For more information you can read about FECCA’s policies and programs at our website www.fecca.org.au
Our department is continuing to improve the way we provide services to multicultural Australia with the launch of our new multicultural servicing strategy Delivering Services to Multicultural Australia 2012–2016.

This is the first integrated strategy to include all our programs and services from Child Support, Medicare, CRS Australia and Centrelink.

This strategy underpins our commitment to meet the current and future expectations of all multicultural Australians and builds on our already strong performance.

To read our Delivering Services to Multicultural Australia 2012–2016 strategy visit humanservices.gov.au/corporate