

# The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia



**REPORT BY**

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## ***Integration Strategies of Migrant and Refugees***

**AIM:** To Assess Migrant and Refugee Integration Strategies in New Zealand, USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany and Israel; and compare to Australia's settlement programs.

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## 1. AUTHOR

Haileluel Gebre-selassie's expertise in refugee settlement and integration stems from extensive study and a career working with government, non-government organisations, higher education and grass roots communities.

Haileluel joined the Migrant Resource Centre in Footscray (Melbourne, Australia) and worked as a settlement officer and provided practical support and advice to the newly arrived communities in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Whilst completing his Masters degree in International Social Work at La Trobe University in 2000 he joined Deakin University as postgraduate education officer and worked with local and international postgraduate students. Then he moved to the Victorian Government.

In his role with the Victorian State Government's Department for Victorian Communities (subsequently the Department of Planning and Community Development), he developed and managed the stakeholder communication strategies component of the *Refugee Brokerage Program* and provided strategic policy advice on settlement of refugee and humanitarian new settlers. He also managed a number of refugee brokerage program (subsequently renamed the "Refugee Action Program") projects; employment contracts and community engagement strategies with local governments. He is a strong advocate of refugee settlement, education and employment policies. While working with the Victorian Government Haileluel graduated with Master of Public Policy and Management from the University of Melbourne in March 2008.

In his voluntary capacity, he has initiated and managed a number of grass roots community capacity building projects including the African Think Tank Conference held in April 2007 at the University of Melbourne. He is a member of several boards for of not-for-profit organisations including the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and Onside Victoria. Haileluel is the co-founder of the African Think Tank. He was recognised and awarded:

- the prestigious Winston Churchill Fellowship in 2008 to investigate and document integration strategies of refugees and migrants in several countries around the world including USA, Canada, Germany, Israel, New Zealand and United Kingdom.
- Victoria's award for Excellence in Multicultural Affairs for Meritorious Service in the Community, by the former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks.
- Certificate of Appreciation for the excellent contribution to the establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Australia.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

In 2008, as Australia recorded the largest surge of migration in its history due to the need to meet skill shortages, the critical issue of integration became more relevant and central to the country's settlement and long term population strategies. The 2008 migration figure exceeds those of the previous two well known historical migration periods: the Gold Rush of 1854 and the post-Second World War European migration push. On the one hand economic benefits to be derived from the Gold Rush and in addressing skill shortages have triggered dramatic increases in Australian migration. On the other hand, fear of foreign invasion and regional power imbalances leading to concern to defend the country through policies such as "populate or perish" also led to an increase migration numbers, particularly in the immediate post-war period. This paper argues that our current high migration intake heightens the need to promote better integration for migrants to improve social cohesion.

The purpose of this paper is to explore and document projects and programs that contribute to integration strategies for migrants and refugees in New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and Israel. One of the main issues that prompted me to investigate integration strategies for migrants and refugees is the tendency of government departments and non-government organisations to emphasise settlement services and to give less priority to ongoing integration support, a process which begins at the selection of migrants and refugees for resettlement in Australia.

Better integration of refugees and migrants is critical to the long term interests of both the host community and migrant communities. Australia is a leading country in allocating resources and effort to settlement services for migrants and refugees. However the efficiency of the settlement program and the integration part of the settlement process require further improvement in order to achieve better outcomes.

The recent confrontations between migrant and host communities in various parts of the world including in Australia are demonstrating the result of the lack of integration. Participation of refugees and migrants in the social, economic, cultural and political life of a host society is critical to improving integration. Social exclusion and long term disadvantage are symptoms of lack of integration. I believe some of the past incidents that tarnished our country's image in the international media could have been avoided if **proactive** measures had been taken. In this regard, resettlement programs as well as other key initiatives such as host community education programs can play important roles. The European Council on Refugees and Exile, for example, strongly argues for the need to educate the host society to be more

welcoming towards new immigrants to improve their integration: “The development of an inclusive and welcoming society is a key prerequisite to the successful integration of refugees”<sup>1</sup>.

The Fellowship Program enabled me to visit various places and to meet and interview a range of people including government policy makers, non-government agency personnel, refugees and migrants, grassroots community associations and academics who are conducting extensive studies in the field. The experience and knowledge of working in integration strategies varies according to each country’s exposure to diversity and their political will to work with refugees and migrant communities.

For example, in New Zealand the encouragement given to recently arrived refugee communities to manage programs and services; and in the United States the priorities of migrant employment policy to increase self-efficiency, were excellent examples of different approaches to integrating multicultural communities. Perhaps one of the most fascinating experiences came from visiting the City of Toronto where ethnic organisations are encouraged and resourced to build their capacity to support government organisations and to contribute to community safety.

The impressive integration strategy of the City of London as well as their practical programs for dealing with their massive number of migrants was a breath-taking experience – they also had numerous useful written resources. The extensive programs of support for new migrants and their organisations of the Refugee Council of UK and the active engagement of the British Red Cross with Britain’s large number of asylum seekers shed light on what else can be done in Australia to fill gaps in integration policies and strategies. Although my visit to the city of Dresden in Germany was insufficient to enable full understanding of integration issues in Germany, I believe they must improve the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees given the poor standard that I observed.

Despite the enormous challenges in settling Jewish citizens from many parts of the world, Israel has a lot to offer to the world. It has extremely effective programs and projects that assist in integrating migrants into the community, providing many examples for our learning.

This report also highlights some of the key learnings about young people given their propensity to easily overcome the language and cultural barriers, although they do face other barriers which exclude them from social participation. Community consultations in Victoria confirm that disadvantage

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<sup>1</sup> (European Council of Refugees and Exile: *Towards the Integration of Refugees in Europe, July 2005*)

and socio-economic exclusion are some of the root causes of young people's crises. It is thus my view that the role of the Australian Government's current social inclusion agenda is a crucial factor in this debate.

The point needs to be made that it has not been possible to list all the learning and experiences that I gained during my travel within a short report like this. However, among many other activities I:

- have large numbers of documents and important materials to share with organisations and people who may be interested to learn how other countries are working in this field;
- will endeavour to present these where possible and engage in discussions to improve settlement and integration strategies in Australia;
- will present it as a paper to the 2009 Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia Conference (FECCA) in October; and
- will submit a short version of this report to Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) current IHSS review.

Finally, it is also important to understand the different terminology this report uses to explain services and programs. Some of the most important key words include:

1. Refugees – people accepted and resettled under UNHCR recognition (1951).
2. Migrants – people migrate under different circumstances including family reunion.
3. Skilled Migrants – people migrated under skilled migration program.
4. Asylum seekers – people ask asylum in a country and don't have permanent visa.
5. Skilled refugees – people migrated under refugee visa and skilled (educated).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In supporting my project I would like to acknowledge the Winston Churchill Fellowship Trust which granted me the scholarship to carry out the visits. Without the support of my colleagues from the Department of Planning and Community Development I would not have been able to navigate the application and interview process. The thoughtful advice and valuable comments from Ian McHutchinson, Steven Gianni, Simon Thompson, Genevive Fitzgerald, Con Pagonis, Dr Berhan Ahmed, Russell Jaffe, Anna Rabin, Prof Morton Beiser, Frehiwot Getachew, Nick Chiam, Abebayehu Gebre-selassie, Robel Getachew, Melkam Shume and Kate Ring were extremely useful for the success of my project. I can't thank enough my wife, Hamere Alemu, and daughters Loza Gebre-selassie and Salem Gebre-selassie who struggled to figure out why I disappeared for months at the expense of their swimming lessons!

During my preparation and visits I also received support from hundreds of people within and outside Australia but I cannot list all of their names. I sincerely thank you all for your valuable time and great support. However I list a few names in appreciation of their generous time, support and valuable advice: Professor Andrew Marcus, Associate Professor Danny Ben-Moshe, Ms Faten Mohammed, Marta Tsegaw, Dr Hass Dalal, Dr Hussein Tahiri, Professor John Nieuwenhuysen, Mr Murray Thompson MP, Mrs Eleni Bereded, Mrs Voula Messemiri, Dr Melika Shake Eldine, Mr Nicola Konsiras MP, Mr Petro Georgiou MP, Mr John Williams, Minister for Finance Lindsay Tanner, Mr Peter Van Vilet, Ms Pansy Wong, Minister of Ethnic Affairs & Minister of Women in NZ, Mr James Merlino, Minister Assisting the Premier for Multicultural Affairs, Dr Alemayehu Molla, Mr Belete Bobe, Ms Roslyn Leany, Mr Paris Aristotle, Ms Sue Fowler, Mr Sam Afra, Mr Samuel Kout, Dr Walteneagus Dargie, Dr Ilene Hyman, Patricia Smith (DFAT), Kim Robinson and Alice Hang.

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Fellowship examined and documented government and non-government settlement practices aimed at improving integration strategies to assist migrants and refugees. I visited a number of countries include New Zealand (Wellington), United States of America (Los Angeles, Washington DC, Baltimore and New York), Canada (Toronto), United Kingdom (London and Canterbury), Germany (Dresden), Israel (Jerusalem) and Ethiopia (Addis Ababa). During my visits I had the opportunity to meet refugees and migrants, academics, settlement service providers, politicians, government policy makers and grass root community associations.

This study identifies that governments and host societies must demonstrate a high level of commitment and investment to the integration of migrants and refugees, based on the notion that the development of an inclusive and welcoming society is a key prerequisite to the successful integration of [migrant] and refugees. Proactive government policies and programs are critical for better integration.

The high level policy commitment of the City of London, backed by serious actions such as the establishment of special boards, is exceptional and one of the best examples for others to follow. The Mayoral office confirmed that integration of migrants and refugees cannot happen on the ground without appropriate investment from all levels of government across the country.

I learned also that tailored programs and specific targeted projects achieve the best results in settling migrants and refugees. The United States, for example, has tailored its settlement and integration programs to the development of self sufficiency, especially in employment. The success of the eight month settlement and integration process is measured by settlers' employment outcomes. During the interview almost all settlement agencies confirmed their programs successes. Focusing on employment outcome seemed to me a narrow policy but it has been successful in integrating migrants and refugees.

A successful former refugee commented that *“the endless counselling did not help us to live for tomorrow and move on from our past experiences. Integration and settlement must focus on the future – economic participation”*. Australia should revisit the wisdom of its short-lived policy of six months Integrated Humanitarian Support Service and the five year settlement program to understand why people are falling through the cracks.

Accountability for the success or failure of integration programs requires detailed feedback. In the US, for example, resettlement agencies must

achieve a success rate of 75% to maintain government funding. Funding bodies are more interested in the outcomes of client contacts than the number. Service agencies therefore are more accountable for their actions rather than blaming those falling between the cracks as a result of inadequate support.

Israel's intensive and integrated settlement services help migrants to learn the language within a short period of time, equip them with life skills and build their confidence to mix within the broader society. Absorption Centres help new arrivals to access all requisite services and support them to build their confidence. Further to that the specialised prevention and rehabilitation programs for young people provided through Yedidim provided a considerable number of lessons on how to successfully integrate young settlers.

The study tour found that Canadian support to ethnic community organisations seems to be unique. Canada believes that supporting ethnic organisations contributes to enhanced integration and improved community safety. The high level of engagement of local government with these organisations creates a unique platform for increased local participation.

Affirmative action seems to be necessary to empower migrants and refugees to improve their participation through representation. New Zealand encourages and supports new arrivals to become involved in managing settlement services and to work in government and other sectors, thus increasing their integration. Canada also undertakes a similar program. Australia can learn in this regard by taking affirmative action to assist refugees and migrants to manage programs and services, thus maximising their practical experiences.

The active and practical support provided by the Jewish community in New Zealand to newly arrived African communities demonstrates genuine commitment to working together to address the challenges of settlement and integration and disadvantage within the newly arrived migrant and refugee communities. The Jewish community has opened its door and taken proactive steps towards working together by providing practical assistance. There is no significant competition for funding, a factor which in other countries caused tension between organisations.

The Fellowship enabled me to learn about various initiatives and programs that assist the settlement and integration of migrants and refugees in various countries. I have committed myself to make presentations at various workshops, conferences and meetings to share what I have learnt with others.

#### 4. A BRIEF HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN MIGRATION

Australia has a fascinating and dynamic migration policy history, with changes instigated to adapt to waves of migration and settlement challenges over the decades. Australian migration settlement policy has passed through four broad historical changes: the “white Australia policy”; assimilation; integration; and multiculturalism. I will briefly describe these changes.

The White Australia migration policy, excluding the settlement of non-white Australians, was introduced as the first Act after the Federation in 1901. The first Australian Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, stated that the White Australia policy was driven by fear of losing national identity and foreign invasion: Barton stated that “the fear of Chinese immigration which the Australian democracy cherishes...is, in fact, the instinct of self-preservation, quickened by experiences...We are guarding the last part of the world in which the higher races can live and increase freely for the higher civilisation”<sup>2</sup>. This fear undoubtedly contributed to the expulsion of Pacific Islanders and accounted for the 1924 policy that imposed quotas on early migrants such as Greeks and Yugoslavs.

After the Second World War, fear that Australia had to “populate or perish” forced the government to extend migration beyond the United Kingdom to European peoples. This policy was based on the belief that European migrants could easily abandon their cultural and linguistic background and assimilate into Australian society. To achieve this assimilation policy the government proposed to match the small number of European migrants with a much higher number of migrants from the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup>.

Some argue that dismantling of the White Australia policy paved the way for Australian assimilation policies. In fact while assimilation policies started in the 1940s 1950s and continued until the 1960s; some would argue even into the 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

The post-war migration of large numbers of European migrants and their need to integrate into the wider population underpinned Australia’s assimilation policies. Then, from the mid-60s until 1972, in recognition of the hardships faced by Europeans and other non-English migrants who came to Australia

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<sup>2</sup> Petro Georgiou, *The Limits of Tolerance – diversity, identity and cohesion*, 9 October 09

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/04fifty.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/>

after World War II, Australia introduced an 'integration' policy. This policy also did not encourage cultural diversity.

The acceptance of Indo-Chinese refugees by the Fraser Government in the 1970s marked the end of this divisive policy and opened the door to a new era. The introduction of a parliamentary motion that no Australian government would use race or ethnic origin as a criterion for migration and the announcement of a new policy of multiculturalism confirmed the death and burial of the previous divisive Australian migration policies.<sup>5</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s Australia expanded its inclusive migration policies and attracted large numbers of people from almost all parts of the world regardless of their race, language and religion.

## 5. MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism recognises the cultural diversity of migrants and the right of individuals and communities to maintain their cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic heritage. In the 1970s, the recognition of the special settlement needs of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, which included the need for the establishment of ethno-specific agencies to support communities and to maintain their cultural heritage, was one of the key outcomes of the establishment of multicultural policy and represented a significant shift of policy from assimilation to recognizing cultural diversity.

In celebrating this policy, the former Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, rightly said that: "*Multiculturalism involves far more than the passive acceptance of diversity. It sees diversity as a quality to be actively embraced, as a source of social wealth and dynamism. It encourages groups to be open and to interact so that all Australians may learn and benefit from each other's heritage. Multiculturalism is about diversity and not division. It is about interaction, not isolation. It involves respect for our law and for our democratic institutions and processes.*"<sup>6</sup>

However some groups strongly opposed the idea of multiculturalism from its inception to its implementation. They consider multiculturalism as an invasion of their values. Multiculturalism in Australia is a cosmopolitan-internationalist ideology which, in the words of one enlightened commentator, "may cause some citizens to develop a lump in the throat, but in reality this shallow patriotism is akin to choking on a Big Mac and Coke."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Petro Georgiou, *The Limits of Tolerance – diversity, identity and cohesion*, 9 October 09

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/malcolmfraser/speeches/nonparliamentary/whataustralia2001.html> ).

<sup>7</sup> <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~natinfo/ozcul2.htm>

In the 1990s the Howard Government showed some form of commitment and through an official government policy position of supporting multiculturalism. After extensive consultations new policy agendas were launched in 1999 and 2003 reaffirming the Commonwealth Government's commitment to a Multicultural Australia. In this policy the government stated that "Multiculturalism has been central to our social, political, cultural, and economic growth as a nation over the past fifty years, and is vital to our further development in the new millennium and beyond." Despite this, many doubted the government's practical commitment to multiculturalism.<sup>8</sup>

Towards the end of the Howard era, Australians became divided over the policy of multiculturalism. His government scrutinized multiculturalism and questioned its role in building a cohesive society. This may have contributed to entrenching "Hansonism"<sup>9</sup> and widespread objection to accepting Islamic and African immigrants. Ugly incidents including the rejection of settling Sudanese migrants by Tamworth Council and the December 2005 Cronulla beach riots involving Middle Eastern communities were some examples of a divided nation<sup>10</sup>.

The Howard government eventually dumped the term multiculturalism from the Immigration portfolio and shifted the emphasis to 'citizenship'. Many ethno-specific associations were defunded because they were perceived as "social ghettos" that limit the integration of migrants by keeping them locked in their own cultures.

Although the 2007 Rudd government has failed to reinstate the term "multicultural" to the ministerial portfolio, its move to unite the divided community by promoting harmony in Australia seems a positive step towards acknowledging the importance of unity within our diversity. The recognition of the past injustices against Australia's Indigenous people and the introduction of the new government policy of social inclusion are also key steps that acknowledge the importance of Australian multiculturalism. However there are still ongoing challenges.

One of these challenges is that Australian multiculturalism seems confined to limited sections of the Australian community, mainly in the big cities, and within government and community services. Australia's practise of multiculturalism needs to go beyond big cities, government bodies and the community sector given that it "recognises and promotes the socio-economic

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.immigration.gov.au/media/publications/settle/\\_pdf/united\\_diversity.pdf](http://www.immigration.gov.au/media/publications/settle/_pdf/united_diversity.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Refers to the doctrine of Pauline Hanson, a former federal MP who strongly opposed Asian migration and multiculturalism

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,20932168-5005961,00.html>

potential of diversity and facilitates and supports participation of all Australians in building a strong, harmonious and fair community”.<sup>11</sup> In particular corporate Australia and the private sector should actively embrace and acknowledge policies that support their businesses in and out of the country. Australia needs to harness its diversity as a key strength to compete in the global market. In doing so, all sections of the Australia community including small towns and rural areas, corporate Australia and the private sector should play their part by providing resources and support to multicultural programs that enhance social inclusion.

## 6. INTEGRATION

The meaning of “integration” in this context is equal participation in the social, economic cultural and political life of a country without abandoning the cultural and linguistic background of individuals or groups. I must define the word because integration has been used by different countries in different context and interpretations. In the past Australia used the word “integration” to promote its assimilation policies

Integration of migrants and refugees can be seen as a dynamic process of interaction between the host society and new settlers. It is a process that requires ongoing support and an assertive and affirmative actions to accommodate differences and to enhance social cohesion to create an inclusive society. Social inclusion cannot be achieved without addressing integration challenges and thus can appear as political rhetoric lacking strategic action. The Rudd government should give priority to the social integration of migrants as part of its policy of ensuring migrant and refugees do not fall between the cracks at a time of economic hardship. Practical experience in many countries suggests that the relationship between the host community, refugees and migrants deteriorates during times of short term economic and political hardship. Consequently long term social cohesion may be affected by short term challenges.

Dismantling barriers to socio-economic participation is the basis of positive integration. Because these barriers, particularly inequality, systemic discrimination and racism, are inbuilt within institutions they become an ongoing obstacle to social integration. Several pieces of research in Australia, for example, have confirmed that racism and discrimination against black African-Australians prevents them from successfully accessing employment. A recent Human Right and Equal Opportunities Commission publication

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<sup>11</sup> Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia’s Policy Statement 2008

(African Australians: A report on human rights and social inclusion issues, March 2009) as well as Murdoch University's special research (Refugee & Employment: The effect of visible difference on discrimination, 2007) have confirmed this reality.

What is somewhat surprising in this research is that educational institutions seem to stand out against this trend. In higher education, a comparatively high number of African-Australians hold positions as university professors and lecturers because these institutions value genuine qualifications and experience. In tackling these challenges, the affirmative action undertaken in Canada to diversify the work force; and the support and encouragement of the New Zealand government to increase minority groups in the work force are some of the best examples that could be adopted by Australia to contribute to migrant and refugee economic integration.

Comparatively Australia provides good settlement services and spends large amounts of resources to support migrant and refugee communities. This activity, however, does not necessarily guarantee the best outcomes or efficiency in integrating migrant communities. For example, the unacceptably high number of unemployed people within newly arrived migrant communities during the recent economic boom confirmed the inefficiency of service providers in the area. Settlement agencies provide various reasons to justify such inefficiencies, including blaming the settlers. However this study tour found the same types of refugees, who migrated from the same countries of origin, successfully accessing job markets in other countries such as the US and Canada, hereby disproving the excuses used by Australian settlement agencies.

The lack of newly arrived migrants in management positions in the settlement sector does not allow opportunity for them to share practical experiences in order to support their fellow refugees, nor to help themselves through learning how to manage their community associations. In fact some migrant agencies which deliver services to newly arrived communities do not even involve newly arrived refugees on their management board. The responsible Commonwealth department should work to address exclusion in this area and to improve the engagement of such organisations with their client group.

Having said this about the importance of integration to enhance social cohesion and to address disadvantages, let us learn of other countries' experiences in addressing similar challenges by looking at their specific projects.

## **7. COUNTRY ANALYSIS**

### **7.1 NEW ZEALAND**

With respect and admiration to the indigenous people, modern New Zealand's history is the history of migration, with the country being built by immigrants. Each year over 50,000 permanent visas are issued including to skilled workers, families and family reunifications, and refugees. Despite this, a large number of New Zealanders also depart the country in search of better life which contributes to the ongoing skill shortages in that country. Australia is one of their primary destinations, with over 25,000 people per year migrating to Australia. This means that there are no means other than increasing successful immigration available to the New Zealand government to grow the country's population.

The *Refugee Resettlement, Integration and New Zealand's Settlement Strategy* report states that New Zealand is one of the first nations not only to recognise the need for positive settlement outcomes for migrants, but also to develop wide-ranging government policies to support immigrant integration<sup>12</sup>. The seven key goals of the settlement strategy have been designed to assist and facilitate new and emerging communities to integrate fully in New Zealand society. These goals include that they:

1. are accepted and respected by host communities for their diverse cultural backgrounds;
2. obtain employment appropriate to their qualifications and skills;
3. participate in civic, community and social activities;
4. form social networks and establish a sustainable community identity;
5. are able to access information and services that are available to the wider community;
6. feel safe expressing their ethnic identity and are accepted by, and are part of, the wider host community;
7. confident using English in a New Zealand setting, or can access appropriate language support to bridge the gap.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Grogan P (July 2008): *Does a Rising Tide Lift All Boats? Refugee Resettlement, Integration and New Zealand's Settlement strategy*

<sup>13</sup> Grogan P (July 2008): *Does a Rising Tide Lift All Boats? Refugee Resettlement, Integration and New Zealand's Settlement strategy*

Settlement Support New Zealand (SSNZ) is responsible for ensuring migrants and refugees have access to information and services available from locally based contracted organisations. The Department of Labour contracts out services to a range of community based organisations to deliver specific services to the migrant and refugee communities. The Director of Settlement Division and the Manager of Settlement Purchasing explained to me that the New Zealand Government provides practical support to former refugees to improve their integration into the community. This includes affirmative action such as employing former refugees in government departments.

The Manager of Settlement Purchasing, Mr Ismail Ibrahim, who was a refugee from Somalia and who works for the Department of Labour, said: “I found New Zealand to be a land of opportunities, the people and government are encouraging integration through equal access and opportunities to all citizens. New Zealand strongly believes in representation of minorities in every sector to ensure the equal participation of every citizen to build a cohesive society”.

The Department of Education, which employs a number of refugee managers, stands out as good practice example.

Settlement services are delivered through local lead agencies that require the establishment of a Settlement Network Support Group (SNSG) and a Local Settlement Network (LSN). The support group, which consists of local service providers and clients, works on needs identification and identifies available services to address the unmet needs of settlers. They are also working on developing training and workshops for refugees and migrants. The LSN, on the other hand, focuses on the development of a settlement profile and plan. The LSN consists of a large number of providers and client groups. These agencies are working in collaboration and in partnership with government, local communities, refugees, and local service providers.

I also met with Peter Cotton, National Manager of Refugee Services New Zealand. Mr Cotton has been working for Refugee Services New Zealand over many years and is regarded by the industry as one of the most respected refugee advocates around the world. Refugee Services New Zealand provides broader services to refugee communities. According to Peter, the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand is a partnership between community based organisations, refugees, government and host communities.

The high level of direct involvement of refugee communities in decision making processes, which bypasses the endless consultations that exhaust refugee communities in many countries, is critical for better outcomes. Mr Cotton believes that good settlement services contribute to better integration. He said that to see better outcomes, former refugees should be involved in

developing, managing and implementing programs - because no one can claim the refugee settlement experience better than them.

The following day I visited one of the emerging grassroots refugee community agencies, Change Makers Refugee Forums. Here I was also fortunate to meet the Minister for Ethnic Affairs and Minister for Women, who was launching the new Multicultural Services of New Zealand office in Webb Street, Wellington. The Minister herself is a former migrant from China and was very humble in explaining to me New Zealand's multicultural policy and their practical programs of support for refugees and migrant integration.

Mr Adam Awad, Chairperson of the newly established Change Makers Refugee Forum, was also pleased to discuss his organisation's activities in Wellington. Unlike the big welfare agencies, this highly successful organisation is run by refugees for refugees. I was introduced to their management committee members who represent different refugee communities from around the world. During the visit I interviewed them about the practical activities they undertake to improve their communities' integration into the broader New Zealand society. Mr Awad, a former refugee from Somali, expressed his satisfaction with the level of support provided by the people and government of New Zealand to settle and integrate refugees.

In particular he highlighted the level of practical support and encouragement given to newly arrived migrant and refugees to access employment in government and non-government agencies, and their involvement in the management of settlement services, as quite exceptional. He said that these demonstrate the government's inclusive policy and gives comfort to settlers to integrate naturally into the community.

While integration is a two way process, the host community needs to first open its door and accept new settlers. A welcoming environment that includes the creation of equal access and opportunities to increase participation are the foundation of trust and social inclusion. Mr Awad also emphasised providing education to the host community by community leaders, including political leaders, as far more important for integration and social cohesion than anything else.

Peter Cotton on the other hand identified employment as a key part of integration process, as it demonstrates the contribution of immigrants to the host society and their higher level of ongoing participation. To this end New Zealand has been working hard to ensure newly arrived communities have access to local employment opportunities, whether they be in government or non-government agencies.

Overall, it is possible to identify key areas that will improve integration, as identified by service organisations, refugee communities and endorsed by the New Zealand government:

1. **Social Integration:** Social integration programs to support migrant and refugees to establish friends is very important. New Zealand totally relies entirely on volunteers to establish contacts with new settlers. This creates opportunities to improve social integration of a refugee family with the host community as it may establish a lasting friendship and cultural exchange. This program, which New Zealand started four years ago, has been hailed as one of the best to assist new migrants. Providing an accredited training program for volunteers is part of the activity and all volunteers must complete the training and also must obtain a Police clearance before meeting a refugee family.
2. **Family Reunion:** Although integration of refugees varies depending on individual's experiences, capacity, attitude and interest, New Zealand's experience has found that family reunion is one of the key elements of enhancing integration. Family is the first institution which creates a sense of belonging. Family reunion contributes to the increased capacity of belonging to the host nation and inability to reunite with family members is likely to hamper an individual's ability to integrate into the host society and reduce their sense of belonging.
3. **Capacity Building:** Building the capacity of newly arrived refugees and migrants contributes to their settlement and integration. Small community based organisations and faith based institutions strengthen their sense of identity and meet their cultural and religious needs.
4. **Tailored/efficient Services:** It is not the number of times that a particular refugee client contacts a service agency but what matters is the quality of assistance the person receives. Funding bodies must look at outcomes other than number of contacts the client makes. For example one of the reports measured the number of networks and friendships a particular refugee client established through the support services he/she received.
5. **Role models through Employment Opportunities:** It is clear that refugee communities have the capacity to integrate into the broader society so long as equal opportunities and support are provided to them. With appropriate support refugees are resilient and capable of integrating into the society. In New Zealand there are several former refugees and migrants who hold senior government and non-government positions, with the feedback from their staff being very encouraging. Former refugees are clearly mentored and encouraged to utilise their skills and develop their potential.

## 7.2 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I had two interesting events coincide during my visit to the United States of America. The first one was that I visited the country at the time of the economic crisis. All the discussion on the television, in the taxis, shopping markets and private conversation involved the impact of the economic crisis which led many people to experience greater insecurity and uncertainty about their future. I heard first-hand stories about families losing their jobs and their houses. Some had borrowed to buy a house and the price of the house had then dropped by half or was worth next to nothing, yet people were still paying their mortgages.

Migrants and refugees were particularly badly affected as they are easily targeted by housing agents to buy worthless properties. For example during my stay in Washington DC I met a refugee woman who had refinanced her house to reinvest in the housing market. She was advised to borrow money and buy another house which she did. Now her investment is worth nothing and worst of all she lost both houses and became homeless. She shared her story and confirmed to me that there are so many migrants and refugees who became the victim of these dealers. Despite these crises and the doom and gloom, I also observed the hope and the aspiration of the American people who are bravely facing the challenges and are focused on their future. This refugee woman said to me "I came to this country empty handed and made some money and now lost it. But I will make get it back". Yes she can!

The second coincidence was when I was in New York. A former refugee from Vietnam burst into a citizenship class and killed over 12 people and himself. It was shocking news for refugees and migrants, who work hard to fulfil their American dream, yet these were gunned down by a fellow migrant for an unknown reason.

The United States has one of the largest refugee and migrant settlement programs in the world. Services to immigrant communities are provided by a range of community based and faith based agencies. To capture the broader perspective of integration and resettlement strategies I visited grassroots community organisations, national settlement providers, migrant and refugee peak bodies and religious based settlement service providers as well as newly emerging and more established organisations. These included the Refugee Council of USA, South East Asian Resource Action, Centre for African Refugees and Immigrants, African Community Centre, Refugee Resettlement Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services in Baltimore, African Services Committee in New York, Ethiopian Community Centre in Virginia.

There are ten national resettlement organisations funded by the federal government. These organisations include religious and non-religious

organisations and they receive millions of dollars from the government to deliver settlement services aimed at specific high level outcomes.

Each year in October the 'Presidential Determination' announces the number of refugees by nationality to be resettled in the US. The ten settlement organisations receive lists from the allocation committee depending on their specialities. The allocation committee takes into account language needs and organisation capacity to provide support, age, disability, family size, and employability before allocating settlers to settlement agencies.

Pre-and-post migration orientation emphasises employment and self-sufficiency of settlers. "Refugees are told frankly about the American dream – you have to work for it, not get it handed to you". During orientation all refugees are advised that they must repay their travel expenses to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) six months after their arrival. If they are not willing to repay their debt it will automatically transfer to their credit system. The US settlement services are highly outcome focused. Employment and self-sufficiency within a specific period of time is the top outcome measurement. Government is not interested how many times a particular agency meets a refugee person. The question is what did the agency do to address the problem?

The length of the settlement service provided to each client is eight months. However the program is highly tailored to meet an individual's specific needs. Within the first 90 days of arrival settlement agencies must report details of how they have assisted individual refugees in areas such as employment and education. For example, if a person refuses employment this must be reported to the department immediately and children must be registered at school within 30 days. As employment is the primary aim of refugee settlement, agencies must place people in employment and must achieve over 75% employment outcomes within 180 days. If agencies fail to place them then they will not be funded for the next round.

For Americans the issue of integration is heavily dependent on employment outcomes. I interviewed former refugees about the services received through the system. Some were assisted to access employment within a few months which they strongly believe helped them to establish friendships, build confidence and naturally integrate within society. Most importantly they no longer see themselves as refugees or foreigners.

Although employment is the emphasis, young people are encouraged to become involved in skills-based training such as car mechanics, nursing and physiotherapy.

According to the settlement service providers the emphasis on employment is highly successful in the US. There are some key lessons to be learnt from the American experience including:

- Employment is critical for the settlement and integration of migrants and refugees. Australia should revisit settlement funding outcomes and make employment one of the key outcomes for Australian settlement funding.
- Self-sufficiency of migrants and refugees must be a priority. In Australia, some untailed settlement services result in long-term dependency on services. This does not mean there is a need for further funding - the Australian government spends substantial amounts of money to support refugees and migrants. It is a matter of creativity.
- Settlement and integration outcomes for individual refugees and migrants should be specific and measurable. General information about service provision does not provide details of actions taken for individual settlers. It is important to note how easily people fall between the cracks, despite the large amount of spending on settlement services.
- Most of the agencies in the US which achieve the best outcomes work with private agencies. The contribution of private agencies, big corporates and philanthropies such as banks, insurance companies, mining industries and foundations should not be underestimated. They maximise the employment outcomes of skilled migrants and refugees.

### **7.3 CANADA**

I visited a range of settlement service providers, government representatives, and academics including the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture and Trauma, University of Toronto, St Stephen's Community House, City of Toronto, City of Migration, African Communities and COSTI Immigrant Services. I also had the opportunity to visit several grassroots community groups and settlers to ensure I had a balanced view of settlement and integration of migrants and refugees in Canada.

At the outset, I observed that Canadian resettlement and integration strategies seemed quite similar to the Australian experience, but there are significant differences. Both countries follow multicultural policies, and in some areas Australia excels and provides good services. In other areas, such as building the capacity of refugee and migrant community organisations, Australia lags behind.

What I found interesting was that the municipality of Toronto provides substantial funding to the newly emerging community organisations to build their capacity to provide services to their communities. Services include health, education, employment and other activities. An example is the local Ethiopian Association in Toronto, which manages 31 staff members, with a budget exceeding \$4,000,000<sup>14</sup>. According to Dr Busha Taa, Chairperson of the organisation, the Canadian government actively supports local communities as these communities play a critical role in integrating community members by providing safety nets for newcomers.

The City of Toronto considers ethnic organisations a key vehicle for improving community relations. In comparison to the Canadian and US experiences, African organisations in Australia do not have strong organisational capacity and the system does not support them to build this despite their best efforts. This is not due to lack of educated refugees or lack of credible organisations. Some recent research such as that conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission has indicated that negative attitudes to black Africans in Australia and continuing systemic racism contributes to the weakening of their organisations<sup>15</sup>.

This area could be improved through the Commonwealth Government focusing on working with the grassroots communities. A staff member from the City of Toronto said that "...helping ethno-specific organisation can be seen as assisting a ship in a high sea. Community organisations are a safety net that help to anchor the ageing, single mothers, the disabled, people without language, vulnerable youth etc. Some may see ethno-specific agencies as ghettos, which is wrong. Remember rich people also have their own ghettos where ethnic and poor people can't join them".

Secondly, direct involvement of local municipalities in assisting refugees and migrants, such as in the municipality of Toronto, is important. Integration of migrants and refugees is a key priority of the Diversity Division of the municipality. To achieve best outcomes the municipality has established a team of consultants and adopted the motto "diversity is our strength". Issues related to racial minorities, Indigenous, youth and gender are allocated to specific consultants within the municipality office, whose role is to break down barriers and to maximise the potential contribution of migrants to the city. One affirmative action taken by the municipality was the municipality workforce survey conducted to ensure people from different backgrounds were included in the city's workforce. Further to that the City of Toronto published a Plan of

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ethiocommun.org/index.html>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/partnerships/projects/african\\_australian.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/partnerships/projects/african_australian.html)

Action for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination that reaffirms its commitment to:

1. build an inclusive society, serve as a model of diversity, and to celebrate the cultural, economic and social successes of our diverse communities;
2. remove the barriers of racism and discrimination that contribute to disadvantages of individuals and communities;
3. ensure that non-discrimination, anti-racism, accessibility and equity policies and programs are integrated in the operation of the municipality; and
4. demonstrate accountability of all residents in striving to achieve the goal of diverse, equitable and inclusive society.

These actions are strengthened by seven strategic directions including political leadership and economic participation. Questioning the extent to which their workforce reflects residents' diversity may be a challenge for Australian municipalities such as the City of Maribyrnong, home to a large number of Vietnamese, Indian and African Australians.

To ensure fairness and equity, the City of Toronto has taken two further important steps. The first one is the establishment of the "Black African Employee Career Mentoring Project" whereby senior executives mentor black African refugees who are placed in managerial positions. The second major step was the establishment of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Consortium of Agencies Servicing Internationally Trained Persons (CASITP), which started in 2004. This was a critical step in supporting skilled migrants. Staff members are allowed to mentor skilled professionals for up to six hours a month.

In addition, the City of Toronto provides \$4.5 million to grassroots community based associations to run programs that support skilled migrants. This funding requires high levels of accountability and transparency as the Council considers it part of their community engagement and safety commitments. The neighbourhood action team of the council, on the other hand, works with local businesses to create internship and job opportunities for young migrants with the aim of promoting local employment for local communities. I believe Australian municipalities can learn a lot from their Canadian counterparts. The involvement of Australian local governments in providing settlement support is very limited, practically nonexistent.

Furthermore, in NZ, US and Canada the support provided to newly emerging community organisations from established communities is quite astonishing. For example, African communities in Wellington receive a significant level of support from the Jewish community who share their experiences and provide

technical and financial support. In Australia, the experience of newly arrived communities working with established communities is at an early stage of development primarily due to the competitive nature of government funding. More resources and funding allocated to established organisations as they have the political influence due to their large numbers and their extended systemic networks. Unlike Australia, Canada funds communities based on their needs not numbers.

Successful provision of settlement services for refugees and migrants occurs in several countries including Canada. The Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for the Survivors of Torture, who was a former refugee from Africa, pointed out that refugees and migrants are encouraged to become involved and manage refugee and migrant related service organisations. He said that “we have a rigorous monitoring and accountability system to ensure that we have to be inclusive of refugees in our management structure”. In New Zealand funding conditions highlight the need to involve refugees and migrants in managing organisations in both professional and volunteering capacities. Although there are some signs here of the involvement of former refugees and migrants in managing settlement services, Australia seems a long way away from taking affirmative action to ensure such active involvement. It seems the responsibility of governments to ensure they set specific criterias where former refugees and migrants directly involved in managing programs.

Canadian Torture and Trauma counselling provision uses cultural sensitivity to meet the needs of individual clients. Counselling models are constantly reviewed and actively seek input from the relevant community members such as religious leaders, elders and mothers. Counsellors are supported by community nurses who speak the same language and background as their clients. The model and its flexibility contribute to it reaching a large group of young people in their environment, who are considered silent victims. The organisation understands not all refugees require counselling, and its services and support are tailored to respond to individual clients’ needs.

Lessons learned from Canada include:

- Active support and engagement of ethno specific organisations is necessary to improving social inclusion and harmony in the community. Building the capacity of these community associations contributes to the integration of newcomers within the host society. Government must actively engage with community associations to increase their participation and to involve them in the nation building process.
- Active engagement of local Councils with their newly arrived citizens is critical. Creating employment opportunities for skilled migrants and engaging international students and other citizens are equally important

steps in achieving the best integration outcomes. Municipal workforces should reflect the diversity of residents of the city. The City of Toronto's experience can be utilised by other councils in Australia such as the City of Melbourne. It is to say all tax and rate payers should have equal privileges and responsibilities.

- Commonwealth and State governments can assist new migrants to successfully manage services and join government and non-government boards. Governments should lead by example - Government appointed positions should reflect diversity. Ensuring that any affirmative action does not involve political favouritism is also equally important.
- Newly arrived community groups working with established migrant groups without taking an advantage of them is important for both groups.

## **7.4 UNITED KINGDOM**

The Madrid conference on Models of Integration and Resettlement of Refugees stated that nine countries in Europe have active resettlement programs including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Portugal. Other European countries such as Italy, Spain and France receive refugees on an ad hoc basis (European Conference on Models of Integration and Resettlement of Refugees, Madrid (8th and 9th November, 2007). Alongside the formal UNHCR resettlement of refugees, many European countries receive a large number of asylum seekers and skilled migrants every year, bringing ongoing challenges of integration to Europe. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles has been working in several countries as an umbrella organisation to bring together key stakeholders to address the plight of refugees and migrants in European countries.

Visiting the United Kingdom allowed me to meet government representatives, academics and local service agencies and learn first-hand experiences. Unlike other countries the Refugee Council of United Kingdom (RCUK) plays a great role in delivering broader settlement services rather than the usual advocacy and representation roles.

Among their many programs the Policy and Development Director of RCUK highlighted three critical areas for assisting the integration of refugees in the UK:

- young people and education;
- employment and;
- capacity building of refugee community organisations.

Targeting young people through education is one of the priorities for the organisation. The Inclusive Secondary School Project, which is funded by KPMG, assists by engaging young people and providing practical support to help them cope with their education. This project, which directly involves grass-roots community organisations, seems small but delivers practical outcomes. Further to this the Supporting and Mentoring in Learning and Education (SMILE) Project, which is funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), is another useful project run by the children's section of the RCUK.

According to the RCUK the project is one of the most successful in supporting refugee and asylum seeking children, both unaccompanied and in families, by supporting them in their school or college placement to enable them to learn life skills and enjoy their learning. The project recognises that the greatest

challenge refugee children face is in integrating into school. The project contributes by reducing school drop outs and increasing the retention of students in schools and colleges.

The Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES) has specifically designed intensive programs to meet the employment needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Access to employment is one of the key strategies of the UK government. The Government recognises that integration and social cohesion without economic participation is almost impossible, and thus prioritises appropriate support to achieve the best possible outcomes. Several programs target both skilled and unskilled refugees. To improve the job prospects of skilled refugees, for example, RCUK has several projects in partnership with specific professional bodies; an example is the REACH project with the British Medical Association, aiming to assist medical professionals; and the Refugee for Teaching (RFT) project working to help refugee qualified teachers get jobs in the education system.

Capacity building activities with the Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) is another priority for the RCUK as they play a critical role in facilitating social cohesion. Through the active support and representation of RCUK the UK government has recognised the role of RCO. In particular RCO is playing a major role in providing cultural assistance, welcoming new arrivals, and helping members' integration into host communities. Despite this ongoing active involvement, establishing a genuine partnership continues to be a challenge for the RCUK.

The UK Red Cross (UKRC) on the other hand provides extensive support and practical assistance to a large number of asylum seekers and illegal residents. There is a high number of migrants due to the sudden migration from new European Union member countries. One million migrants arriving from Poland over a short period of time overstretched their resources. In addition, the City of London accommodates a large number of homeless people who utilise emergency assistance from the UKRC.

To deal with the current challenges and to improve engagement with refugee and migrant communities, the Mayor of London introduced a comprehensive integration policy: "Strategy for Refugee Integration in London". This policy recognises the disadvantages and inequalities between refugee communities and others. Factors leading to refugee disadvantage and exclusion are identified. Limited education, pre-migration experiences, exclusion from the labour market, poor access to local services, poor knowledge of services and entitlements, discrimination by employers and service providers in private and public sectors, and negative perceptions and racist attacks are some of the areas for policy focus.

There are four fundamental focal points in the Mayor's policy:

1. The aim of refugee integration work in London is equality of opportunity for refugees, allowing them to contribute fully to the development of the city in safety and dignity.
2. Moving towards this aim is a process that extends across all aspects of economic, social, cultural, civic and political life. It usually has to continue for a long time after the refugee's arrival; and must be a two-way process involving both host and refugee communities.
3. Integration is therefore not about adapting to a given norm but about respect for diversity, enabling refugees to be themselves in freedom under the law.
4. An effective integration strategy will consider how the previous lives of asylum seekers may affect their prospects of integration, before making a positive decision.<sup>16</sup>

Most importantly the Mayor's statement defined refugees as a valuable opportunity for demonstrating London's inclusive policies. The newly elected Mayor said that "...building a fair and inclusive city calls for a firm commitment...the city's refugees can settle in safety, dignity and equality with other Londoners...Work for refugee integration is an investment, enabling London to realise the opportunity offered by its role as city of sanctuary"<sup>17</sup>. To make his strategy work the Mayor established a high level body, the 'Board for Refugee Integration in London' (RRIL), to bring together leaders of London and to draw up a strategy for refugee integration work across the city. Further to that he established the 'Mayor's Refugee Advisory Panel' to ensure refugee communities participate in the consultation and implementation process.

The UK experience demonstrates high level government commitments to support refugees and skilled migrants in the UK. Although the UK's annual refugee and humanitarian intake is far less than Australia's (around 1000), the number of asylum seekers exceeds 26,000 a year. This number of migrants does not include the hundreds of thousands of migrants from the new EU member countries. Despite the massive numbers and complex challenges, the high level government commitment and the specific programs and projects contribute to their good settlement outcomes.

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<sup>16</sup> Board for Refugee Integration in London, Meeting held 26 July 2006.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/immigration/strategy.jsp>

## 7.5 GERMANY

At the time of my study tour many countries in Europe had been debating what to do with the many refugees and asylum seekers arriving in their countries. Some countries like Italy took the drastic measure of deporting refugees back to Libya where they face uncertain futures. This kind of action directly contradicts the UN international convention about the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in a country.<sup>18</sup>

Worst of all, the recent proposal by the European Commission to establish an asylum processing centre in Libya, a country of undemocratic rule where human rights abuses are widespread, confirmed some European countries' lack of willingness to deal with refugees and asylum seekers. The European Council of Refugees and Exile is very disturbed by this proposal which it says would allow 'EU States to evade their obligations to protect refugees by shifting the responsibility to countries with extremely dubious human rights records'. The Secretary General of ECRE, Bjarte Vandvik, rigorously objected to the new proposal and said that "Refugees are the first victims of the 'fight against immigration' that our governments are undertaking. While Europe is putting all its efforts in preventing as many people as possible from entering the EU irregularly, persons fleeing persecution around the world are finding it ever harder to reach a safe haven in Europe".<sup>19</sup>

Europe seems to have forgotten its own recent history as the major refugee producing continent of the world. We learn from history that many European refugees stayed in developing countries during their ordeals. This includes Greek and the Armenian settlers escaping their conflict, and the former Italian soldiers living in Ethiopia after committing war crimes and genocide in that country during World War II.<sup>20</sup> These are some of the clear examples of our recent history. Today European refugees exist in almost all parts of the world including Australia. The results of these movements undoubtedly created opportunities and economic growth for Europe.<sup>21</sup> .

Furthermore, past and present ongoing European political and economic activity has contributed to the increasing production of refugees and asylum

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org.au/basicoblig.shtml>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.ecre.org/files/ECRE\\_press\\_release\\_responsibility\\_shift\\_June\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ecre.org/files/ECRE_press_release_responsibility_shift_June_2009.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org/files/VATICAN\\_APOLOGY\\_TO\\_ETHIOPIA.pdf](http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org/files/VATICAN_APOLOGY_TO_ETHIOPIA.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org/files/VATICAN\\_APOLOGY\\_TO\\_ETHIOPIA.pdf](http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org/files/VATICAN_APOLOGY_TO_ETHIOPIA.pdf)

seekers in the world. For example, past colonial involvement of Germany and Belgium in the Rwandan genocide is well known by the whole world.<sup>22</sup> .

Thus, rather than harshly treating the symptoms, Europe should work on addressing the root causes to dry up the fertile breeding ground of refugees and asylum seekers.

Germany is one European country with a large number of refugees and asylum seekers. The settlement and integration of refugees in Germany has attracted local and international media over the last fifteen years. Discrimination and mistreatment of refugees, racially motivated attacks and their possible deportation are some common reports I heard during my visits. Border areas, in particular the Polish and Czech Republics, have been identified as dangerous zones for refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>23</sup>

As this report explained in the beginning my visit to the city of Dresden may not adequate enough to reflect the entire support and services available in Germany. I must also mention the strong warning received from my relative, who married a German national and live in Frankfurt, to not move around by myself in order to avoid racially motivated attacks contributed to the limitation of my movements in the area.

Dresden city was part of the former socialist republic of Germany. By comparison with the Western part of Germany, the unemployment rate seems much higher in this region. I had an opportunity to visit two agencies that provide services to refugees and asylum seekers, Integra and Ecumenical Information Centre (CABANA). I also interviewed a number of people who live there and who used to live in Germany.

Integra was founded twenty years ago to assist people from overseas, such as European and non-European guest workers. While these guest workers, including some from Vietnam and Mozambique, are expected to pack up and leave the country upon completion of their seasonal work, some stay in the country and seek asylum even though there are no services to support them. Today there are many refugees, asylum seekers and their families living in Dresden - Integra provides them with limited services, such as referring them to other organisations.

Ecumenical Information Centre (CABANA) was established to provide education about peace and environmental issues within parishes. It also provides basic information to refugees and asylum seekers regarding how to access housing, employment and education in Dresden. According to a staff

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<sup>22</sup> <http://courses.wcupa.edu/jones/his311/timeline/t-rwanda.htm>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/mar2001/germ-m08.shtml>

member “integration in Dresden is not easy for refugees and migrants due to the language and cultural barriers. It may be easy for their kids as they joined in schools. It is up to individuals to decide either to assimilate by embracing the new culture or stay isolated”. During the interview the staff member also described the high level of discrimination which disadvantages refugees and asylum seekers in the region.

Refugees and asylum seekers experience great challenges in integrating into the community in Dresden. An unacceptable level of discrimination and isolation makes their life more difficult and complex, especially its involvement on the day-to-day life of the communities. Services providing assistance for those groups are either inadequate or nonexistent. Furthermore, there have been a number of racially motivated attacks, and constant police checks of anyone who looks different, a common practice in the region. The treatment of asylum seekers seems beyond belief and is clearly sub-standard.

According to one of the staff members, asylum seekers receive forty euros per month and live in big houses in large numbers, in over-crowded conditions. The most disturbing part, according to another worker, is that if someone seeks refugee status he/she is not allowed to move to another city in search of employment. Should the person leave the city and is caught by police, this will be recorded as a crime and consequently that may affect the outcome of the decision whether or not to grant asylum..

During my visit I met a number of asylum seekers who beg for money in the street to cover their living expenses. As I outlined the experience in the city of Dresden may not reflect the practice throughout Germany. However, if this trend is matched throughout the country, then a policy of settlement and integration of migrants and refugees is almost impossible to implement in Germany.

## **7.6 ISRAEL**

After many years I finally fulfilled my childhood wishes and my dream – visiting the place where King Solomon of Jerusalem and Queen Sheba of Ethiopia once met. I also decided to find out where and how Ethiopian Kings such as Emperor Haile-Selassie inherited for thousands of years the title: King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah”. So many stories and historical facts energised me to visit several places. However I decided first to complete my priority task - the Fellowship.

Israel’s migration program is quite different from that of any other because the Law of Return allows anyone from the Jewish faith to have the right to return to and live in Israel. This places migration and settlement at the heart of the establishment of the State of Israel. Consequently integration is the most

critical component of the process as people migrate from all corners of the world. My visit to the cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and other towns and villages such as Nazareth and Galilee allowed me to witness the diversity of the people.

Despite the constant presence of heavily armed military personnel almost everywhere, the country looks peaceful and beautiful to visit. I found people in Israel to be very friendly and welcoming. My small amount of Hebrew language allowed me to read some of the road signs and notices on boards. I must admit that many people thought I was local (there are a significant number of Ethiopian migrants in Israel) and were confused as to why I didn't speak Hebrew rather than English. I constantly explained who I was and where I came from to clarify the misunderstanding. This may have helped me to assimilate into the crowd without being singled out as a visitor.

For the purpose of the fellowship I visited a number of key places such as the Canadian Absorption Centre in Jerusalem and other agencies that provide specific services such as the Yedidim Centre, as well as visiting specific grass-roots organisations. I also interviewed a number of settlers at the Absorption Centre and many other asylum seekers, mainly Eritrean refugees who had crossed the heavily fortified Egypt-Israel border.

The main settlement supports in Israel are provided by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, with other relevant government and non-government including the local municipal authorities, the Israel Defence Forces and educational institutions agencies also heavily involved<sup>24</sup>. Undoubtedly the government of Israel mobilises significant human and financial resources to ensure that new arrivals receive good services to accelerate their integration through provision of intensive settlement support and training.

Settlement assistance includes providing simple information such as what individuals should expect upon arrival in Israel. Upon arrival in Israel settlers can automatically become citizens - they don't need to wait for years. This is due to the Law of Return (1950) which allows every Jew the right to return Israel as a citizen<sup>25</sup>. According to the guide for the new immigrant, the basic principle of the Law of Return is that all Jews, as well as their spouses, children (and their spouses), and grandchildren are entitled to come on Aliyah (migration) to Israel. Access to citizenship, however, is not the same for refugees, as their status is quite different from those arriving under the Law of Return.

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<sup>24</sup> ([http://www.moia.gov.il/Moia\\_en](http://www.moia.gov.il/Moia_en))

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Text\\_of\\_Law\\_of\\_Return.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Text_of_Law_of_Return.html)

Israel's resettlement process starts at the time when individuals contact the overseas Jewish Agency Aliyah Centres, which provide crucial pre-arrival information and counselling services to individuals wanting to migrate to Israel. This information is also available on-line in different languages. It helps to manage settlers' expectations and to give support to potential migrants.

According to the manager of the Absorption centre, each migrant receives comprehensive settlement assistance upon arrival. The Centre welcomes arrivals at the airport and provides them with housing for up to a year. New settlers live together and, as language is regarded as the key to living within the community, study intensive Hebrew language courses. I had the opportunity of meeting and interviewing settlers from Iran, Australia, Ireland, Ethiopia, USA and Latin America.

Most of those who migrated from English speaking countries believe that it's easy to integrate into Israeli society as many people in Israel speak English. However those who migrated from non-English speaking countries argued that it's hard to integrate into the host society. However the manager said that experience suggests that most people who come from non-English speaking countries struggle at the beginning, then perform better than those who came from English speaking countries.

Israel's settlement assistance is focussed on specific areas that enhance social integration and social cohesion. Assistance is given to up-skilling young settlers who study vocational courses and undergo training. This seemed to me to be carefully tailored support to help them to integrate into the job market. Further to that, compulsory military service allows many young people to acquire special life skills that help them to integrate in the host society. Several young military cadets told me that military service helps them to build their confidence and to acquire many skills which may not be achievable in normal circumstances.

Despite the support there are ongoing challenges for both service agencies and settlers, including:

- Cultural shock, the first challenge identified by many settlers. Negotiating prices, for example, is very common in the Middle East which seems quite odd for someone who has migrated from New York.
- Coordination of services is another issue for service providers in Jerusalem. Some staff members expressed their concern that some service agencies operating in isolation.
- Although there are high levels of interaction and socialisation between groups, and the government has taken a clear stand, racism and racial

segregation remain a concern for some. Some of the challenges attracted international media over the last few years<sup>26</sup>.

I also visited very interesting organisations and programs targeting young people: Yedidim and MAXAM. MAXAM was established in 1992 by an individual Foundation to provide an after school program for Ethiopian Jews. During their early settlement there were lots of challenges and misunderstandings, such as understanding why children sit outside, near the house or under trees with their parents. The area was a very cheap and rundown neighbourhood and had an unacceptable rate of school dropouts. MAXAM was the first program in the area to provide homework support to children. Local teachers, police and volunteers were also heavily involved in the program. The program has been very successful and the school retention rate is now very high.

Yedidim is a key local organisation addressing the needs of young people. In particular Yedidim is concerned about young migrant girls who may be exposed to violence, poverty, substance abuse or issues which affect their families and the host society. Some young people end up in the prison system and others become disengaged from school and their families. In response to these challenges the organisation developed strategies that combine prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programs for young people at risk. A number of programs run in conjunction with other key government and non-government service agencies in the area. Some of the programs results:

- One-to-one mentoring by university students achieved high level outcomes. Young people listen to and are strongly influenced by young people of their own age. In consultation with other agencies Yedidim recruited and provided ongoing support to mentors.
- Connecting new settlers with Israeli teenagers was another activity to help school kids. This program particularly works for those settlers who ended up in primary and secondary schools. Yedidim finds the program one of the best ways of addressing isolation and of helping children to integrate into the school system and establish new friendships.
- Involving young people on the verge of risk in volunteering in community services helps them to feel better through making a contribution to society.
- Yedidim has been working with police and community groups to ensure their prevention strategies work. Police communicate with Yedidim before locking youngsters up or sending them to courts for minor offences. Yedidim supports the local police by identifying the young person's issue. In some cases the source of the problem could be family

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/932384.html>

or school. In these circumstances the organisation not only assists the young person to overcome the challenges, but also to avoid reoccurrence of the problem. The organisation also works with the local police to eliminate the police record to assist those young people to integrate in the society.

- Yedidim also supports young people to join the army. Young people with minor police convictions are unable to join the army. Yedidim works closely with police to rehabilitate those young people. The system shows that over 80% never commit any crime again. In fact most of the young people move on to education or full time work.
- The Girls at Risk program works with young girls involved in socially unacceptable behaviours including prostitution and promiscuity. These young girls are particularly vulnerable and can be taken advantage of by older men. Through a one-on-one program, Yedidim find out the cause of the breakdown and provides rehabilitation support. The program is successful and many girls return to normative behaviour.

Lesson from Israel include:

1. The pre-departure program provided by local agencies informs settlers of what to expect in Israel and what kind of services are available and where to access them.
2. Providing intensive language programs in conjunction with other pathway opportunities including the opportunity to join the army helps settlers to build their confidence and to integrate into the host society.
3. The intensive programs targeted to disengaged young people and young girls demonstrated huge success in achieving behavioural changes. The prevention and rehabilitation strategies, which reduced the reoccurrence of reoffending, have a lot to offer other countries who can learn from their experiences. Many refugee young people are entering the justice system in Australia. Specialist prevention and rehabilitation programs are required to support them out of the justice system and into building their life.
4. The one-to-one mentoring of local teenagers by university students seems to be another strategy which works with young people. The homework and family support through schools contributed to the success of this strategy.
5. The program involved with young girls highlights a lot of important elements. Anecdotal data suggests that teenage pregnancy among refugee girls has alarmed some service agencies in Victoria. This area along with many other health related issue requires more attention from the responsible agencies.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

My travels across five continents went smoothly without encountering any serious problems. I am indebted to the many organisations and individuals who provided me with critical information and shared their precious time to complete my Fellowship.

Australia is one of the leading countries in providing good settlement services. The resettlement and integration of migrants and refugees into the host society is a two-way process. It begins from the day of departure and becomes a continuing process. In Australia, integration of migrants and refugees continues to be a vital issue to the Australian government and the general public due to a range of factors, but mainly its importance in fostering social cohesion.

As a small population in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia can't afford division and social disintegration. Successful refugee and migrant settlement and integration creates opportunities and benefits for the nation and thus integration must be looked at as part of a long-term investment in the country. The recent media and public debate on the integration of refugees, migrants, international students and faith communities within Australian society continues to attract international attention. Negative media and publications paint Australia as one of the more racist countries in the world. Although the conclusion may not be accurate, Australia needs to introduce affirmative action to improve social cohesion and consequently its image on the international stage. I believe integration, which is the basis for social inclusion, is one of the best vehicles.

One of the critical steps this report suggests is to review the extent to which Australian multicultural policy promotes social cohesion: are we a cohesive multicultural society? There is no question about the importance and benefits of Australian multiculturalism. However the experience and lessons learned throughout the Fellowship that broadly based government multicultural policies promoting ethnic food and cultural festivals can't address the critical challenges of integration. For some, counting the numbers of faith groups, languages and ethnic origins reflects our multiculturalism and social inclusion, which is wrong. I believe multiculturalism should move beyond its current limited activities related to cultural diversity, to better recognise the needs and aspiration of new settlers, the support required by host communities to learn about new settlers and the opportunities required to allow settlers to access socio-economic and political participation - these are some of the critical aspects.

Social cohesion and integration can't happen by accident. It requires active measures that promote equal access and opportunities for all by all.

Unacceptable levels of poverty in some sections of the Australian community, under representation of minority groups in the country's socio-economic and political life, unbalanced distribution of wealth and many other factors are the breeding ground of social division and hatred. For example the unacceptable level of unemployment within the refugee, migrant and Indigenous population in Australia is one factor that contributes to social exclusion.

The report identified that integration without equal economic participation is almost impossible because it sends a clear message that some citizens are not equal in the society. Recent research by reputable Australian universities and other institutions has confirmed that the unemployment rates within refugee communities are unacceptably much higher than the broader community<sup>27</sup>. In particular the situation of skilled refugees, including refugees who graduated from Australian educational institutions, who are unable to find employment raises several questions. On the one hand, those who graduated overseas cannot get recognition of their work experiences and qualifications. On the other hand those who graduate from the Australian universities continue to struggle to find appropriate employment in the country. A recent Murdoch University report identified racism and discrimination as the two leading factors contributing to the plight of unemployed skilled refugees and migrants<sup>28</sup>.

Australia has great potential and willingness to address integration challenges. The Rudd government's unquestionable commitment and support must be utilised to achieve best outcomes. However the Australian government policies and programs must be proactive. The debacle with the current international student crisis could have been avoided had there been proactive integration policies and programs<sup>29</sup>. The reactive policies and programs introduced after the crisis, are costly, and do not save the country's image overseas.

I believe Australia must take affirmative action on matters such as on work place diversity to ensure fairness and equality in the Australian society. In acknowledging these challenges the recent move by the Australian Minister for Finance, Lindsay Tanner, inviting large corporations to play their part by providing opportunities to disadvantage skilled refugees is a bold step. I believe this kind of practical initiative must be supported. Because employment is one of the key elements for successful integration in other

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/refugees\\_and\\_employment.pdf](http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/refugees_and_employment.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/refugees\\_and\\_employment.pdf](http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/refugees_and_employment.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/national/india-is-losing-interest-in-our-universities-say-agents-20090730-e32w.html>

parts of the world, failing to address economic integration sets a negative example to refugees and their families and encourages them to marginalise themselves.

Key learnings from the study tour are that practical experiences, and specific tailored programs and projects contribute to improving the integration of migrants and refugees in the countries visited. Settlement challenges can be addressed only when new arrivals and the host communities plan together to improve integration outcomes. This will not happen without creating a level playing field and outlining measurable steps to be taken by organisations involved in the process.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to be applied in the Australian context, are drawn from my learnings through the Fellowship. These recommendations target all levels of government, settlement service providers, educational institutions, private sectors, local community associations and the broader host and migrant communities. Australia is extremely well placed to address integration and social inclusion challenges, and as such, it is recommended:

### **SETTLEMENT**

- That the Commonwealth move to outcomes focused settlement service funding based on employment and self-sufficiency measures rather than service outputs. Settlement services act as critical steps in integrating migrants and refugees. These services must be tailored to meet the needs of individual settlers in Australia. Employment and self sufficiency should be the central component of these services.
- That access to Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS) should be extended from six months to one year for each individual settler and that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) must require specific measurable self-sufficiency outcomes from funded IHSS services. Service agencies must be accountable for their services delivered to individual settlers on the government's behalf.
- That the Commonwealth establish conditions on settlement services around succession planning that encourages governance and workforce representation by newly arrived communities. In some organisations community board members hold positions over many years leading to lack of fresh ideas and failure to arrange succession enabling the involvement of newly emerging communities in managing these organisations. The Commonwealth government needs to urgently review its funding guidelines to ensure efficacy in the management of these organisations.
- That the five years of settlement support provided through migrant agencies be reviewed to establish their relevance to recently arrived communities, as some agencies are shifting their focus to delivering other services. Efficacy in providing for the unmet needs of new settlers are in doubt as the reported number of client contacts confirm nothing other than numbers.
- That the Commonwealth encourage a stronger future focus on models of refugee counselling and advice applied by settlement services. Settlers' experiences suggest that people affected by past traumatic

circumstances prefer to plan for their future rather than revisit their past. Untailored refugee counselling programs may trap them into overly dwelling on past memories rather than living for tomorrow. The experience of the Victorian bushfire victims offers one of the best examples. Like many other refugees from traumatic experiences, bushfire victims want to live for tomorrow. The Commonwealth must ensure that refugee counselling services are provided by qualified and culturally appropriate professionals, and that they are tailored to individual needs and connected to other services.

- That the Commonwealth promote the use of mentoring in settlement service models. Individually tailored settlement programs should be supported by mentoring programs to achieve better outcomes. One-to-one mentoring opportunities may also create opportunities to create friendship and enhance individual integration.
- That relevant Governments establish specialised or minimum professional standards for settlement workers, including a minimum capability/qualifications be set. There must be a minimum standard and training for staff who deliver settlement services, teach English, and work on integration for refugee communities, to ensure high levels of support and services delivered to new settlers. To date anyone can work in the settlement field without being equipped with the appropriate skills and cultural knowledge required to work with people who may need greater assistance.
- That Governments and community organisations address the unmet needs of skilled refugees. Many refugees are highly qualified and require intensive supports in the areas of skills recognition and local work experience to access the Australian job market. The current effort by Minister Lindsay Tanner in placing skilled refugees at IBM and National Australia Bank could be one of the best examples.
- That support is provided to skilled migrants and their families as it is critical for their successful settlement and integration with the host community. Currently the available support is minimal or non-existent, based on the assumption that either they have secured employment at the time of their arrival or are bringing sufficient money with them. They are denied access to various government funded programs including intensive support from employment agencies to assist them to search for jobs and/or to update their skills.

## **INTEGRATION**

- That the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments develop integration partnership agreements, including promoting the role of Local Councils in promoting local/regional integration. This may require high level political commitment supported by measurable, specific and accountable actions. Furthermore governments need to ensure that the concept, strategy and implementation of community integration is developed and supported by all levels – national to local. This requires good will and leadership rather than additional resources.
- That all levels of Government develop new integration strategies to engage private sector donors and employers in supporting refugee settlement, professional mentoring and affirmative action employment. Integration demands multi level inter-disciplinary participation by all sections of the community. A platform should be established to allow the private sector, prominent individuals, non government sectors, and grass roots migrant and refugee communities to actively engage in promoting integration through various formal and informal activities.
- That all levels of Government develop representative participation models in political decision making and nation building processes to reduce consultation fatigue. Integration is almost impossible without addressing barriers to socio-economic and political participation. New Zealand's representative model is a useful tool for ensuring minority groups, including women and Indigenous people, become involved and participate in nation building processes.
- That all levels of Government develop an anti-discrimination campaign targeting stereotypes of new migrants and racial and religious discrimination in employment. Systemic racism and discrimination require a systemic response. Economic discrimination based on race, gender, religion or language must be addressed. A responsible government will ensure access and equality of all citizens.
- That all levels of Government develop public sector migrant employment strategies aimed at increasing the number of newly arrived migrants and refugees employees and managers. Affirmative action should be taken to ensure minority groups are represented in government and private sectors.
- The role of local governments in supporting the integration of refugees and migrants within their areas must be specified. Municipal workforces must reflect their community's diversity by employing local settler

community members who pay their rates, fees and fines as equally as other members of the community. The workforces of some of our most highly diverse municipalities do not reflect the realities of their communities. The City of Toronto and the City of London, for example, are working through the challenges of addressing disadvantage in their municipalities.

### **YOUNG PEOPLE**

- That focus cross government collaboration to improve education and employment attainment by refugee young people, including more structured individual support to stay engaged in schools and universities. There is clearly a need for tailored programs to provide pathways to employment and/or further education as they may not receive any advice from their parents. Providing specific support for the unmet needs of young refugees is critical for minimising school drop outs. Supporting young refugees in colleges and universities demonstrates higher outcomes in Canada. Most universities in Australia seem to lack specific supports and programs addressing the educational challenges for refugee young people in colleges and universities.

### **POLICY AND PROGRAMS**

- That multicultural strategies give higher priority to campaigns that promote the importance of positive two-way community relationships in the wider host community. Multiculturalism must be promoted within the broader community, including rural and small towns, and the corporate and private sectors. Some sections of the Australian community are less involved in multicultural activities than others.
- That all levels of Government take proactive policy measures to promote harmony as community relations requires proactive steps and ongoing participatory platforms. The lack of support for emerging community associations and the reactive policies contribute to the creation of negative images of the country as a racist state – the unfortunate incidents with the international students are a typical example. Right after the incidents a Contact Centre was established in Melbourne. Community associations and grass roots organisations must be resourced to build their own capacity to contribute to social cohesion and community safety.

### **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT**

- That recruiting, nurturing and supporting community leadership among newly arrived and emerging communities is recognised as critical, as it gives meaning and a sense of belonging to young people. In the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Israel community members, in particular young people, have the opportunity to see leaders and role models who belong to their communities. Australian refugee young people, particularly black Africans, are trying hard to associate themselves with black Americans due to the lack of visible African - Australian leaders.
- That the Commonwealth take affirmative action to build the capacity of ethno-specific organisations from newly arrived communities to tender for settlement service provision. Strengthening migrant and refugee communities and building their capacities to maximise their participation within the broader host society is critical for their integration. As learned from Canada, the role of ethno-specific organisations in supporting governments, local agencies and their community members is important. They should be supported and strengthened by relevant bodies without any political favouritism for one community over another. This support also must be needs based other than numbers.
- That all levels of Government facilitate the establishment of working relationships between established and newly emerging communities as it is very important in the transfer of experiences and the sharing of resources. The report learned of the benefits of this process in different countries. Government and service agencies must support the connection between the various migrant communities in Australia. These relationships may require some degree of management and understanding to manage expectations and avoid exploitation.

## **10. DISSEMINATION**

I plan to disseminate the key outcomes of the Fellowship to government and non government organisations. I aim to present the key findings at conferences, forums and network meetings as one of my key strategies. I will present this paper to the 2009 FECCA Conference, and I will make a submission to DIAC on the IHSS review. I will also utilise all available opportunities, whether formal or informal, to share the resources I have acquired during my Fellowship.

Maintaining the contacts with international organisations and individuals with whom I met during my trip will be critical to the continued exchange of new ideas. I will continue promoting the work of the Winston Churchill Fellowship and I will encourage other people to apply to research further on the topic. I will support and mentor people who wish to apply for the Fellowship.

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