



**Australian
Human Rights
Commission**

everyone, everywhere, everyday

2010

African Australians: human rights and social inclusion issues project

.....

A compendium detailing the outcomes of
the community and stakeholder consultations
and interviews and public submissions

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1 Recognition of Indigenous context

“When I first arrived on this soil, I asked around about who the custodians of the land were here.... it’s very important for us to know about the land and its history. This was common practice for us back home. Unfortunately though no-one could actually tell us. For me it really showed that as newcomers we have an obligation to remember the history of this land and its original people, and that we always pay respects to that...”
(Community Leader, Victoria).

Australia is home to the oldest continuing cultures in human history, which date back an estimated 50,000 years. Cultural and linguistic diversity has been a part of the Australian landscape since pre-colonisation times, when more than 250 Aboriginal languages with over 600 dialects were spoken¹.

Almost all of the consultations undertaken raised the importance of recognising that multiculturalism operates within the context of Indigenous history and Indigenous sovereignty.

Whilst there are examples of tensions across various states and territories between Indigenous communities, particularly young people, and newly arrived African communities, even more examples were given of activities currently being undertaken in partnership between Indigenous and African communities.

In undertaking this project an ideal opportunity was presented for an open dialogue to occur between Aboriginal and African communities to identify common community issues, particularly around youth, and to explore constructive ways forward.

A community consultation involving Indigenous and African communities in Melbourne was co-hosted by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the City of Yarra in recognition of their large population of Aboriginal and African communities.

The meeting was chaired by former Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma, and included over 20 participants representing both Aboriginal and African communities and community organisations.

This consultation was believed to be the first formal meeting of this kind run in Australia, bringing together Australia’s oldest and youngest communities. As one African leader described: *“this gathering reflects the true spirit of reconciliation and inclusion”*.

¹ Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *Aboriginal Languages*, www.daa.nsw.gov.au/landandculture/language.html (viewed 24 May 2010).

2 Overview

As Professor Graeme Hugo's background paper indicates, there is a long history of migration between African and Australia – however in recent years, it has accelerated.

At the time of the 2006 census, there were 248,699 people born in Africa who were resident in Australia, this constitutes 5.6% of the overseas-born population and around 1% of the total Australian population². Of these, 210,872 were of sub-Saharan origin. Since then, approximately another 50,000 migrants have arrived from sub-Saharan Africa (and Sudan).

African-born residents in Australia come from most, if not all countries in Africa, representing a diverse range of cultures, religions and language groups from across the African continent. The majority (72.6%) are from southern and eastern Africa, with 22.9% from North Africa (which for Census purposes includes Sudan) and 4.5% from Central and West Africa.

Other large communities include: Zimbabwe (8.1%), Sudan (7.7%), Mauritius (4%), Kenya (4%) and Ethiopia (2.3%). Other Sub-Saharan African communities have less than 5,000 people, or only 2% (or less) of the total. It is likely that these figures include a high proportion of white South Africans and Zimbabweans.

2.1 Scope and framework

This compendium seeks to build a national picture about everyday experiences of African Australians in relation to human rights and social inclusion. As such, it reflects the stories, experiences and perspectives from African Australians themselves, which allows a comprehensive picture to emerge.

The compendium highlights the available support and issues impacting upon social inclusion for African communities with particular reference to:

- employment and training
- education
- health
- housing
- justice.

The issues arising in these areas were analysed through a legal and moral human rights framework also informed by social inclusion policy principles. The framework emphasised a number of related principles including:

² Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2006 – People Born in Africa.

- importance of representing **The First Voice** of communities

The First Voice

The **First Voice** concept³ has its origins in the heritage conservation and museology; however it is now more widely applied as both a process and principle. **The First Voice** involves consultation on the basis of respect and equality, collaboration on the basis of ownership and participation, and action on the basis of substantive equality.

A central aspect of this project was the commitment to respecting **The First Voice** of African Australian communities, which was critical in identifying:

- the issues
- what works and what is not working
- achievements and contributions
- preferred solutions and suggestions for progressing the issues.

Respecting and encouraging The First Voice acknowledges that communities are collaborative partners who are best placed to identify what needs to be done. It requires active engagement and meaningful dialogue with communities at all stages throughout a project.

- recognition of diversity within communities
- recognition of identity and language as a major contributor to inclusion/exclusion
- the need to build evidence in relation to good practice and social inclusion and human rights
- the need to adopt a strengths-based approach to the research and consultations
- the need to be solutions focused without minimising evidence of disadvantage and exclusion.

2.2 Project partners and governance

The project is one of several undertaken by the Commission under its Community Partnerships for Human Rights program. It was largely funded by the Australian Government as part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security.

³ A Galla, 'The First Voice in Heritage Conservation', (2008) 3 *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* p 1.

The project was established with the following partner organisations, who contributed knowledge, expertise and financial resources:

- Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) in Victoria
- Australian Red Cross
- Diversity Health Institute
- Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia
- Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

Over the course of the project, the Settlement Council of Australia and the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship also joined as project partners.

The project was governed by a Steering Committee⁴ that was chaired by the Commission. All funding partner organisations were represented and the Committee also had two community representatives: Samia Baho, Executive Director of the Centre for African – Australian Women’s Issues and Abeselom Nega, Immediate Past Chair of the Federation of African Communities Council; and a service provider representative Eugenia Tsoulis OAM, Chief Executive Officer of the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia, also Executive Committee member of the Settlement Council of Australia.

The purpose of the Steering Committee was to provide overall governance and accountability to and for funding partners of the project, as well as provide expert advice. The committee also played a critical role in ensuring quality control and direction to the planning, conduct and completion of the project.

In addition, the project received valuable input from a national Community Reference Group (CRG)⁵ made up of over 100 African Australian community members from around the country. The purpose of the CRG was to provide strong content knowledge, links and representation to African communities and service provider agencies. The group provided a vital forum to debate issues, the scope and approaches of the project and final documents, and solutions to problems.

MyriaD Consultants was contracted by the Commission to work closely with the Steering Committee and CRG in organising the national consultations. They also undertook broader relevant research, analysis and assisted to prepare the final project documents.

⁴ For a list of names see Appendix A.

⁵ For a list of names see Appendix A.

2.3 Consultation strategy and approach

In implementing the project objectives, MyriaD Consultants drew on a number of different theoretical approaches, including participatory action research and appreciative enquiry. An important component of these approaches is meaningful community engagement.

All too often, research of this nature professes to ‘consult’ and ‘engage’ community voices, however, ends up lapsing into formulaic responses and methodologies when the challenges of engaging diverse voices becomes too great. This project sought instead to actively engage in meaningful dialogue with communities across various locations throughout Australia.

Early in 2009, the Steering Committee decided that the two community representatives on the Steering Committee – Samia Baho and Abeselom Nega – should work more closely with MyriaD Consultants in both the organisation and facilitation of community consultations. Their work with communities over the years contributed towards increased willingness of many community leaders and members to participate in the project. The extent of community involvement in the consultations, particularly from hard-to-reach individuals and groups, was certainly enhanced by their guidance and input.

The project comprised a number of components:

- a series of **Background Papers** and **Literature Review**
- development and distribution of a **Discussion Paper** and call for submissions
- **national consultations** involving community meetings, focus group discussions, in depth interviews
- Analysis of information and the production of a **project review**, **compendium** and a **summary guide** translated into several languages.

2.4 Questions of identity and terminology

In the early stages of the project, both the Steering Committee and CRG provided clear advice that there was a need to move beyond the tendency to perceive African Australians as ‘homogenous’ as well as promote the diversity characterising communities. This advice was taken when the research and consultation methodology was developed.

A number of preliminary issues that emerged at the very outset of the project related to the use of various terms, including the term ‘African Australian’ and the word ‘refugees’ and the need to ensure that the diversity representative of African Australian communities was adequately conveyed throughout every stage of the research and consultation phases.

Both the consultations and the writing of this compendium therefore reflect an absolute recognition of the significant diversity among and within different groups, in

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terms of religion, age, gender, language, levels of education, culture, demography and experience.

3 Current policy and operating context

There are a number of important current policy and legislative developments that impacted on the project.

In summary, key recent developments include:

- recommendations from the National Human Rights Consultation Report
www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf/Page/Report_NationalHumanRightsConsultationReportDownloads
- federal government's social inclusion agenda
www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Resources/Pages/Resources.aspx
- National Compact
www.nationalcompact.gov.au
- work of the Australian Social Inclusion Board
www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Partnerships/Board/Pages/default.aspx
- establishment of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council
www.immi.gov.au/about/stakeholder-engagement/national/advisory/amac
- ongoing development of the federal multicultural policy
www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2010/ce10033.htm
- evaluation of National Action Plan to build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security
www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-diverse-australia/national-action-plan/nap.htm
- current anti-racism research and initiatives
- increase in numbers of humanitarian entrants
- Report of the Working Party on Settlement Issues – announcement of Strategic Settlement Framework
www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/lf090925.htm
- Commonwealth-State Working Party on Skilled Migration
www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/pdf/comm-vic-migrationv2.pdf
- National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children
www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/immediate_government_actions/Pages/default.aspx
- National Women's Health Policy Discussion Paper and Consultations
www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-women-consult-disc-paper
- Australian Citizenship Amendments
- review of Adult Migrant English Program
- establishment of Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution
www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/detention/regulations/cissr

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- Increase in government scholarships to international African students
www.ausaid.gov.au/scholar/studyin.cfm
- federal government's National Partnership Agreement on homelessness
www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/Pages/default.aspx
- Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth's inquiry into homelessness legislation
www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/homelessness/index.htm
- federal government's *National Homelessness Research Agenda 2009-2013*
www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/news/Pages/nat_homeless_research_121109.aspx
- federal government's Housing Affordability initiatives
www.fahcsia.gov.au/SA/HOUSING/PROGSERV/AFFORDABILITY/Pages/default.aspx
- federal Government's Social Housing initiative
www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/social_housing/Pages/default.aspx
- Access to Justice Taskforce's Report
www.ag.gov.au/a2j

4 Community and stakeholder consultations, interviews and public submissions

The following sections (employment and training, education, health, housing, justice and additional issues) detail the outcomes of the community and stakeholder consultations and interviews. It is further supplemented by key issues raised through the public submission process.

Responses provided during the consultations, interviews and submissions are set out under each of the headings and many of the questions provided in the project Discussion Paper.

The sections also provide good practice examples which have emerged throughout the consultations, and identify the range of ways in which members of diverse African Australian communities are contributing to Australian society.

The voices of African Australians and other stakeholders are woven through the following sections as evidenced by quotes. In many instances the source of the quote is detailed however there are other instances where there is no source provided. If no source has been provided that is because the consultation participant had said that they wanted to participate in consultations but on the understanding that they could request anonymity. This request has been respected.

4.1 Community and stakeholder consultations

The consultation process was extensive, involving over **2500 African Australians**⁶ and over **150 different organisations and service providers**⁷. Participants came from a cross section of the community, encompassing different genders, ethnicities, ages, class, cultures and migratory patterns (skilled, family reunion, diplomatic, humanitarian entrant and so on). There were **50 community meetings** in locations across each state and territory. Every effort was also made to ensure consultations were held in rural and regional areas of NSW and VIC, the states where the largest African Australian populations reside. There was also a regional consultation in Bordertown, South Australia.

Various peak African organisations and associations assisted MyriaD Consultants in terms of arranging venues, promoting the consultation events and encouraging widespread participation amongst their constituent groups.

A number of Migrant Resource Centres and other settlement services were also extremely supportive and assisted in organising many of the consultation events across the country.

⁶ The list of community focus groups is found in Appendix B.

⁷ The list of stakeholders who were consulted is found in Appendix C.

The questions provided in the project Discussion Paper were used as a guide in the focus group sessions.

Apart from focus groups and in depth one-on-one interviews, the consultations also featured a series of innovative consultation approaches, including:

- informal conversations with individuals at cultural and religious festivals and other social and sporting events
- an Indigenous and African Communities Dialogue Forum hosted by the City of Yarra in Victoria and attended by, the former Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma
- good practice forums showcasing innovation in service design and delivery
- several radio talkback sessions involving Samia Baho and Abeselom Nega (Ethiopian and Eritrean Radio – 3ZZZ and 3CR)
- focus group discussions with DIAC staff in Melbourne, NSW and the ACT
- focus groups with people with disabilities and their carers
- discussion groups with secondary students on site
- local government forums involving diversity officers and multicultural liaison staff
- legal forums, including joint community and police discussions
- a workshop session with community educators employed with the Justice for Refugees Program at the Victorian Department of Justice
- a workshop with taxi drivers in Victoria
- a workshop with childcare providers
- workshops with professional bodies, including chambers of commerce and businesses with a focus on African Australians
- workshops with staff at a number of torture/trauma services across Australia
- attendance at a range of conferences.

In some instances, consultations were conducted in the preferred community language and facilitated by trusted bilingual/multilingual facilitators. This ensured greater levels of participation and inclusion of individuals and groups who might normally be excluded from consultations by virtue of language barriers.

As indicated earlier in this document, the project was largely funded by the Australian Government as part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security. This meant that the Commission was required to ensure that funding requirements were met. However this funding was further supplemented by funding from the project partners, which meant that the project parameters could be broadened.

There was a particular focus in the project on gathering the views and experiences of **young African Australians, African Australian Muslim communities and African**

Australian Muslim women, who often encounter specific and multiple challenges. Every effort was made to hold sessions specifically engaging these subgroups, for example, ‘women only’ and ‘young people only’ consultations were held to ensure participants could express their views freely.

In some instances, consultations were conducted as part of pre-existing events to maximise engagement opportunities. Examples include:

- women’s sporting and leisure events
- young people’s conferences
- conferences focused on experiences of African Muslim communities.

A number of peak African Australian women’s organisations were able to assist in hosting a number of consultation sessions. These included:

- women’s sporting and leisure events
- young people’s conferences
- conferences focused on experiences of African Muslims.

A number of peak African women’s organisations were able to assist in hosting a number of consultation sessions. These included:

- African Women’s Advocacy Training Program
- Centre for African Australian Women’s Issues.

Numerous ethno-specific and Muslim women’s organisations were also extremely supportive of the project and its objectives. A complete list is provided in Appendix C.

Various African Australian youth organisations were also vital in encouraging young people to attend the various youth specific focus groups that were held. These included:

- Lost Boys and Girls Association
- Australian Sudanese Youth Conference.

Other mainstream youth organisations that supported the project and assisted with hosting focus groups included:

- Centre for Multicultural Youth (Vic)
- Ethnic Youth Council (EYC)
- Multicultural Youth SA Inc.

(a) Additional meetings with Victorian Somali communities

Following requests, meetings were held with Somali community leaders and African community members in Melbourne. The Race Discrimination Commissioner,

Commissioner of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Chairperson of the African Think Tank attended these meetings. Staff from both commissions also provided support.

4.2 Public submissions

The Commission received **over 100 written submissions**⁸.

The public responses are quite varied. Some submissions are personal stories of African Australians, while others are from government and non-government agencies who answer specific questions in the discussion paper. Yet others have responded more generally to the sub-sections or larger sections of the discussion paper. Another raft of submissions refers to published articles, reports or research.

⁸ The list of submissions is outlined in Appendix D.

5 Employment and Training

5.1 Overview

This section documents the issues emerging from the consultations and public submissions in relation to employment and training.

For migrant and refugee job seekers, finding paid work is both a key indicator and a major determinant of successful settlement. Employment is also a crucial area of social and economic participation.

African Australians want to build their new life and contribute to Australian society, but many, especially newer arrivals, have to confront numerous barriers when accessing employment and training.

Ensuring that all Australians have the skills and opportunities to participate in the workforce is fundamental to Australia's social and economic sustainability. In addition, investment in skills and workforce participation serves to strengthen social inclusion.

5.2 Access to training

(a) What barriers do African Australians face in accessing training opportunities?

(i) *Community*

There are a variety of options available for those who wish to undertake vocational education or training. These include tertiary courses in universities and colleges; courses run by TAFE colleges designed to cover a range of needs and education levels, including trade apprenticeships; and training programs funded by government bodies and other organisations, designed to assist disadvantaged job seekers to enter the workforce.

Community respondents highlighted a number of barriers confronting African Australians in accessing training opportunities. In summary, the main barriers identified during the community consultations included:

- increasing mistrust and cynicism by community members of training providers and programs
- challenges in accessing 510 hours of English language classes as oral skills above entry criteria, but written skills fall below
- limited English language fluency – or 'survival' English not vocational English proficiency
- lack of knowledge of employment and training options

- stereotyped views of capacity to learn
- lack of familiarity with training concepts and terms
- entry level requirements for many training courses and apprenticeships exclude many African Australians, particularly the newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants
- specific issues for women, including limited childcare options/availability which restricts their ability to attend training and education opportunities
- inadequate support and resourcing of flexible delivery options for some courses
- travel to and from the training centre/site
- limited availability of preparatory and access programs
- newly arrived African Australian young people often have difficulty in securing apprenticeships or traineeships
- inconsistencies between state and federal policies in the area of apprenticeships leading to confusion
- training centres or sites are often inaccessible to African Australians with mobility disabilities or attendant care needs.

Following is a more detailed overview of some of the key barriers identified.

Community respondents across each of the various states reported feeling increasingly cynical of training providers and programs, particularly as those having completed a course or program had found themselves out of pocket and without a job:

“I have heard many examples of people paying for the training and other things like clothing and equipment on the promise of employment only to find that the circumstances had changed and no jobs, even after you have spent so much.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, NSW)

Many of the young people in the youth specific focus groups also highlighted that the widespread perceptions of ineffectiveness associated with the training programs offered was impacting on people’s motivation to participate:

“Young people (are) being dissuaded from pursuing apprenticeships as a result of seeing others being left without a job at the end of their training.”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group, SA)

There was general agreement that more youth friendly approaches needed to be adopted in the design of training programs. Respondents also stressed the need for better transition frameworks for supporting and integrating young people into education, employment and training pathways generally.

Discussions relating to English languages skills and English language training featured in almost all of the consultations:

“500 hours of English language training – this may be adequate for immigrants from Europe who have some understanding/knowledge of English, but for others, such as those of us from Africa, especially remote areas, it’s just not enough.”
(Participant, Community Consultations, WA)

A specific issue for women, including limited childcare options/availability which restricts their ability to attend training and education opportunities, was consistently identified across a number of community consultations:

African woman faces overwhelming challenges in applying for jobs, most are faced by both men and women. African women cannot get a job just by applying via a resume and demonstrating the skills they has like other Australians. They have to know someone that works in the business or organization they are applying with, a relative, a friend or a family member or even cannot get an interview. We are not talking professional job in their field. Many are working as cleaner after their graduation from Australian university.”

(ii) *Stakeholders*

When asked to identify barriers to accessing training opportunities, stakeholder respondents cited the following (in order of frequency):

- lack of English language proficiency
- lack of individualised assistance in accessing employment and training options, especially in understanding and responding to procedural details
- lack of understanding by case managers & employers of the social and cultural backgrounds of clients and their needs
- lack of knowledge of employment and training options
- inadequate pre-training assessment to determine individual learning needs
- insufficient resources for individualised case management and mentoring
- lack of familiarity with training terminology
- lack of childcare and its impact on participation for women
- lack of follow up/assistance with formal applications after completing the training
- lack of awareness of rights in relation to making complaints relating to inadequate or unprofessional programs
- limited training facilities in rural and regional areas.

Several service providers highlighted the challenges associated with current levels of English language training, with most agreeing that at present they do not enable most students to acquire English language competence to a level required for VET and employment.

“The effects of trauma, low literacy levels, cultural differences and disorientation impact profoundly on a students’ capacity to achieve functional English. It affects their

concentration and then ultimately their motivation to learn.”
(Stakeholder, NSW)

Other stakeholders also highlighted the fact that there are too many competing concerns, particularly for new arrivals:

“They are trying to learn English, whilst also trying to seek out appropriate support services, get all their necessary paperwork in for Centrelink, find housing, and at the same time trying and work out the education system and processes.”
(Stakeholder, NSW)

A number of providers of English language training did, however, highlight that humanitarian entrants can also access the Special Preparatory Program (SPP), which consists of an additional 100 hours before the 510 commence.

Lack of knowledge and use of employment information services was seen to be having a major impact on employment, with several stakeholders suggesting an urgent need for greater information on the programs and supports available:

“So many have just not heard of these training and support programs, and just don’t end up using any of the vocational counseling service or career information centres.”
(Stakeholder, ACT)

The impact of limited day care places for children, and associated costs, influences the ability of parents, particularly newly arrived mothers, to attend English classes and, therefore, impedes the settlement process for those affected:

“There are increasingly fewer childcare places in Perth to accommodate the children of parents studying English. Consultations suggest that some childcare centres are reluctant to take children of AMEP students because it is expected that they will be more needy and time consuming. The high cost of childcare services is a further issue for African humanitarian entrants, many of whom have several children.”
(Stakeholder, WA)

Stakeholders frequently identified the need for more targeted programs to improve access to, and success in, VET programs and courses, including apprenticeships and traineeships. Due to limited language and educational backgrounds many African Australian humanitarian entrants do not have a level of English language competency, study skills or life skills to access or succeed in VET.

Several providers expressed the view that many newly arrived African Australians are not accessing career counselling services to guide decisions regarding education, training and employment:

“Although counseling services might be available, what we find is that many just don’t make use of these services. They self select out, largely due to their lack of confidence in their English language fluency, and think there is no point in even trying to seek out what possible further education or employment opportunities might exist for them.”
(Stakeholder, NSW)

(iii) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to the broader theme of access to training were addressed by almost half (44%) of the submissions.

The submissions detailed a number of barriers preventing African Australians from accessing appropriate training opportunities. These included:

- inadequate post-arrival settlement information
- lack of knowledge of how to access appropriate services
- lack of recognised qualifications to access some training programs
- lack of recognised referees
- lack of appropriate understanding of position descriptions and requirements
- case managers not being appropriately informed about African Australian communities' cultures and refugee experiences
- language difficulties negatively impacting training opportunities
- inadequate number of hours allocated for English education
- TAFE and other training institutions' opportunities not meeting the needs of the community
- lack of appropriate childcare options
- lack of appropriate transport options
- lack of self esteem and other health issues.

(b) What specific training opportunities would be most helpful to newly arrived African Australians?

(i) *Community*

A range of suggestions were provided by respondents in relation to specific training opportunities that would be particularly helpful to newly arrived African Australians. It is important to note however, that the overwhelming response to this was that any training opportunities that actually resulted in employment would be the most helpful:

"I can list a number of very creative things that could be done, but at the end of it all the question I would want answered or the way I would tell you whether these suggestions are useful or not is whether I got a job as a result. Isn't that why these programs exist?"
(Participant, community focus group, NSW)

Overall, however, suggestions included:

- vocational education programs linked to language skills
- on-arrival information about education, training and employment options

- professional mentoring programs involving members of the Australian business and employer groups
- programs that combine basic training in trade skills with job placement and post placement support
- flexibility and variability in relation to when programs are offered to better enable women to attend
- more preparatory training programs and bridging courses
- provision of onsite childcare
- more intensive and appropriate support both during and after the training program
- innovative teaching practices that allow students to learn in a mode and environment most comfortable for them (e.g. use of diagrams, photographs and workplace demonstrations)
- training and courses to assist with obtaining a driver's licence.

In response to the above question, most people agreed that any training opportunities that resulted in employment would be the most helpful:

"Finding work so that you can support your family.... that's why you go to the training isn't it?"
(Participant, Community Focus Group, Qld)

Participants repeatedly stressed the critical need to gain work experience within Australian workplaces:

"A training program that really gives you some ideas about Australian workplaces, and can then give you some work experience would be terrific."
(Participant, Community Focus Group, Vic)

A significant number of women participating in the consultations also strongly suggested greater variability in relation to when training programs are offered and the need for childcare to better facilitate their capacity to participate:

The need for more intensive support both during the training program and following completion was frequently raised during almost all of the focus groups:

"Training providers need to understand more about the backgrounds of Africans who use their programs, and recognise that when you come from a place where the idea of 'training' is somewhat alien, and you learn through doing or through oral discussion, then the approaches that are taken just don't seem to work. More support needs to be given while people are going through the training, and then making sure that people even know how to fill in an application form."
(African Settlement Worker, Vic)

Several respondents suggested that tutoring, additional English language support and mentoring are required to help those already in training. This is particularly the

case for teenagers and those in their early 20s who have had limited education opportunities on arrival.

Bridging courses were also seen as vital to assist African humanitarian entrants in specific vocational sectors. Programs could incorporate ESL support and be particularly tailored to skills shortage areas, such as the building trades, security industry, metal work industry, truck/bus driving, mining, health English for nurses and childcare, which would provide speedy pathways into employment.

The need for more targeted and more effective information dissemination for African Australian migrants and refugees who are unable to access all the available services because of limited knowledge about how and where to obtain information about employment and training programs available was repeatedly identified by community respondents.

Several suggestions were made in relation to the development and implementation of mentoring programs to assist migrants and refugees with their employment and training opportunities. Mentoring programs would be aimed at increasing knowledge about how to apply for jobs in Australia, including interview techniques, and how to put together resumes.

Following are examples provided of current projects:

Multicultural Development Agency, Qld

MDA's employment and training programs offer migrants and refugees case management services which involve working one-on-one with individuals to make them job ready. They also provide paid work experience opportunities where participants are able to obtain on-the-job work experience with community organisations and tertiary institutions. Along with this, the participants attend one day a week of in-house training where they are able to improve their job search and interview skills, occupational health and safety, Australian workplace culture, social and work environment and office administration skills.

Please see: www.mdainc.org.au

Ishar Program – Wonder Woman Going Back to 'P' Work, WA

Ishar received funding from the WA Department of Education and Training under the Equity, Development and Innovation Grants Pave the Way.

The project commenced in July 2008 and with further funding for 2009, continued to offer assistance to women from African, Middle Eastern and Asian backgrounds to develop and adapt their job search skills to the Australian context. There are a total of three series of workshops. The sessions include information on resume writing, job search and interview techniques and addressing selection criteria amongst other relevant topics. Further, the project provides individual assistance by a local Employment Service and by the

Project Coordinator. The program also offers a crèche facility for women with young children.

Please see: www.ishar.org.au/html/programs.html

Obtaining a driver's licence is critical for newly-arrived migrants and refugees. Several barriers to obtaining a driver's licence have been identified, including low literacy levels which pose a challenge to passing the Learner Permit Theory Test, particularly when computer-based multiple choice questions are used, and also the high cost of driving lessons in addition to the higher than average number of lessons required by many CALD clients, particularly those from some African countries.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders made the following suggestions in relation to specific training opportunities that would better assist newly-arrived African Australians:

- combination of vocational training with English language classes
- basic and advanced Language, literacy and numeracy courses
- cultural orientation programs on the culture of the Australian workplace
- workplace laws, including equal opportunity and anti discrimination laws
- developing business acumen in the Australian workplace environment
- basic computer skills
- building self confidence
- life skills
- bridging courses to address skills gaps between qualifications and experience gained overseas and Australian industry standards.

It is important to note however that many of those consulted cautioned against the presumption that training alone would improve access to employment opportunities.

Several stakeholders highlighted the need for programs that would improve the awareness of cultural contexts within Australian workplaces amongst African Australians, particularly those who are newly arrived. Cross cultural awareness training was considered essential for improved service delivery to migrants and refugees in their employment endeavours. Both employers and Job Network providers can benefit from such training.

More flexible specialist employment and training programs would be beneficial in assisting African Australian migrants and refugees.

(iii) Public submissions

A number of specific training opportunities and other recommendations for increasing access to training were offered in the submissions. They include:

- establish a government agency that specifically manages a work experience program for refugees, including:
 - perform training and skills assessments on arrival
 - provide appropriate career counselling, employment readiness skills training and mentoring programs
- provide work related English skills training
- establish a gender-specific educational outreach service for women with children
- provide cross-cultural training for educators
- establish a HECS-like scheme for job training
- increase childcare hours for training participants
- provide a program targeting older people with limited education that helps them understand Australian culture and introduces them to effective ways of learning
- establish networks between service providers and employers willing to assist newly-settled African Australians
- increase AMEP services, including:
 - make AMEP a two year program de-linked from Centrelink and Job Network reporting
 - increase hours of English tuition (510 hours are not enough)
 - provide tuition to people with poor written literacy even if spoken literacy is good
 - provide a wider range of courses with more intensive English
 - utilise Get Wise series from AMEP
- establish ACE and TAFE living skills programs (in addition to English language tuition)
- establish community advocates, including:
 - training Africans to help/serve their own communities in Australia
 - focus on self-employment opportunities
- provide realistic career counselling for students, including:
 - provide parents with information on education opportunities for children
 - provide cross-cultural training for educators
 - inform students and parents of educational requirements and financial costs involved in entering different fields of employment
 - assist students with realistically planning a career
- provide more interpreters, including:

- ensure interpreters are available to speak the various dialects spoken by African Australians
- provide appropriately translated information about accessing interpreters to both newly arrived African Australians and their communities, and to the service providers working with them
- provide more accessible translated information about all services and other useful information, including:
 - local geography and map reading
 - transport options
 - language, including learning English and accessing interpreters
 - clearly describing Australian requirements for training and employment opportunities, including duties, rights, codes of conduct
 - industrial relations and unions.

(c) How can interpreting and translation services be improved to provide better access and assistance to African Australians in the training and employment sectors?

(i) Community

All respondents agreed that interpreters are critical to accessing assistance in the training and employment sectors. However, a number of gaps were identified and suggestions for improvements offered.

One of the key gaps identified was the lack of availability of accredited interpreters particularly in the newer African languages:

“If you are Bari, and you don’t speak either Dinka or Juba Arabic, then there is nothing else for you except to find a friend or family member to come with you and this is what I have had to do because I keep getting told that I cannot be helped.”

(Community Respondent, Vic)

There is no doubt that the diversity of languages, and the constant arrival of ‘new’ languages through the immigration program, have been and remain the most challenging aspects of meeting need.

Several community respondents expressed their frustration at what they perceived to be the lack of training by service providers in using interpreting services appropriate and effectively. For example, identifying a client’s language based on their country of birth can be unreliable:

“He kept asking my wife where she was born. She was born in Ethiopia, but she is Eritrean, and she does not actually speak Arabic. They seem to think that all Africans speak Arabic!”

(Community respondent, SA)

Difficulties in getting translations of documents particularly application forms for training programs, was also identified as a significant barrier.

Another issue that received attention from community members was the inaccessibility of many of the websites that employment and training providers utilised:

“It would be helpful if maybe they could put some of the information on the internet in different languages. This would help at least get some of the basic information clear in my head.”

(Community respondent, NSW)

A few respondents pointed out that languages written in other scripts may pose special challenges. The provision of information in an audio format may be worth consideration and technologies such as touch-screens and interactive voice response (IVR) may provide additional opportunities to help users to locate information.

Suggestions for improvements included **increasing the availability of languages to better accommodate the diversity of African languages, particularly the more recent language groups.**

A considerable number of community respondents referred to Centrelink’s Interpreting Services as good practice, and suggested that some of the service features could be transferred to some of the training providers. Centrelink provides interpreters at no cost to customers. Interpreters are available by appointment in Centrelink Customer Service Centres. Where necessary to support a claim, Centrelink also provides a free translation service for customer documents.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders made a number of suggestions in relation to improving translation and interpreting services so as to enhance access to employment and training options:

- increased funding to train more translators / interpreters
- thinking of new ways to engage Job Network Providers and caseworkers to access interpreters
- provide interpreters at interviews with caseworkers
- translated information regarding employment and training options
- better training for caseworkers and administrative staff in the use of interpreters.

Particular concerns were also raised that the allocation of one fee-free translation per document category was not sufficient.

Several stakeholders made reference to the *Decision Tree for Engaging an Interpreter* which can be used as a useful resource to assist in determining the kinds

of communication exchanges that require the use of competent interpreters or translating services.

5.3 Employment and training needs

(a) Can you give examples of genuine training and employment pathways available to African Australians?

(i) Community

Several respondents identified local social enterprises as being particularly helpful to newly-arrived African Australians. Social enterprise affords unique local opportunities for economic and social participation for the program's participants.

Following are some examples of training and employment pathways, including social enterprises, provided by community participants:

African Enterprise (Tas) – In 2003, some refugees with the support of community organisations formed an Association, which was registered as an Incorporated Association and named African Enterprise. They secured a government grant and opened the AFRITAS restaurant in Hobart as the first enterprise project. AFRITAS is no longer in operation however when it was, it provided training and much-needed employment opportunities for those interested in the hospitality sector.

The Ambassador newspaper is the first Horn of African newspaper in Australia and helps to train community members in various skills. The Ambassador runs a program which provides work experience to TAFE students. So far, four people involved with this program have graduated with the Certificate III in Business Administration.

Please see: <http://nexusproject.net.au/nexusblog/the-ambassador-not-your-usual-newspaper/>

Mu'ooz Cooperative – Qld – The Mu'ooz Cooperative was started by the Eritrean Women and Family Support Network which supports new arrivals in the settlement process and conducts community development activities, particularly for refugee women from Eritrea.

The project aims to enhance their catering activities and further develop capacity building through work experience in the restaurant. As well as creating opportunities for paid employment for refugee women and their families through cooperative-based self-employment,

Please see: www.muooz.com.au/

Somali Women Interested in Business (Vic) – 'Somali Women Interested in Business' was conducted in partnership with Women's Health West and the Flemington Project. This event focused on women who were interested in or

required support to run their own business. There were key speakers from Victoria University (VU), Centrelink and the Australian Tax Office (ATO), who were able to provide a range of information.

Please see: www.whwest.org.au/media/MRelease_071009.php

There were also other examples of specialist groups getting together to assist members of the African Australian communities, particularly professionals who may be experiencing difficulties in accessing employment opportunities.

Examples included:

African Professionals of Australia (WA) – is an association of African professionals living and working in Australia. The organisation is a professional body whose mission is to contribute to professional growth and capacity of African professionals living in Australia.

The association aims to provide information to newly-arrived skilled immigrants about procedural requirements necessary for them to practise. Employers will also be provided with information about the skills offered by the migrants. African Professionals of Australia Inc organises workshops, events and networking opportunities for professional Australians of African backgrounds and the business community in Australia.

Please see: www.apaau.org

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders were able to provide examples of successful programs aimed at providing industry skills and workplace experience. These include:

Employment Pathways Reference Group – MRCSA – This is a jointly convened committee with Centrelink, with membership from DEEWR, AMEP and Job Networks, and is a forum for identifying gaps in refugee training and employment pathways and addressing these through advocacy to relevant bodies.

Please see: www.mrcsa.com.au/employmentadvocacy.html

Multicultural Youth Employment Project was funded by the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST) for 12 months and targeted young CALD jobseekers aged between 15 and 24 years who were experiencing barriers to effective participation in the labour market. The project developed and implemented pathways to employment, with young people receiving intensive assistance with writing resumes and job applications, preparing for interviews and accessing appropriate employment and training. Many young people found work in a range of areas in various sectors.

Please see: www.mysa.com.au/projects.html

ACCES Employment Pathways – This project assists newly-arrived migrants and refugees with practical job preparation and job search assistance. The service operates from various locations in Queensland. The project works at building cross-cultural awareness to break down barriers in a supportive environment and identifies employment and training pathways suited to the participant's skill set, in order to encourage ongoing sustainable employment.

Please see: www.accessservicesinc.org.au

AMES Community Guides Initiative – Community Guides are employed in order to:

- assist refugees in their early settlement to become linked to broader community and mainstream networks by providing Community Guides who speak the refugee's first language, are culturally matched to the refugee and who share the refugee experience.
- provide employment opportunities for refugee community members who become Community Guides.

To date approximately 140 people from refugee backgrounds have worked as Community Guides to assist more recent arrivals from the same country background or first language to navigate and settle into Victoria. Their work demonstrates the value of their first language and their cultural backgrounds and skills in explaining concepts and details which can be complex and foreign.

Please see: <http://ames.net.au/index.php?sectionID=6748&pageID=6754>

The Mamre Project (Sisters of Mercy) – an initiative of the Sisters of Mercy whose aim is to assist recently arrived settlers from Africa, living in Blacktown and Outer Western Sydney, to gather the skills required to achieve sustainable employment. This project utilises partnerships with local employers, job network providers and emerging African communities to identify and address barriers to sustained employment

Please see: www.mamre.com.au/social-services/

Community based examples cited also included:

Werribee Community Centre – Community Kitchen: provides training in hospitality and catering to Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) students from new and emerging communities. The community enterprise set up a sustainable community garden to provide vegetables for the kitchen, and training and employment pathways. The project is a follow-up to the continuing work of the Wyndham Humanitarian Network, a grouping of local service providers that was initiated several years ago in Werribee by Centrelink, the Werribee Community Centre, AMES Settlement and the Wyndham City Council to meet the settlement needs of the increasing numbers of refugee and humanitarian migrants, mainly Sudanese and Karen Burmese, who were settling in the Wyndham local government area.

Please see: www.werribeecc.net

Personal Services Broker is a pilot project providing employment assistance to young refugees in Fairfield (NSW) and Broadmeadows (Victoria).

Please see: www.fecca.org.au/conf09/Presentations/Sam_Campisi.pdf

Migrant Work Experience Program (Qld)

This program gave recently-arrived migrants a chance to gain experience through a mix of training and work experience with a state government department acting as a sponsor over a 10 week period. The program does not guarantee ongoing paid employment however past graduates from the program have won traineeships or entry level administrative positions within the Queensland public service or in the private sector.

Please see:

www.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=58856

Several employer groups have also contributed to the establishment of programs. For example, an organisation called **Employers Making a Difference** in Tasmania, set up by business people with a successful record of employing people with a disability, produced a video that positively influenced employers to recruit people with a disability.

Please see: www.emad.asn.au/

The Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training in Tasmania discussed with **STEPS Employment and Training Solutions** the idea of providing funding for producing a similar video to encourage employers to consider employing refugees. The team at STEPS Employment and Training Solutions approached the employers and employees featured and gained their agreement to appear in the video. Five employers were drawn together and interviewed about their experiences of employing African refugees. They were asked how they had addressed any perceived or real issues.

Another example provided is one currently being undertaken by **the Royal Life Saving Society WA**. The Royal Life Saving Society WA Training department has been working with the **Employment Directions Network** to develop and improve the skills of people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to employment and training needs were addressed by more than a third (40%) of the submissions.

A number of training and employment pathways available to African Australians were provided in the submissions. They include:

- Family Action Centre Project in Newcastle

- AMES
- Tasmanian Polytechnic Pathways courses
- TAFE and other training institutions
- Interlink in Adelaide
- Job Networks / RTOs.

(b) Please comment on what is meant by ‘securing meaningful employment’ from your personal and/or professional perspective?

(i) Community

Very few community participants were able to elaborate on their understanding of ‘securing meaningful employment’, with most suggesting that “*any kind of employment would be good*” (*Participant, Youth Focus Group*).

A handful of statements were made, with most citing:

- job satisfaction
- financial independence
- alignment with one’s skills and qualifications
- positive self image and self-esteem
- being able to provide for one’s family.

(ii) Stakeholders

A number of service providers/government agency representatives were able to provide some comments, including:

- work that is aligned with your skills/capacity
- security and confidence in the nature of the job and the working environment
- non exploitative
- workplaces where contributions are valued and respected, and career progression is possible
- self determination
- any pathway that recognises not only prior learning and experience but also takes into consideration the aspirations of the individual by recognising his or her right to self-determination while at the same time providing the guidance, resources and mentoring to achieve those goals.

Several stakeholders also spoke strongly of their observations of employment agencies who did ‘anything but seek out meaningful employment’ for African Australian clients:

“It means not channeling clients, especially those from refugee backgrounds, into the first available menial job but reinforcing their acquired skills.”
(Stakeholder, WA)

“I have spoken to several young African Australians who aspire to become lawyers or doctors, only to have their dreams disparaged by teachers and career advisors who believe they lack the commitment and intelligence to complete tertiary studies. Several young African Australian women have been advised to seek careers in health or aged care, cleaning and hospitality or marry and start a family.”
(Stakeholder, Vic)

(c) What career advice is helpful for newly-arrived African Australians?

(i) Community

In responding to this question, several community representatives and leaders made the point that in their view employment agencies rarely viewed employment for African Australians as a career and so rarely provided ‘career advice’:

“I think if the process of seeking employment was seen as one involving career options, then maybe we wouldn’t get sent out to low skilled jobs when some of us are clearly over qualified... maybe we would get seen as professionals or skilled people who are interested in a ‘career.’”
(Community Leader, Qld)

Broadly, however, the following suggestions were made in relation to career advice:

- career advisors need to be realistic about the competitive nature of Australian workforces and convey this honestly to newly-arrived people, particularly young people
- advice in relation to the impact that unemployment can have on issues such as skills development, exposure to changing requirements within the specific industry of choice and so on
- specific information and advice in relation to apprenticeships – information should also be targeted at parents of young people around the benefits of trade work to counter misinformation
- career advisors should come from within the community – these advisors could also act as role models.

“We need advice that is real and doesn’t lead people to believe things that won’t actually happen. So many times people get disappointed because they think that they can just get into the job they want.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, Tas)

“Sometimes our parents don’t realise that becoming an electrician or a plumber is actually a good job, and one that pays good too. They all think that you have to be a doctor or a lawyer to be successful in Australia.”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group, SA)

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders made the following suggestions in relation to career advice for newly-arrived African Australians:

- be realistic about training and job choices
- patience as a critical part of seeking employment
- the need to be willing and prepared to start at the bottom
- be prepared that discrimination and racism does exist in the recruitment process and learn about your rights to complain
- older arrivals will find it difficult to seek out employment of choice
- prior experience is important, but needs other competencies such as English fluency
- be prepared to explore new avenues and pathways to professional advancement.

“Any advice that assists African Australians to understand the job market, the importance of establishing contacts and networks, accessing services and programs to upgrade existing skills and any advice that motivates them to be willing and flexible to explore new avenues and pathways to professional advancement.”

5.4 Employment services

(a) What barriers do African Australians encounter in using services of employment agencies (including the Job Network)?

(i) *Community*

Many respondents noted a broad range of barriers encountered by African Australians in using services of employment agencies, such as Job Network, although several highlighted the fact that New Employment Services (Job Services Australia) had been recently introduced and that there was widespread anticipation in relation to the program addressing many of the barriers.

Barriers cited included:

- system difficult to access as it is often overly complex, frustrating and overwhelming
- inadequate emphasis on finding work that is appropriate to individual’s skill levels, interest and experience
- insufficient time to explore employment pathways
- particular challenges for newly-arrived African Australians, especially those from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds include requirement of computer skills (with little support to acquire them)

- inadequate use of interpreter services by employment agencies
- lack of focus on obtaining Australian workplace experience in advice/direction provided by employment services
- pressure to exit AMEP before the completion of allotted English classes in order to take up employment, which is also a precondition of receiving Centrelink support

“The system assumes clients have access to technology and information, rather than being there to help them navigate the system.”

(Participant, Community Focus Group, NSW)

A key issue raised was the lack of information or advice on what to do if people have experienced discrimination.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders regularly expressed the view that overall, Job Network Providers are failing to help people get jobs. It was suggested that this was due to a number of factors including:

- lack of cultural awareness by providers
- lack of specialist services, such as those provided by Centrelink through its network of Multicultural Liaison Officers
- negative stereotypes about African Australians held by providers

The following barriers to using employment agencies were identified by stakeholders:

- English language fluency
- inadequate screening process in relation to proper identification of needs
- lack of flexibility in relation to streaming decisions
- conflicting advice between different providers – leading to confusion
- lack of appropriate and intensive support.

Specific issues for young people were highlighted, particularly the view that existing employment support programs are not equipped to provide the intensive assistance these young people require:

“There needs to be greater coordination of the existing resources, cross-cultural training of the services that deliver them and more targeted employment and jobs skill programs available for refugee young people. Without these measures, refugee young people and their communities will continue to have high unemployment rates, leaving them disengaged and isolated.”

(Stakeholder, WA)

While it was expected that the reforms would go some way to addressing many of the identified barriers, several respondents cautioned about the importance of

ensuring that such services were able to meet the specific needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to employment services were addressed by one third (32%) of the submissions.

A number of submissions also drew attention to some of the barriers African Australians encounter when using services of employment agencies (including the Job Network).

(b) Do employment agencies provide culturally appropriate services to African Australians? If yes, then how?

(i) Community

The overwhelming community response was that, on the whole, employment agencies were falling well below the mark in terms of provision culturally appropriate services to African Australians.

A significant number of respondents also suggested that negative, and in some instances perceived discriminatory perceptions of the skills sets and work attitudes of African Australians were underpinning the inadequate level of service provision.

Some participants felt that employment agencies were overly ethnocentric and “**only took care of their own people**”.

Several community respondents suggested that it was commonplace for many within African Australian communities to seek employment through informal connections rather than through formalised employment networks.

Although mostly negative, some positive examples were provided. These positive examples generally tended to be migrant employment programs such as:

The New Futures Training Workforce Participation Partnerships (WPP)

The Victorian Co-operative on Children’s Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) set up New Futures Training. Certificate and diploma courses are delivered in a range of locations across Melbourne, to refugee and migrant women in the care services, particularly childcare and aged care. A partnership was developed with a family day care centre via the WPP project. Prior to joining the project, most of the participants had not received formal education, had limited English language and had not previously undertaken paid work experience. As a result of the partnership, 40 refugee women gained permanent employment.

Most community respondents agreed that equipping employment service providers with the skills to work effectively with African Australians, particularly those who are

newly arrived, will make assessments more effective and pathways to achieving employment outcomes more realistic.

Several community participants highlighted that specialist migrant/refugee services are better able to recognise the issues facing newly-arrived communities and better understand the many refugee groups, their cultures, and needs and also employ workers from different cultures who speak different languages. One such group is:

African Australian (A2)

African Australian (A2) was founded and established in 2008 by African Australian citizens. A2 employment consultants come from diverse industry backgrounds, and emphasize high standards and ethical service.

Please see: www.african-australian.websyte.com.au

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders varied in their response this question, but most agreed that cross-cultural awareness training is necessary for improved service delivery to migrants and refugees in their employment endeavours.

Examples cited of current successful programs aimed at building the cultural competencies of employment agencies included the following:

Auburn Employment Working Group

Auburn Employment Working Group developed an initiative to provide pilot training to employment service providers (ESP) in the area. The training was designed specifically for ESP consultants working with clients from refugee background and was open to all ESP from the Central West Employment Service Area.

Please see: www.auburn.nsw.gov.au/page.aspx?id=2430&

Several youth specific stakeholders stressed the need for employment service providers to be able to operate in ways that are cognisant of the multiple pressures newly-arrived and refugee young people face in their initial settlement period (6–12 months).

A very small number of stakeholders made positive reference to the funding of employment service coordinators by DEEWR as a good initiative towards addressing some of the barriers to access.

5.5 Government, employment and training policies

(a) Does government employment and training policy and program design meet the needs of African Australians? Please give reasons in your answer.

(i) Community

Overall, most community participants felt that government employment training policies and programs had failed to meet the needs of African Australians.

Specific policies identified as being particularly problematic included:

- the high cost and complexity of overseas qualifications and skills recognition assessment processes prevents many having labour skills recognised and utilised
- currently English language training provided through the Commonwealth Government Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) does not enable most humanitarian entrants to acquire English language competence to a level required for VET and employment
- the impact of limited day care places for children, and associated costs, influences the ability of parents to attend English classes
- due to limited language and educational backgrounds many African humanitarian entrants do not have a level of English language competency, study skills or life skills to access or succeed in VET
- there are currently no programs addressing the transition to work requirements of 15 to 18 year olds, which is of particular concern given the current high unemployment rate within the African refugee group
- Centrelink pressures to get a job forcing people to accept positions that lock them into underemployment or jobs that are not aligned with background qualifications
- the current model for career counselling, which is based on a self-help model, is problematic for African humanitarian entrants who may not be familiar with computers or service systems in Australia
- one fee-free translation per document category was not sufficient, for example, for employment and education purposes.

'I'd prefer to work with less pay in a place where I don't have to explain and defend myself as a Sudanese. There are many good people in Australia who are willing to support and teach us how to live in Australia. I spend more than a year doing English language and I learn nothing but since I meet my Australian neighbour and start going shopping with her start speak English and make plan for shopping.

(Participant, Community Consultations, NT)

(ii) *Stakeholders*

The responses provided to this question varied considerably amongst stakeholders, and differed between states.

Positive responses made referred to the following policies and programs:

- Humanitarian entrants can access the Special Preparatory Program (SPP), which consists of an additional 100 hours before the 510 hours commence. The SPP provides an important initial introduction to formal learning for those who have had little or no previous formal education overseas. The SPP entitlement is 400 hours for students under 25 years of age who have fewer than eight years of education
- AMEP students who require additional English language training are also eligible for 400 hours of tuition (some humanitarian entrants are eligible for 800 hours) through the Commonwealth Government Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP). Alternatively, AMEP students have the option of enrolling in migrant English courses at TAFE
- Enterprise Facilitation is having some success in supporting African Australians who are keen to start or expand small businesses. It has also had some success in linking those with the passion and skills for their product or service with professionals who have expertise in business, marketing, finance and so on.

Critical comments made by stakeholder respondents included:

- these programs do not offer specialist support services to humanitarian entrants and the competency level required to exit these programs is Certificate III in English
- Language studies which are only suitable for low-level employment. Moreover, providers report that progress to certificate level achievement is not common. Additionally, LLNP providers only issue certificates on request, which means that students are often unaware that they are able to obtain recognition for their studies.
- Sponsored Humanitarian Entrants (SHPs) are further disadvantaged as they do not receive automatic assessment for English classes by AMEP providers on arrival. Once in receipt of Centrelink benefits, SHPs are automatically referred to a Job Network Provider (JNP) that may refer them to the LLNP for training until their English language competencies are considered at a suitable level for employment
- The competitive tendering funding model discourages coordination and communication between providers and adversely affect the advice provided by organisations when informing clients about the range of options available to them
- as Job Network funding is dependent on specified outcomes, it is interpreted that this can result in placement of some clients in low level employment,

which requires a low level of English competency, rather than encouraging further education and training to pursue more highly skilled employment.

Several stakeholders identified the need for much greater collaboration between all levels of government and service providers.

Several stakeholders were of the view that the federal Government's *Employment Services Model* would hopefully address many of the barriers and challenges to employment and training for African Australians, particularly those who are newly arrived or have a refugee background.

It was thought that the emphasis on individually tailored interventions and the provision of work experience should have an especially positive impact on African Australians, particularly those from newly-arrived communities, if implemented appropriately.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to government, employment and training policies were addressed by one third (45%) of the submissions.

The main issues discussed were:

- African Australians' overseas qualifications not being recognised by employment agencies or employers
- government immigration policies negatively impacting employment and training.

5.6 Employment opportunities

(a) What are the key challenges faced by African Australians in finding and retaining employment (e.g. recognition of qualifications, English language requirements etc.)?

(i) Community

Consultations with community members consistently identified the following key challenges in finding and retaining employment:

- racial and religious discrimination
- lack of extended family networks and social supports
- English language difficulties
- problems having overseas skills, training, qualifications and experience recognised
- employers requiring 'experience'

- limited access to affordable housing proximate to workplaces and not serviced by appropriate public transport
- delays and difficulties obtaining Australian citizenship, restricting job opportunities
- difficulties obtaining a driver's licence, narrowing employment opportunities
- knowing where and how to obtain information about employment opportunities and accessing vacancies
- lack of knowledge of the Australian workplace and employment conditions
- many refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia do not have the supporting documentation required to prove qualifications gained in their country of birth
- often professional associations are reluctant to allow entry to immigration professionals into professional practice.

"I come from a country where English is an official language. I believe that I speak excellent English and have received this feedback from Australian friends. But every time I get on the phone to speak to a possible employer I am told that my accent is not understandable and that communication skills are a pre-requisite for the position. If I can't even get past the telephone then what chance do I have?"

(Participant, Community Focus Group, Tas)

"People who are running for their lives are not going to stop to pick up their documentation.. just in case they have difficulties later on in their new country, like employment. Really, this is something that employers need to be made aware of."

(Participant, community consultations, ACT)

"The 'catch 22' situation in which the job seeker needs experience to get the job, but can't get the job to get that experience, is a reality for many African Australian jobseekers."

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholder consultations identified the following key challenges faced by African Australians in finding and retaining employment:

- English language difficulties when seeking to access the labour market
- lack of awareness of employment assistance programs/services
- difficulties in getting overseas training and qualifications recognised
- the costs for bridging courses and supplementary examinations are prohibitive
- requirement by employers to have Australian based workplace experience
- racial and religious discrimination
- prerequisites such as Australian citizenship can be limiting.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to employment opportunities were addressed by more than half (60%) of the submissions.

While a number of individuals said they had positive experiences when securing employment in Australia, many said they faced several barriers.

Some of the barriers to employment presented in the submissions include:

- inadequate post-arrival settlement information
- lack of knowledge of how to access appropriate services
- case managers not being appropriately informed about African Australian culture and refugee experiences
- poor job search, networking, interview and resume skills
- lack of recognition of qualifications
- lack of appropriate service provision by job employment agencies
- lack of 'meaningful' employment opportunities
- the need to find work as soon as possible contributing to a lack of opportunity to secure meaningful employment
- difficulties for refugees to acquire skills to enter labour market
- language difficulties
- lack of cultural awareness by employers
- prejudicial perceptions that African Australians are lazy, unskilled and unreliable
- lack of appropriate childcare options
- lack of appropriate transport options
- under-employment or employment below capacity can lead to deskilling
- government employment policies do not meet African Australian communities' needs
- lack of self-esteem and other health issues.

(b) What can be done to increase employment opportunities for African Australians?

(i) Community

Overall, community respondents called for an increase in the number of more culturally appropriate job readiness strategies and the establishment of a job placement model that includes individualised support with a focus on assisting in skills recognition, providing local workplace knowledge, and mentoring. Community

respondents also suggested community initiatives could assist to develop, promote and deliver appropriate bridging courses. Suggestions raised included:

- information and awareness raising programs for African Australians in relation to Australian workplace environments and workplace cultures
- better utilisation of Multicultural Employment Consultants
- Information about available complaints mechanisms and lodging complaints about discrimination.

The following good practice examples were provided by community respondents:

Centrelink Multicultural Services WA

Workshops conducted by Centrelink Multicultural Services WA in consultation with African community leaders and in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the provision of employment services developed a series of workshops aimed at enhancing African community leaders' expertise, capacity and knowledge of Australian government systems and policies, particularly in relation to employment. Feedback from community leaders suggests that the workshops were extremely successful because they offered practical advice in relation to employment issues and the Australian workplace.

Work It Out

Work It Out is a work experience program for migrants and humanitarian entrants in the Adult Migrant English Program at TAFE Tasmania which helps prepare migrants for the workplace, acting as a 'stepping stone' on the pathway to employment.

To accompany *Work It Out*, resources targeted at employers and workplace mentors have also been developed as a way of building awareness of the needs of migrants, encouraging local business to take migrants on for work experience, and to give strategies on how to overcome communication barriers and increase cultural awareness in the workplace.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders suggested the following actions or strategies could be implemented to increase employment opportunities for African Australians:

- simpler processes around the recognition and crediting of overseas employment experience
- employer education to ensure a better understanding of the assets and capabilities of African Australian migrants and refugees
- additional incentives need to be provided to employers who hire refugees and humanitarian entrants.

“If you don’t actually increase the awareness of employers around the range of skills that African Australians bring, then no amount of changing programs or introducing other processes is going to make one ounce of difference. In my view, the issues are largely attitudinal or based on misconceptions of what African Australians bring with them when they come to Australia in terms of skills sets. We really need to highlight the message that employers are missing out big time.”
(Stakeholder, NSW)

Migrant Resource Centres and some Legal Aid offices are providing training to employers on the refugee experience and obligations under anti-discrimination legislation, in an effort to encourage employers to avoid discriminatory employment practices. Successful programs have also been run educating employers about the benefits of hiring humanitarian entrants who, following appropriate induction and training, typically have levels of commitment that will improve productivity and reduce staff turnover.

The following programs were cited as examples of good practice in relation to increasing employment opportunities for African Australians:

African Virtual Network – National Multicultural Reference Group, Centrelink

Early in 2008, Centrelink facilitated 26 community dialogues with 349 representatives of refugee and humanitarian customers from African backgrounds. The sessions were held in 21 locations nationally to better understand the service delivery challenges facing these customers.

A ‘virtual network’ of 250 member contacts was subsequently created. The network is a pivotal gateway between Centrelink and African communities, and enables Centrelink to disseminate information and provide progress updates on issues raised.

Centrelink also produced a variety of information products, including CDs in various African languages such as Amharic, Dinka, Kirundi, Krio, Swahili and Tigrinya.

Please see:

www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/publications/car0809_chapter5.htm

STEPS Employment and Training Solutions (Tasmania)

STEPS Employment and Training Solutions, an employment, training and community development organisation, with the support of the Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training (now Skills Tasmania) developed a video as part of a broad strategy to encourage local employers to consider recently arrived refugees when recruiting staff. The broad strategy included conducting an awareness-raising function at an African restaurant for Job Network providers, Australian Apprenticeships Scheme and group training companies to meet African employees and their employers where the video was shown.

Please see: www.stepstas.com.au

(iii) Public submissions

A number of recommendations for increasing employment opportunities were offered in the submissions. They include:

- provide more specialised living and employment skills programs, including:
 - establish a Government agency that specifically manages a work experience program for refugees
 - provide appropriate career counselling, employment readiness skills training and mentoring programs
 - provide work-related English skills training
 - provide drivers' education, particularly in rural areas where it is seen as vital
 - provide childcare services for women
- increase AMEP services
- establish community advocates
- encourage employers and workplace staff to attend cross-cultural training
- provide realistic career counselling for students
- provide more interpreters, including appropriate information about accessing interpreters
- provide more accessible information.

(c) What are the health, social and cultural impacts of unemployment and underemployment for African Australians?

(i) Community

There were a multitude of health, social and cultural impacts of unemployment and underemployment identified throughout the community consultations. Those most commonly cited included:

- impact on intergenerational disadvantage
- decline in confidence and sense of disillusionment
- low self-esteem
- family breakdowns
- boredom through inactivity and not having anything worthwhile to occupy their time
- being locked into lowly paid jobs with little opportunity for career progression or upward mobility

- many reported having to reduce their household budgets by deleting leisure and social activities leading to increased difficulty for all family members in integrating into Australian society.
- social isolation
- depression and frustration can result as well as a sense of alienation from the wider community.

“We came here for our children, and we want them to feel that they are part of this society. But when they see us working in cleaning jobs or retail jobs, when some of us have been teachers, doctors.... and they then think that there is no hope for them.”
(Community leader, SA)

Community respondents reported feeling embarrassed and ashamed because they did not have a job. This also included a loss of self-respect, self-esteem and being respected by their family members:

“When I arrived in Australia I felt useless because I was not doing anything, I had worked all my life; I felt I was begging because I was taking money for free, and in the end I didn’t believe in my ability to return to work. Like all refugees I had a dream and a hope when I left the camp; I had ideas about rebuilding my life, but when I reached Australia I was faced with reality and confusion. The longer I spent on social security the lower my self esteem became.”

Participants agreed that unemployment was a factor that contributed to problems in the family. As men become more frustrated with their loss of social status and self-esteem in the public sphere they stated that they fought harder to maintain their position as head of the family and this often led to increased disruption in a previously smooth running household.

A considerable number of respondents also spoke of the fact that many African Australians not only have their immediate families to support, but often overseas relatives who are in precarious situations and expect financial assistance from them.

(d) As an African Australian, if you have not had difficulty in securing employment in Australia, please tell us about it and some of the reasons that contributed to your success.

(i) Community

Responses to this question varied considerably from state to state and also from target group to target group. While the overwhelming number of examples cited considerable and at times insurmountable challenges and difficulties in obtaining employment, there were some who conveyed more positive experiences. These tended, however, to be characterised by the following factors:

- the extent to which the community (ethno specific) was established (for example, years of settlement for that particular community overall)
- the extent to which family/social support networks were available

- immigration stream – with skilled migrants suggesting more positive experiences of obtaining employment than those arriving under the family stream or as refugees/humanitarian entrants (but not always)
- age – younger and older workers reported having a much more difficult time obtaining employment than those who might fall within 30-40 years age category
- levels of English language fluency – those with higher levels of functional English and no ‘apparent’ accent more likely to obtain employment
- type of industry/occupation – greater demand for particular occupational groups contributed to improvements in job prospects.

Those who were most likely to report positive experiences of obtaining gainful employment were individuals who had obtained employment through family contacts:

“It is a small business that is operated by my cousin who was looking for some extra help and he offered me a job. I am very lucky... I know people who came here around the same time as I did [six months ago] and are still looking for work. At least I can support my family.”

(Community Participant, NSW)

Extended families are clearly important to the establishment and operations of small businesses which is reportedly increasing amongst various African Australian communities:

“Small businesses like remittance businesses or travel agencies are growing in our communities and these are often run by and then sustained by extended family members.”

(Community Participant, Vic)

(ii) *Public submissions*

One positive experience cited included:

“My employment and training experiences in Australia have been positive. I migrated from East Africa as a skilled migrant. I first stayed in Adelaide... [where] I participated in a program called Interlink; aimed at assisting migrants secure jobs. I received some training on job application and preparation for interviews. My overseas qualification was recognised in Australia. I did a volunteer job in Adelaide. This role equipped me with the relevant skills that assisted me in my job search.... I was delighted to get a job after moving to Melbourne.”

(s42)

5.7 Discrimination in employment and training

(a) Can you provide examples of how African Australians are treated differently when seeking employment and/or training?

(i) Community

There were many examples of negative, differential treatment, most of which was perceived as discriminatory and racist.

“In order to make a contribution to Australian society we need to shift the negative perceptions to the positive. The way politicians send the message out is that the refugees are coming here to be supported and fed. That is how employers are seeing us.”

Some examples cited included:

- difficulties getting interviews because of accents or unfamiliar names
- getting interviews but then feeling discriminated against once employers have sighted them (perception that this is based on skin colour or other visible difference such as wearing the hijab)
- being bypassed for promotion
- being told to seek alternative employment pathways despite qualifications or skills.

When I first came in 2004 I was doing an English course. The teacher said to me that now that I was in Australia I would need to take the scarf off. She said this is Australia, and so I had freedom here which means that I can take the scarf off. This is my religion, and so this should at least be respected. She said that she thought that your father or mother forced you to wear the hijab. For me being an African is hard enough, but being a Muslim African is a major issue. I face discrimination getting employment most because I am a Muslim woman.

Discrimination within mainstream organisations that delivered programs to African Australians was also identified by some community respondents as being discriminatory. Examples were given where African Australian workers were paid less money than their Anglo Australian counterparts for the same work, where there was very little support or career progression opportunities made available and situations where they were required to undertake work not in their job descriptions, but solely because the issue involved “someone from the African community”.

“It really makes me angry that some of these services parade around the fact that they have African workers on their staff.. but when you look closely you can see that we are not paid the same, that when the program funding finishes we are the first to go.. this is discrimination, and just because it’s a community service that is actually helping the communities doesn’t mean this should be allowed to be ok.”
(Community respondent, Vic)

(ii) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to discrimination in employment and training were addressed by half (50%) of the submissions.

Various forms of discrimination cited in the submissions included:

- lack of qualification recognition, such as examples of African Australians with University degrees being employed only as manual labourers
- lack of advancement opportunities, both with employers and within industries

“I have been there for almost two years now but there is no indication that the system will ever want to staff develop me at all. All my white colleagues, who have come after me, are given the opportunity to experience each and every activity that takes place at the company. But I am stuck to just one area... Whenever I go to the supervisors for them to give me hands on teaching on something they give me the manual which I will have no time to read because I am supposed to be working.”
(S46)

- perception of being passed over for a white candidate
- racist treatment by fellow employees
- persistence of a racially segregated market
- multiple barriers to lodging complaints including fear of losing their job, lack of confidence in English skills, lack of knowledge about employee rights and responsibilities, fears of implications for family reunion applications, possible negative impact on community, not feeling entitled.

(b) What is the impact of this discrimination?

(i) *Community*

The impact of discrimination was considered to be extremely serious by community respondents. The impact of discrimination on people’s sense of belongingness was frequently discussed:

“How can you feel Australian when you are always being told to go back to where you came from? I am where I came from. I was born here!!”

“This is destroying people who have so much to give this country. Please give us a chance to show that we have a lot to give”

Several community respondents shared their experiences of taking up jobs well short of their qualifications as a result of being repeatedly subjected to discrimination:

“Once or twice you put it down to bad luck or a bad person, but when you are having to deal with discrimination week after week, and your savings are running out, then you just start applying for any job that comes up. In the end it doesn’t matter what it is...”

what matters is that you can feed yourself and your family.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, Tas)

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders cited:

- loss of occupational status among skilled African Australians
- increasingly being concentrated in low-skilled service ‘niches’ such as cleaning services, transport (especially taxi-driving), security and building industries, and increasingly, aged care
- loss of human capital benefits to Australia and a waste of skills currently in short supply.

(c) How can African Australian workers be made aware of and supported to exercise their rights in relation to discrimination in the workplace?

(i) *Community*

Respondents suggested that while ideally, African Australian workers should be made aware of and supported to exercise their rights in relation to discrimination in the workplace, the reality is that often most are simply too fearful of making a complaint.

“They [African Australians] do not have the bargaining power in the workplace to challenge these conditions themselves. The fear of losing their job is often perceived as outweighing the benefit of seeking external sanction, advice or support.”

There were nevertheless many examples provided during the consultations of information strategies aimed at increasing awareness amongst African Australians of their right to complain in the event of perceived discrimination. Broadly, these strategies can be grouped under the following themes:

- facilitating and delivering language specific information sessions about discrimination in the workplace
- providing guest speakers from anti discrimination and human rights agencies to multicultural interagency meetings.
- working collaboratively with individuals and agencies including ethnic community workers from community settlement workers; Migrant Resource Centres; DIAC, Centrelink; multicultural inter-agency networks and Ethnic Communities Liaison Officers
- working with language specific media, including SBS and community radio, community newspapers and community newsletters to provide accessible information in the relevant languages

- disseminating information in relevant community languages to places frequented by members of the target communities, for example, places of worship, shops, restaurants, clubs and community centres
- disseminating information through migrant expos, ethno-specific events, fairs and so on.

(ii) Stakeholders

Several stakeholders suggested that making a complaint should be simpler, with an easy-to-understand complaint form available in a variety of community languages. They said it was important to be able to make complaints orally, by telephone or in person, and individuals should be able to complain on behalf of others or as representatives of communities or groups.

They said advice about the complaint process should be made available at various community locations, libraries, medical centres and shopfronts.

5.8 The effect of religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability

(a) Are experiences of employment and training different for African Australians based on religion, age, gender, sexuality or disability? Please provide reasons in your answer.

(i) Community

Muslim African Australians, in particular, conveyed the view that they faced additional challenges due to their religious identity. Indeed, a substantial number of respondents argued that while racism was identified in consultations, prejudice and discrimination against Muslims in the workplace, on the grounds of their religious identity, has never been directly addressed:

“Religious discrimination is sometimes worse for me than racism, if I can separate my colour from my religion, because it’s more underhanded. Racism often stares you directly in the face, but religious discrimination.. that’s harder to argue.”
(Community respondent, Vic)

Most respondents agreed that many put up with negative behaviour in fear of further discrimination or losing their job or being subjected to some kind of retaliation.

Several stakeholders, however, expressed the view that better information about Islam targeting at employers would probably ameliorate the negative experiences in the workplace considerably:

“I’m not sure that for me it is actually discrimination. I think it’s that people don’t understand why I do things like pray and fast. I think if there was some cultural and religious awareness, this might be solved”
(Community respondent, WA)

Women, particularly African Muslims, spoke of feeling generally more vulnerable to exploitation around workplace arrangements. Several women also spoke of their experiences of sexual harassment:

“Sometimes it feels like its a challenge for these men to see if they can get to a Muslim women. The stereotypes around our sexuality are quite extraordinary. So I regularly have to put up with statements like, well you look pretty but then Muslim women don’t want to be pretty do they. Really awful stuff that gets a bit much when you have to put up with it every day”

(Community respondent, SA)

The issue of discrimination experienced by Muslim women who wear the hijab when they apply for work was extremely well canvassed by almost every focus group involving Muslim women. Some women who wore the hijab reported being given incorrect information regarding job availability, while others spoke of feeling that they were denied the opportunity to apply for jobs, or made to feel invisible and unwelcome when applying.

Older people

A small number of consultations highlighted the particular challenges for older African Australians in trying to access meaningful employment and training opportunities. Refugees and those who arrive in Australia through the Family Reunion Program at a mature age are the most disadvantaged, because they have to start to learn English and new trade skills to have access in the labour market and upgrade their general working skills.

Added to these disadvantages there is sometimes employer bias against older workers: they may be considered less productive than younger workers, because of perceived reduced capacity and inadaptability. Employers are sometimes reluctant to invest in training older workers, because their working life is relatively limited compared with younger workers.

6 Education

6.1 Overview

Education is a key determinant in predicting health and well-being, longevity, employment, housing and economic stability. This section documents the issues emerging from the consultations and public submissions in relation to education.

While issues related to education were canvassed at all of the consultation workshops and forums conducted, a small number of additional focus groups were conducted with:

- teacher Aides in Victoria (these aides assist students in class or on a one-to-one basis, and act as a link between the school and parents)
- Students at both secondary and tertiary institutions (ACT/Vic/SA)
- Foundation House Staff specifically working with schools around education and refugee young people. Programs include:
 - **Rainbow Program:** A preventative school-based group program for children and families from refugee backgrounds.
Please see: www.kidsmatter.edu.au/programs-guide/rainbow-refugee
 - **Kaleidoscope:** Six week structured group program for refugee young people. Please see:
www.foundationhouse.org.au/resources/publications_and_resources.htm

Individual interviews were also conducted with the following:

- staff/volunteers at the Homework Club on the Flemington Public Housing Estate
- staff at CMY involved in supporting/developing homework support programs.

6.2 Access to education

(a) How do African Australians find out about education services available to them?

(i) Community

Community respondents identified the following ways in which African Australians find out about the range of education services available to them:

- on arrival programs such as IHSS for refugee and humanitarian entrants
- family and social networks
- multicultural teacher aides

- Migrant Resource Centres and other settlement support providers
- homework support groups
- professional networks/support groups
- Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMEP providers)
- overseas skilled migration officers – career and vocational guidance
- neighbourhood houses and learning centres
- ethno specific media
- Centrelink
- Departments of Education and Training.

Newly-arrived migrants require assistance in accessing information and resources on various areas of education, be it further research in their own field of specialty; higher education; skills recognition; labour market regulations; training needs and opportunities; skills development and other related areas.

Responses varied for those who were newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants from those who had migrated to Australia under the skilled migration program and were either newly arrived or had been residing in Australia for a number of years.

For those who were newly-arrived refugee or humanitarian entrants, the most common source identified was service providers offering IHSS services, such as settlement support and information provision. IHSS programs provide important initial information and support to meet the diverse settlement needs of newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants.

IHSS focuses on equipping entrants to gain access to mainstream services such as schools and adult education options. Assistance provided through the IHSS program in relation to accessing schools was primarily seen as positive by most respondents.

“The worker came with us on the bus to the schools to meet with the teacher. For our little ones, they even helped us know what a kindergarten meant, and showed us what it is. We didn’t know.”

(Participant, Community Consultations, WA)

Family and social networks, where they are available, were identified as important sources of information, particularly in relation to availability and quality of education options:

“We were new in the country and we needed to know how to go about getting our children into the local schools. The local support group helped us a lot. It’s hard without help from people who know what it’s like to be in a strange environment where nothing makes sense. We didn’t even understand the issue about enrolment and how old your child has to be and rules about which schools you can get your children to go to.”

(Participant, community consultations, Qld)

Professional networks were identified by those arriving as skilled migrants as important sources of information. One example cited included:

The African Australian Union (AAU)

A group of Africans Australians, who have been through the challenges of resettling in Australia, decided to found an organisation called the African Australian Union to provide newly-arrived migrants with the tools they needed to settle into the Australian way of life. Helping fellow Africans grasp the education system is one of the AAU's top priorities.

A small number of respondents also stated that they learned about the various education options available through Centrelink:

“The people at Centrelink told me that I could go onto the Youth Pathways program. I went and spoke to them, they are career counselors and they gave me some advice about what education I could do.”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group)

Youth Pathways has been set up to help young people who are at risk of leaving school, to make it through school to the end of year 12 (or its equivalent), and beyond that to further education, training or employment, and an active community life.

(ii) Stakeholders

Responses from stakeholders were similar to those provided by community respondents. Additional sources identified, however, included:

- Settlement Grants Program (SGP) services
- Newly Arrived Youth Support Service
- Local Learning and Employment Network
- Refugee Brokerage Program (Vic)
- Youth Settlement workers
- Career Information Centres
- Australian Education International
- Local Community Partnerships (LCPs)
- The Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program
- Youth Transition Support Initiative (Vic)
- Employment transition support programs
- Local government councils.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to access to education were addressed by close to half (45%) of the submissions.

A small number of submissions identified ways in which African Australians are currently finding out about education services available to them. They include:

- information through sponsor (social worker)
- IHSS
- Church
- NGOs
- family and friends.

(b) What barriers do African Australians face in accessing education opportunities?

(i) Community

The range of education opportunities that exist for all Australians is undoubtedly vast, and varies from state to state. There are also considerable variations across states and territories in terms of specialist education programs that are offered to newly-arrived migrants and refugee and humanitarian entrants. As such, the range of barriers identified varied depending on the availability and nature of the programs or levels of support provided.

However, a number of common barriers were identified:

- stereotyped views about the capacity of African Australians to learn, particularly those newly arrived
- impact of racism and discrimination on decisions relating to continuing education
- inadequate communication between parents and schools – impacting on the level of support provided by parents and schools
- specific cultural and linguistic barriers for women, particularly women with children
- high transport costs limiting access to ‘ideal’ education options
- inadequate number of hours provided under the AMES program to acquire levels of fluency required for higher education
- lack of awareness of options available upon exiting AMEP programs such as the Home Tutor Scheme or Distance Learning
- interpersonal barriers such as uncertainty about the future, pre arrival experiences of loss and trauma

- lack of cultural appropriateness of learning methods resulting in students ceasing their studies
- overseas degrees not being recognised in Australia requiring attendance at additional courses to gain recognised qualifications.

The most commonly cited barrier to both generalist and specialist education opportunities and programs was the negative stereotypes that some teachers and other educationalists had about the capacity of African Australians to learn. Community respondents, particularly young people, reported being adversely affected by teachers who reinforced problematic and limiting views about the capabilities of African Australian students to attain academic success:

“Just because I came from a war torn country as a refugee does not mean I cannot learn. Sometimes all that talk about trauma makes me angry because it is working against us. I was asked when I tried to get into a course, whether I would be better to get counseling first. Then maybe I could reapply. I don’t need counseling. I have a degree from overseas. What I want is to get an education so that my skills will be properly recognized.”

(Participant, community consultations, ACT)

Stereotyped views of women’s capacities to learn were also repeatedly raised as a barrier for women, particularly young women:

“You can be locked in as a young woman. On the one hand the wider society looks at you and thinks you don’t have the intelligence to learn, and then within your own family and community there might be cultural issues and values that mean it’s hard for you as a girl or woman to study.”

(Participant, Community Consultations, Tas)

Numerous respondents also raised the issues of perceived racism and discrimination and its impact on people’s decisions to access or pursue education pathways and opportunities:

“My son told me that his teacher said not to bother studying because people like him find it too hard to learn because their families big, and that he will just be made to go and get a job to support us all. I was a teacher in Eritrea, and I know the value of an education. This kind of view is really stopping so many of our young from really fulfilling their dreams.”

(Participant, Community consultations, Qld)

Several respondents expressed the belief that their limited English language fluency had hindered their children’s access to further education. This highlights the importance of ensuring adequate English language support for parents as a way of also ensuring better involvement in their children’s education experiences.

“I know that if I could speak more English this would help my children. I see them read books but don’t know what they say. This is hard. If it was in Tigrinya then I would know better and be help to my children at school.”

(Participant, community focus group, Vic)

English language proficiency is undoubtedly an important prerequisite to accessing and successfully completing various educational programs. The view expressed by many respondents, however, was that 510 hours of English language classes was not enough to ensure transition to various educational options, and this often meant that people were deterred from pursuing advanced education.

The lack of sufficient AMEP hours to enable newly-arrived African Australians to acquire adequate English language skills was identified as an area requiring urgent attention. Participants also repeatedly stressed the need to significantly expand the number of hours that clients have access to under the English Language Programs.

Community participants frequently stated that approaches and resources currently being used by some teachers and other education professionals are at times irrelevant and culturally inappropriate to many newly-arrived African Australians. This, it was suggested may result in or further exacerbate disengagement or underachievement:

“Schools and education institutions trying but some are not very culturally relevant in the way that they teach, and as a result some of the students in our communities are not getting the result they need to be able to go on to further studies. Worse still the young people get frustrated or think that they are not intelligent, and end up leaving school early.”

(Participant, community consultations, Qld)

Repeated references were made by community respondents of the “highly oral language cultures” of African Australians and the impact that this has on their learning needs. On arrival in Australia, many are unfamiliar with ways of operating in a culture that places a high premium on the written word.

Several community respondents involved in tertiary studies also raised issues related to the perceived lack of support programs at tertiary institutions to assist the successful transition of students from refugee backgrounds into tertiary study. The lack of support impacts on rates of retention and levels of satisfaction with studies.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholder respondents identified the following barriers to education opportunities for African Australians:

- inadequate length of time provided for students receiving support through the IEC or ESL programs
- impact of trauma and disrupted education
- lack of understanding of how western education and employment systems function
- the practice of placing children and young people in classes according to age
- limited funding to mainstream schools to cater for specific learning needs of African Australians

- recently arrived young people in senior secondary school experience considerable difficulty in relation to careers and transitions, completing forms, applications and finding work experience or structured workplace learning (SWL) placements
- lack of awareness of programs to assist English language learning, including special preparatory programs.

The issue of inadequate length of time provided for students receiving support through the IEC or ESL programs was the most frequently cited barrier by stakeholders in every state and territory.

“IEC centres are regularly full and unable to take on more students, with alternate arrangements having to be made. Four terms in an IEC is simply not enough to bring some refugee students to the point where they are ready to succeed in a mainstream classroom”

(Stakeholder, NSW)

Stakeholders also identified there needs to be greater support provided for refugee young people transitioning from IECs to mainstream schools:

“This can result in their needs not being adequately addressed and/or their English proficiency not at a sufficient level to move on to further education and training opportunities – and in some cases means dropping out of education all together.”

(Stakeholder, NSW)

The impact of trauma was identified as another key barrier to accessing education by many service provider stakeholders, with most suggesting that lack of early intervention contributes to the risk that the young person will drop out of school or not pursue educational opportunities:

“Young people have experienced dislocation, loss, interrupted schooling and traumatic separation from families. This inevitably affects their ability to learn.”

(Stakeholder, NSW)

(iii) Public submissions

The submissions highlighted a number of barriers preventing African Australians from accessing appropriate education opportunities, and offered a number of recommendations for improving access to education.

The main barriers to accessing education presented in the submissions included:

- failure of the Australian education system to recognise prior learning or qualifications
- language difficulties
- TAFE English classes not adequately meeting the needs of groups with differing English skill levels
- discrimination

- stereotyping
- the need to work deters some from seeking an education
- working more to send money to family in Africa
- non-citizen/humanitarian visa holders cannot access HECS
- culture shock
- lack of education tradition
- transport issues
- mothers without a partner or other family to support them do not have enough child care resources
- cultural gender bias.

“African Australian women can face barriers from their own communities who may have differing expectations of women in regards to education.”
(s51)

- families with children with disabilities not knowing what services are available to help them
- housing problems.

(c) What specific education opportunities would be most helpful to newly-arrived African Australians?

(i) Community

The following education opportunities were identified as being most helpful to newly-arrived African Australians:

- employment of multicultural aides and teachers
- scholarships
- orientation programs for students and parents
- after schooling tutoring and support/homework programs
- extension of ESL program
- bilingual programs
- careers forums
- tertiary support programs
- youth mentoring programs.

The employment of multicultural education aides (MEA) and teachers from the communities was identified as a particularly helpful strategy to enhance educational opportunities. MEAs are employed by schools in some states to support ESL learners, their families, and the families of students who require language other than

English assistance in their communication with the school. The MEA's skills in a language, or languages, other than English enable them to act as a bridge between the school and families.

Scholarships were also identified as a way of increasing educational opportunities. Several examples of scholarship programs including:

Canberra Refugee Support Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded to 15 refugees settling in the ACT. All are either students at the Canberra Institute of Technology or an ACT English centre, or who are community members who would like to begin studying in the near future.

www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2009/ce09051.htm

After schooling tutoring and support/homework programs were strongly supported, and many examples of good practice were provided including: the Multicultural Council Northern Territory's Homework Club, the African Homework Help Club based at the North Melbourne Flemington Housing Estates and a unique tutoring program offered by the United Somali Women's Organisation and the Drum Centre in Victoria.

A significant part of the success of homework support groups is the social interaction. Respondents highlighted that these kinds of initiatives support young people to build relationships with other students and build their confidence to ensure that they are inspired enough to continue their education.

Community respondents drew attention to the value of supporting bilingual and multilingual programs as a way of enhancing an appreciation of linguistic diversity, and believed that English language learning should be provided alongside the continued development of the first language of the student:

"This kind of approach that says both English and the language of the student's family is important. It helps with family communication and stops the sort of family breakups we are seeing with intergenerational conflict."
(Community leader, SA)

Other benefits identified by respondents familiar with, or involved in the delivery of bilingual/multilingual programs included:

- greater flexibility of thinking
- improved self-esteem
- greater understanding and pride in their ethnicity
- ongoing good communication between home and the wider ethnic community group
- better vocational and life options.

Community respondents were also keen to suggest a number of strategies that could be adopted by teachers and educational institutions in order to improve the current

experiences of students, thereby enhancing their future education options.
Suggestions included:

- creating a more welcoming environment
- better assessment of student needs
- cross-cultural training for staff
- better relationships between staff and parents
- teaching styles that are inclusive and flexible
- tertiary support programs
- youth mentoring programs.

Bridging programs were also identified by several respondents as an effective way of accommodating the needs of newly-arrived and refugee young people who cannot access secondary school in Australia due to age or low levels of English and general education, or those who would like to study in a non-school setting. Such programs should increase the refugee young person's knowledge about the education, training and employment system, language and literacy skills and information on the world of work and future career pathway options.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders made the following suggestions in relation to helpful education opportunities:

- orientation programs to the Australian education system
- transition or bridging programs to assist students exiting from ELS/Cs
- early intervention programs aimed at kindergarten and primary school children
- programs, for parents, be provided in mainstream schools that offer support, family counselling and training in social skills, life skills and cultural transition
- development and implementation of culturally appropriate classroom management strategies, including culturally appropriate curriculum development
- cultural competency programs for education institutions, particularly for teachers.
- after school learning clubs/classes
- Student Support Programs (Tertiary)
- mentoring programs
- increase in ESL and support teachers, including multicultural teachers' aides.

An example cited of an orientation program included:

African Pathways Program

The African Pathways Program assists refugee children and families from the Central Horn of Africa who are living in Darebin and Banyule, Victoria. The aim of the program is to increase the likelihood of African young people making positive transitions into and through secondary school and to improve student, parent and community awareness about the Australian education system. This is achieved by providing appropriate information in a culturally relevant manner. The program aims to increase their school connectedness through activities such as learning clubs, recreation and leisure activities and also offer ESL Conversational English classes and Mothers Groups.

Please see: www.missionaustralia.com.au/community-services/1866-african-pathways-program-vic

Stakeholder respondents unanimously agreed that there is an urgent need for greater levels of support to be provided for newly-arrived refugee young people transitioning from Intensive English Centres (IECs) to mainstream state and Catholic systemic schools:

Several examples of programs aimed at assisting newly-arrived students to make the transition from IECs to mainstream high schools were cited by stakeholders including:

Refugee Action Support (RAS)

Refugee Action Support (RAS) is an initiative of the University of Western Sydney (UWS), the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF) and the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). It aims to help humanitarian refugee children to make the transition from Intensive English Centres to mainstream Australian high schools. RAS is aimed at providing focused literacy and numeracy support through the provision of tutoring centres; identifying the most effective pedagogies for use with refugee children; and developing pre-service teachers' understanding of diverse student learners to best prepare them for the challenges and dynamics they will encounter in their future classrooms.

Please see: www.alnf.org/programs/refugee-action.php

CALD Support Program at the University of Tasmania

The CALD Support Program at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) supports the transition to university life for more than 600 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students, predominantly from African, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, many of whom have been refugees in the recent past. The program uses a relationship-based approach to supporting the cultural, social and academic transition of its people, with an emphasis on developing the self-sufficiency required for university success. Program design and review is iterative and conducted in collaboration with students, their communities and the UTAS community.

Please see: www.support-equity.utas.edu.au/cald

An increase in ESL and support teachers, such as language and culturally specific teachers' aides from African Australian communities was strongly recommended by several stakeholders as a way of providing additional assistance for newly-arrived African Australian students in the classroom and the schooling environment. Stakeholders also advocated the need for teaching and support staff in mainstream schools to be trained and aware of the issues facing newly-arrived African Australian young people and ESL support, to effectively identify and address their needs when they do transition into mainstream schools.

Early intervention programs aimed at kindergarten and primary school aged children were identified by several stakeholders as critical to ensuring newly-arrived children are not "trapped in the cycle before [they] start". Examples of good practice models were offered, including the following:

Boroondara Kindergarten

The Sudanese playgroup at the kindergarten offers support to Sudanese families with children under 5 years, many of whom have experienced trauma as a result of their refugee experiences. A Sudanese teacher is employed to work alongside the existing teaching team and engage family members in play with their children, building on cultural practices such as weaving, beading, hair braiding and cooking. Other families from the kindergarten are also involved, and this provides opportunities for cultural exchange and non-threatening role modelling of different ways of parenting. Local community services are also be involved, allowing Sudanese families easier access to information and support.

Several stakeholders highlighted that a formal style classroom curriculum is often not the best or most appropriate way for newly-arrived communities to make progress or attain a level of English that they believe will be most useful in their daily life. They suggested that education programs need to be supported, developed and provided further within schools and TAFE and alternative learning opportunities need to be undertaken in the community in order to offer a range of options for African Australians to learn. For example, home tutoring or more informal classes may be more conducive to achieving positive outcomes, such as:

The Home Tutor Scheme

The Home Tutor Scheme, which is part of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), assists eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants who cannot attend English classes due to family commitments. Tutoring usually takes place in the migrant's home, creating an informal, relaxed atmosphere. Alternatively, volunteers may assist in conversation practice in AMEP classes. Home tutors receive initial and ongoing training, support and access to teaching resources.

Please see: www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/amep/teaching-english/home-tutor.htm

(iii) *Public submissions*

Specific education opportunities highlighted in the submissions include:

- intensive ESL programs to extend English language tuition when AMEP is not enough
- more VCAL opportunities
- more flexibility with school timetables and age restrictions.

A number of submissions provided recommendations for increasing African Australians access to education, including:

- establish policies that allow for recognition of prior learning and qualifications
- provide a testing process for applicants to prove their education if appropriate documentation is not available
- offer scholarships for refugees with limited income
- establish an orientation program for all students and their parents prior to entering school to:
- conduct oral presentations on information for parents as printed materials are not a successful method of communication for some African Australians
- initiate a 'whole of school' approach to cultural awareness and valuing diversity
- provide after school tutoring
- provide more financial support for school supplies
- employ multicultural and ESL educators
- English classes at schools and TAFE that more adequately target the needs of different African Australian groups
- encourage greater parental involvement so parents and students understand requirements and expectations
- provide interpreters for parents at school meetings
- provide training for educators and counsellors on refugee-specific issues (especially torture and trauma)
- advise families with children with disabilities about services available to help them
- offer additional training in conjunction with language classes.

(d) How can interpreting and translation services be improved to provide better access and assistance to African Australians in the education sector?

(i) Community

Community respondents strongly supported the use of interpreters in educational contexts, with many sharing positive experiences of enhanced communication between themselves as parents and teachers.

Interpreters had been utilised in a number of different educational contexts including:

- parent/teacher meetings
- enrolment
- information about school procedures, requirements and events
- negotiating situations of misunderstanding and/or conflict.

A small number of community respondents identified a number of gaps in relation to interpreters including:

- low utilisation of interpreters by some mainstream educational institutions
- lack of availability of interpreters in some more newly-arrived African language groups
- issues related to confidentiality.

Several respondents also provided examples where children were used to interpret during parent teacher sessions, creating tension between the young person and their family:

“To me, it doesn’t make sense that you would use the same child that you are talking about as an interpreter in a teacher and parent interview.”
(Participant, Community focus group, ACT)

It was suggested that these situations needed to be addressed in order to improve the effectiveness of interpreting and translation services.

(ii) Stakeholders

A number of issues were raised, including:

- low utilisation rates, including teachers not receiving adequate training on how to access interpreting and translating services
- inappropriate use of MEAs as interpreters
- lack of availability of properly accredited interpreters in some African languages
- challenges associated with translating complex curriculum documents.

6.3 Education experiences

(a) What are the experiences of young African Australians in educational institutions (e.g. schools, universities, TAFE, colleges) in Australia?

(i) Community

Young people referred to a range of experiences as characteristic of their interactions with educational institutions, both positive and negative. Negative experiences included:

- discrimination and racism directed at them by both students and teachers
- frustration at being grouped as ‘refugees’ or ‘African Australians’ within the school environment
- difficulties in establishing friendships with non African Australians
- finding the mainstream curriculum and its language demands very difficult
- adjusting to a new educational system and social conditions – experiences of culture shock
- frustration at being placed in classes to match their chronological age as opposed to their actual level of educational attainment
- difficulty in adjusting to formal education when there is no experience of such an education environment in countries of origin
- inadequate levels of support, particularly in schools that are not properly resourced
- reduced levels of self-confidence and low self-esteem resulting from lack of support/feelings of ‘failure’.

Positive experiences included:

- teachers being helpful and addressing racism and discrimination in the classroom
- feeling a sense of belongingness – actively supported and promoted within the school community.

Two focus groups were also conducted with tertiary students, who provided various stories about their experiences. Broadly, these included:

- adjustment issues in academic study and social and psychological well-being
- lack of sufficient induction – better induction and integration into the university/TAFE were reportedly more likely to predict positive student outcomes
- confusion around enrolment processes

- additional pressures around financially supporting family members and so on.

Discrimination and prejudice was described by many respondents as being an ever-present reality for African Australians within educational environments.

“You just get blamed anyway, so I have tried to stop reacting to being bullied, but sometimes it doesn’t help and you get into trouble for disrupting. How come the person who is being racist doesn’t get into trouble?”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group, NSW)

Many believed that the media was largely responsible for the increasing racism that they were experiencing, particularly since the various international events involving terrorist acts.

“I wear the hijab, and I get harassed every single day. Not so much anymore at my own school, but on the way there or on the way home, or when we go and attend a sporting event at another school. You can’t feel accepted if that is how you are treated.”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group, Vic)

It is important to note, that despite the volume of negative experiences expressed, youth respondents also shared some more positive experiences. These were often the result of receiving affirmation and support from teachers and the school environment more generally:

“When I spoke to the teacher about the harassment and bullying, she was very good and we had some classes about it. She didn’t say that I complained about it, she just talked to everyone about how it wasn’t good to do this to other people. It helped me.”
(Participant, Youth focus group, Qld)

Several youth respondents advocated the need to promote positive role models for young African Australians as a way of promoting pride and improving negative perceptions of the educational abilities of African Australian young people:

“I would like to see the teacher use examples of African Australians who have made a contribution to this country when they are talking about these things in class. That way other students can see that we have made positive contributions to Australia”
(Participant, Youth focus group, Vic)

Specific experiences of tertiary students were elicited during a few focus groups conducted with a number of students who had formed small informal support groups for each other:

“We decided that no one else was going to help us, so we are helping ourselves. We meet regularly and talk about the challenges and how we can help each other out. It really helps address problems of isolation and also just basic friendship needs”
(Participant, SA)

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders also conveyed considerable concern in relation to what they perceived to be increasing levels of discrimination within schooling environments, and urged

state and commonwealth governments to implement anti racism strategies within schools as a matter of urgency:

“As a teacher, I can tell you this is an increasing problem, and if it’s not addressed, then it’s just going to get worse.”
(Stakeholder, Qld)

Stakeholders reflected on a number of other issues they believed impacted on the experiences of young African Australians in education institutions. These included:

- language of Australian school classrooms may alienate or confuse students
- cultural expectations and understandings may vary leading to culture shock for both students and parents
- conflict between parental expectations and student wishes
- high aspirations to be balanced with realistic pathways, particularly for newly-arrived students
- confusion around prerequisites for particular University courses – not being able to access accurate information to clarify pathways, requirements and so on.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to education experiences were addressed by half (49%) of the submissions.

Many of the submissions reiterated the range of negative and positive experiences highlighted previously when attending educational institutions in Australia.

(b) As a parent do you think that schools (public and private) have been helpful and supportive to your children and offered a good education and opportunities to learn?

(i) Community

Students at school do not learn in isolation; their families play a significant role in their success at school.

Responses to this question varied considerably, with most community respondents agreeing that the educational experiences of their children were greatly enhanced by those schools and teachers who had actively sought to engage parents and keep them regularly informed of their children’s progress.

On the whole, most parents who responded to this question were more likely than not to report less than satisfactory experiences in relation to parent/school engagement.

Negative experiences included:

- feeling excluded with little information translated so that parents could access information that their children are receiving at schools
- not being informed of various programs, including sex education
- stereotyped views that all African Australian parents are not interested in their children's education
- feeling intimidated by the school environment
- no interpreters or bilingual workers being made available and so deterred from attending school organised events, including parent/teacher nights.

There was a strong view expressed at many of the consultations that language barriers should not be the reason for the exclusion of parents from the schooling of their children.

Several stakeholders also cautioned about the view that cultural reasons posed the greatest barrier for parent involvement, stating that unfamiliarity with the education system was much more likely to be the reason for lack of involvement:

“The parents may just not understand how best to help their children because of the new system, or how Australian schools operate. This is much more likely to be a barrier than cultural reasons. It is important that schools don't just rely on cultural information by non African Australian organisations who keep saying that the issues are cultural. They might actually be about lack of information delivered in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way.”
(Community Leader, NSW)

Parents reported being extremely keen to learn more about the education system and how they could support their children, but believed they lacked the local knowledge to make a positive contribution.

Parents also stated their concern that without knowing where to go or who to approach for careers information, their children would miss out on opportunities.

A small number of respondents highlighted the fact that some refugee students in senior secondary school may not have parents or guardians in Australia and may live with siblings or on their own and issues for these unaccompanied minors needed to be specifically addressed.

Community respondents also mentioned a number of more positive experiences in relation to school/parent engagements. These included:

- the value of having one-on-one assistance
- school counselling services provided in the language of the parents/family
- multicultural aides employed at the school.

(c) As a parent are you actively involved in the school that your children attend and if yes, how did this happen and what is your involvement?

(i) Community

There were several examples provided where parents/carers/families reporting feeling that they were actively involved in the school that their children attended. The reasons provided for such involvement included:

- ESL teacher or MEA available during parent/teacher evenings, as well as interpreter
- distribution of translated information
- attending multicultural event/festival at the school, resulting in ongoing engagement
- School Focused Youth Services
- sitting on the school council or being involved in decision-making groups
- active encouragement by the school welfare co-ordinator
- parents being invited to run a number of school based events, including cultural information days for students and other parents
- school is welcoming, positive, respectful and supportive of parents from African Australian backgrounds – for example, ‘welcome’ signs in key languages spoken by the students, including African languages.

A number of parents spoke of the benefits of enrolling their students in Islamic schools:

“There is understanding there and the teachers know my expectations. They are always inviting us to be involved in our children’s education and their future.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, Vic)

(d) How can young African Australians manage any conflict that may arise between their family responsibilities and education?

(i) Community

Young people responding to this question highlighted the following strategies to resolve conflict that might arise between their family responsibilities and education:

- greater financial assistance to support them to focus on their studies – students are often not only financially responsible for family residing in Australia, but possibly family members overseas
- programs to assist parents to better understand the cultural pressures that young people experience trying to navigate between two cultures

- programs to assist young people to explore their identity in a new environment
- specific programs to address expectations of young girls/women.

Parents were more likely to suggest that the conflict was the result of cultural clashes and the lack of adequate involvement by schools and other mainstream organisations, particularly youth organisations.

A number of parents/carers reported a sense of losing their status, and dignity particularly as a result of depending on their children and their ability to speak English to access a range of services, including health and education services:

“You feel very small when your child is helping you ask for help especially for doctors and other things.”

(Participant, Community focus group, NT)

This shift in power balance was perceived to be one of the most significant in relation to intergenerational conflict.

Parents/community leaders agreed that without effective parenting and/or community support, young people are at risk of being engaged by more destructive patterns and cultures. Suggestions included:

- creating awareness of the new culture and new ways of doing things among parents
- realising that some old ways are worth preserving – and for young people they may not have to choose to reject the old for the new or vice versa
- improving access to English which can then improve parent’s capacity to engage in mainstream and reduce loss of status and so on
- more support resources at schools which better connect and support parents to understand new social, cultural and educational systems.

Importantly, most community respondents urged service providers to focus on strength-based approaches to programs, rather than approaches that many said served to diminish the value of their cultural frameworks:

“These cultures have survived for a very long time so there must be something in them. Please don’t be quick to put them down as tribal and not modern. There are some very useful things that can help solve many of the problems we see in society today.”

(Community leader, Tas)

The experience of migration often strengthens family ties and can lead to family members feeling more connected and protective of each other. This should be a key feature of programs that are developed according to several community leaders and respondents.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholder respondents predominantly highlighted cultural differences as the core reason for intergenerational conflict, particularly:

- differing concepts of ‘adulthood’, ‘childhood’ and so on
- expectations of contribution to the household by young people
- discipline and family structure, including father as authority
- expectations of parents/older generations around socialising only within culture
- concept of “individualism” which is not part of many non-western cultures where the family and community are the foundations of society.

Additional issues identified as impacting on parent/children relationships included:

- grief and loss
- post-traumatic stress
- isolation and lack of social connectedness
- language barriers.

(e) Are there any issues you are aware of for overseas students (fee-paying or subsidised) from African countries?

(i) *Community*

The issue of overseas students from Africa was not one that was widely canvassed during the community consultations.

Reference was made to **The Kenyan-Australian Alumni Association (KAAA)**, which is a Kenyan-based alumni association that seeks to bring together those Kenyans who have studied in Australian Institutions.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

A number of stakeholders, particularly from Victoria, NSW, Queensland and South Australia raised issues related to overseas students from African countries.

Stakeholders in NSW made reference to an **International Forum at the University of Sydney** which brought together leaders and thinkers from Africa and Australia to present their views on Australia’s relationship with Africa.

Guests included High Commissioners from African countries, representatives from NGOs, AusAid, DFAT, Austrade, the Australia Africa Business Council, the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific, as well as African postgraduate students and academics from a number of Australian universities. The one-day

seminar program focused on specific topics including public health, governance, legal reform, education, extractive industries and private sector development.

The **Africa Australia Network** is an interdisciplinary group of academics, general staff and PhD students who are committed to enhancing the University of Sydney's research linkages and collaborations in Africa.

The Network provides an institutional home for cross-sectoral collaboration between researchers, government bodies and the business community with a focus on agriculture, governance, law and health.

Several stakeholders involved in the Victorian tertiary education sector highlighted that the **University of Melbourne** has more than 200 students from Africa currently studying at the University and that the **Melbourne Law School** has an exchange program with the University of Cape Town Law Faculty.

Monash University's Africa Research Initiative (MARI) has received considerable accolade. MARI is an initiative of Monash University in collaboration with other universities within Australia and Africa, and with universities beyond the borders of those two countries. The initiative will focus on research on Africa, initially with special emphasis on those areas with commercial, historical and migration ties with Australia.

Other national developments of interest include the establishment of the **Australian Scholarships for Africa program** which aims to promote sustainable development in Africa. The program includes postgraduate level Australian Development Scholarships in addition to the Australia Africa Fellowships.

6.4 Educational needs for African Australian students

(a) Can you suggest any programs and services that can provide additional support to African Australian students during their education?

(i) Community

Overall, community respondents highlighted that there is a greater need for:

- more teachers from African Australian backgrounds – this also provides important role models for young people in schools
- induction and cultural orientation programs to enhance student's understanding of cultural differences and expectations within the Australian education system
- more classes to be held in informal community settings
- more English language options for youth aged 15 to 18 years who drop out of school or who finish school without adequate English skills to move into vocational training or employment

- more tuition hours to be available to achieve English proficiency levels commensurate with employment requirements and/or to transition into further study
- better learning options for mothers who are unable to be provided with childcare for their children
- bilingual support in class
- better learning resources
- preparatory and transitional support programs
- community language schools
- more scholarship and financial support to assist with the financial pressure to provide for families in Australia and abroad.

A common theme to emerge during consultations was the need for role models in school for young people of refugee background, including more teachers from their own community. Currently there are trained teachers in the African Australian community but often they lack Australian teaching experience or qualifications. Even after completing teacher training courses they are then required to sit an international English exam before they are allowed to teach.

Several respondents suggested that additional tutoring would greatly assist newly-arrived students, many of whom are not able to access support through family or community networks. Several good practice examples referred to by community participants include:

SAIL

SAIL was established in Melbourne in 2001 and has expanded rapidly to now include campuses in NSW. SAIL tutors offer tutoring to members of the Sudanese community. It is operated by a volunteer staff of about 400 people, including over 370 tutors. Most activities operated by the SAIL program run every Saturday morning. These activities include:

- English as a second language tutoring for Sudanese children and teenagers
- English as a second language tutoring for Sudanese adults. The aim of this program is to provide adults with contacts to improve their English language skills and to enable them to consolidate their children's learning at home
- Home Help engages experienced female SAIL volunteers to offer weekday home visits to Sudanese mothers for three hours.

Please see: home.vicnet.net.au/~sail/

A number of respondents also highlighted the need to ensure that the existence of particular services and programs be actively promoted amongst community members. For example, respondents reported that despite various resources aimed

at assisting newly-arrived students to transition to university, these services tended to be underused, and often misunderstood. This then served to deter students from seeking to access them as they were often uncertain about the nature of the support, or the appropriateness of the programs provided.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholder respondents cited a number of examples of programs designed to provide additional support to African Australian students. Some of these examples follow:

Refugee Students Assistance Scheme

The NSW Department of Education provides a range of refugee support programs and resources. One such program is the Refugee Students Assistance Scheme that helps refugee students in NSW government schools by providing limited financial support. Schools who have the largest refugee student populations receive funding. School principals use the funds in ways which will be support students in their school. Funds may be used for textbooks, excursions, subject costs, stationery, and uniforms.

Please see:

www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focusareas/refugee/prosupport.php

Homework support programs

An increasing number of homework programs are being established. In Western Sydney the St Vincent de Paul's Society's SPARK program is running homework help at schools rather than at community centres in an attempt to increase involvement and the support of parents and teachers. This is part of wider and coordinated efforts by agencies in NSW to provide services in schools in order to increase the likelihood of reaching refugee parents. STARTTS and Newcastle University Students Association have a mentoring program linking university students as mentors for high school students of refugee background and working with them on homework and recreational activities.

Please see: www.vinnies.org.au/spark-nsw

Learning Beyond the Bell

The *Learning Beyond the Bell* program has a key aim to increase the connectedness of students of refugee and migrant backgrounds to school and the community at the same time it improves student attitudes to learning. The program coordinates Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs that operate in Victoria. Consistency and accessibility of the programs is central to ensuring that the educational needs of young people are supported.

Please see: www.cmy.net.au/LearningBeyondtheBell

The *Beaut Buddies* Program

The *Beaut Buddies* program is designed to improve the transition of young people from refugee backgrounds from the language acquisition programs provided on arrival in Australia, into mainstream education and training programs. Over a three-year period, **Foundation House (Vic)** will work with three on-arrival English Language Schools at Noble Park, Blackburn and Broadmeadows as well as six mainstream secondary schools to:

- further develop transition processes for students
- improve inter-cultural contact between students, their families and the schools
- establish a ‘buddy’ system where mainstream students volunteer to buddy incoming English Language School students
- produce a resource guide and professional development program to enable *Beaut Buddies* to be replicated in other locations.

Following a range of shared projects and events, students participating in the buddy program will be encouraged to establish a sustainable student body to take responsibility for the *Beaut Buddies* program and to encourage positive relationships and social harmony within the school community.

Please see:

www.foundationhouse.org.au/service_innovation_program/working_with_schools/beaut_buddies.htm

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to educational needs were addressed by half (51%) of the submissions.

Programs and services mentioned in submissions to provide additional support to African Australian students during their education include:

- Dickson College in Canberra has a program that supports people who have missed a lot of education in developing skills to undertake school work at a level appropriate for their age (s22)
- Adult Migrant English Program funded through DIAC (s51)
- Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program provided through RTOs (s51)
- free community programs run by MRCs (s51)
- social and sport programs run by Youth Clubs, the PCYCs, MRC Youth programs, regional and metropolitan council programs (s51)
- Victorian Foundation of Torture and Trauma and Phoenix Centre (Hobart) counselling services (s51)
- IHSS and Settlement Grants Programs (s51).

(b) How can Australian education institutions (e.g. schools, universities, TAFE, colleges) meet and support the specific cultural needs of African Australian students, especially those who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers?

(i) Community

Community respondents reiterated a number of key points made in response to previous questions asked, including:

- utilisation of multicultural/bilingual staff, including teachers from within the African Australian communities
- use of respected community members as cultural mediators
- greater utilisation of strength based approaches to engaging parents as part of their children's education experience
- implementation of anti racism awareness programs for staff and students
- availability of religious and cultural spaces within schools and other education institutions to enhance access (for example, provision of prayer space)
- celebration of cultural and religious events as part of whole of school approach
- build relationships with community groups and organisations to increase awareness of cultural issues
- cross-cultural training for staff
- build cultural information into school curriculum
- establish buddy systems.

(ii) Stakeholders

Examples were provided by a number of stakeholder respondents of programs that had been implemented by schools and other education institutions to meet the cultural needs of African Australian students.

One example is:

Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory

The Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory has been conducting multicultural excursions to places of worship for local schools in recent years. Feedback received suggests that the programs have been extremely successful in increasing awareness amongst secondary school students of the nature of Darwin's multifaith and multicultural communities. These excursions are planned to the themes of inclusion, social history and cultural diversity and are aligned with the curriculum. The MCNT arranges the schedule, authoritative

speakers and the itinerary and the excursions are popular with teachers and Middle School students.

Please see: www.mcnt.org.au

(iii) *Public submissions*

Responses provided by public submissions included:

- provide appropriate information about support and referral services
- involve African communities in designing and delivering programs
- employ African teachers and teachers' aids
- provide culturally inclusive policies and cultural awareness training for staff
- provide refugee counselling to deal with trauma issues
- establish home tutoring programs
- provide culturally appropriate facilities, for example, a designated place for prayer
- establish faculty partnerships for example, co-developed and co-delivered English language and hospitality course
- develop cross-cultural exchanges and events for students
- develop student mentoring programs
- encourage and support student clubs and societies
- provide translation and interpreter services during orientation programs and bilingual resources in libraries.

(c) What training and support should be put in place to assist educators to better understand complex refugee situations?

(i) *Community*

Community respondents expressed the view that any training and support which increases the awareness of educators in relation to the experiences of newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants would be of benefit:

"Increasing teacher and student awareness and understanding of different cultures and the refugee experience assists in creating a school environment supportive to refugee students."

(Community leader, NSW)

Community respondents were, however, quick to stress the need to engage people within the African Australian communities to provide the training and education sessions, suggesting that much of the information currently being provided served to further reinforce stereotypes:

“It is important that schools use people within the community as the experts of their own culture. There is so much around that is delivered about us by people who are not us. This has to be challenged. Lots of times I hear the information and it makes me angry because it says things that are so general and at times just not accurate.”

(Community leader, WA)

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholder respondents highlighted the following examples of training and support programs currently in place to assist educators to better understand complex refugee situations:

National Centre for Vocational Educational Research Teaching Guide for adult learners

The National Centre for Vocational Educational Research has produced a guide for educators working with refugee and humanitarian entrants who come from highly oral cultural backgrounds, particularly those from African countries. This guide provides a set of 'good practice' strategies for designing effective English language, literacy and numeracy programs for all adult learners from highly oral cultural backgrounds.

Please see: www.ncver.edu.au

NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

STARTTS provides training and development in relation to the needs of refugee students for teachers, school counsellors and other regional and school-based personnel. Training includes specialist workshops and the provision of outreach education in which training is designed for specific client groups.

Please see: www.startts.org.au

Settling In

This is a group program for newly arrived refugee and migrant students which was designed for school counsellors as an early intervention program, using group counselling techniques. The program aims to assist students in the process of adjustment to life in a new country.

Please see: www.startts.org.au/default.aspx?id=318

A World of Difference – OMI (WA)

The Department of Education and Office of Multicultural Interests has produced A World of Difference – A resource for teachers to introduce students to the principles of multiculturalism in Western Australia. This resource has been developed to assist teachers provide knowledge, skills, understanding and appreciation of WA's cultural diversity. The resource provides inter-active educational activities on issues including perceptions and the media,

stereotyping and its consequences, the nature of discrimination and multiculturalism in a national and international context.

Please see:

www.omi.wa.gov.au/Publications/teachers_resource_kit/World_difference.pdf

‘School’s In for Refugees – Foundation House (Vic)

This is a comprehensive introductory training from Foundation House for those working with refugee background students. This training is appropriate for those working in schools and other educational settings, at primary, secondary and post compulsory levels.

The training covers:

- the refugee experience for young people including their prior education experiences
- the impact of trauma on young people’s learning and wellbeing
- identifying strategies that teachers and other staff can use in the classroom that support the recovery process
- exploring a whole school approach and key areas where school can increase support for refugee background students.

Please see:

www.foundationhouse.org.au/resources/publications_and_resources.htm

6.5 Discrimination in education

(a) Can you provide examples of how African Australians are treated differently in the education sector?

(i) Community

Numerous examples were provided by community respondents where African Australians were perceived to be treated differently in the education sector. Discrimination was experienced in both overt and covert terms, with several community respondents suggesting that the covert forms were much more difficult to challenge:

“It’s very hard when you are told it is in your head. There is nothing that is actually said, it’s just you know that you were not picked for a class, or given an award because you are black.”

(Participant, Youth focus group, NSW)

Additional examples included:

- Racial slurs and abuse, including examples of physical attacks either at school, on the way to school or on public transport

- Stereotyped views of their capacity to learn
- Over emphasis on refugee backgrounds, even when African Australians were born in Australia
- Negative perceptions of Muslim students
- Reinforcement of being an ‘outsider’.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders provided similar examples of discrimination and differential treatment, including:

- students being blamed for the actions of other, often non-African students
- failure to follow up on allegations of discrimination by other students.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to discrimination in education were addressed by a third (31%) of the submissions.

The submissions provided many examples of how African Australians are treated differently in the education system. Some examples include:

- indirect discrimination through school policies that don’t take into account the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students
- direct discrimination from teacher and other students resulting in social isolation
- teaching staff not understanding post-traumatic stress disorder and inappropriately disciplining students who need help
- Students are often unaware of complaint procedures and feel intimidated by authority figures
- teachers may mistake cultural behaviours as inappropriate:

“In some cultures it is respectful to not look elders and teachers in the eye; to look away. A female student may not answer any question if her male relatives are in the class.”
(s51)

(b) What is the impact of this discrimination?

(i) Community

Community respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the impact of discrimination was significant, and constituted a major barrier to successful settlement, particularly for young people. In relation to education, and access to educational opportunities the

impact was seen to be primarily one of limiting options and reinforcing young people's sense of inadequacy.

In summary, community respondents described the impact in the following ways:

- impacts negatively on a young person's life chances – limited education further limits employment opportunities
- reinforces young people's feelings of insecurity and discomfort and emphasises the differences between them and "other Australians"
- creates tensions between African Australian young people and the non African Australians generally
- influences the attitudes of other students towards the African youth in schools
- Creates a feeling of not being a part of the mainstream community and results in young people feeling isolated
- Affects young people's mental health and development in negative ways
- adds to the resettlement issues young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds already face, making their journey more difficult and in some cases traumatic
- creates anger, fear and distress, which may sometimes lead to 'outbursts' or 'fights' with those perceived to be the perpetrators of discrimination and racism
- leads to young people dropping out of school and interfacing with the criminal justice system
- stereotypes and negative images can be internalised, denigrating young people's self-worth and adversely affecting their social and psychological functioning.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders identified similar impacts, highlighting the fact that discrimination is a major cause of social inequality and social inclusion:

"Racism and discrimination undermines the young person's sense of themselves and what we see is a lot of conflict and anger that emerges as a result, particularly with the young men."

(Service Provider, Vic)

Several stakeholders, particularly those working with mental health or torture trauma services were particularly concerned for the deleterious impact that discrimination can have on young people's health and mental health.

(iii) *Public submissions*

The negative impact of this discrimination identified in the public submissions includes:

- general reduction in student welfare
- erosion of self-confidence and self-esteem
- social isolation
- depression and other mood disorders
- reduced motivation and reduction of trust in education system
- reduced achievement of educative outcomes
- increased delinquency rates
- increased health problems
- increased likelihood of encountering problems with the law.

6.6 The effect of religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability

(a) Are the education experiences of African Australians different based on religion, age, gender, sexuality or disability? Please provide reasons in your answer.

"Educate a man and you educate one person; educate a woman and you educate a whole nation."

(Quoted during the focus group with the African Women's Advocacy Training Program NSW)

A number of community respondents expressed the view that women faced specific barriers to accessing education opportunities, and as a result experienced differential outcomes in terms of employment opportunities.

Specific barriers identified included:

- lack of or inadequate childcare facilities – without affordable and easily accessible childcare options, women, particularly widowed and single mothers, cannot access education opportunities
- stereotyped views of young women's capacity to learn
- socially accepted gender roles and the position of females in many societies may have a strong impact on the needs of adolescent girls
- lack of women only education facilities.

A number of good practice programs were identified:

River Nile Learning Centre

The River Nile Learning Centre provides support for a homework help program and English language classes for adult Sudanese women. The Centre's program for female refugees aged 15–21 began a couple of years ago with support from Debney Park Secondary College in Flemington, the Western English Language School in Braybrook and the St John's Anglican parish. The program was created to help women with limited English skills and little experience of formal education to receive qualifications and enable them to find work.

Please see: www.rnlc.org.au

The Africa Women Support Group

The Africa Women Support Group aims to help women from various African countries to adjust to life in Australia and overcome problems of social isolation and economic hardship. Volunteers work with African women in the Greater Dandenong area to assist them with gaining computer literacy and with researching and applying for employment opportunities.

(i) Public submissions

Issues relating to the effects of religion, age, sexuality and disability on African Australian's ability to access education were addressed by one fifth (19%) of the submissions.

These issues include:

- females can be disadvantaged by cultural bias toward education and lack of child care options
- adults and young people often have different experiences through different programs
- some adult males do not want to participate in programs with their children due to cultural biases that make it humiliating for them
- there is often no coordinated support for culturally and linguistically diverse people with disabilities.

6.7 Government and education policies

(a) Do government education policies and program design meet the needs of African Australians? Please give reasons in your answer.

(i) Community

Most community respondents were of the view that government education policies and program design are still falling short of meeting the needs of African Australians, despite considerable improvements.

Several community respondents shared the view that the approach to education policies for African Australians, particularly young people, was primarily deficit driven, with little attention to the protective factors that may contribute. A number of other stakeholders also made reference to what they saw as the failure of western approaches to give proper and due value to cultural and traditional knowledge:

“The system here does not have much time for older wise people and for our stories that we have told for many, many years. There is maybe something both sides can learn from each other.”

There was fairly widespread agreement amongst many community respondents that schools and other educational institutions have ignored or rejected different cultural expressions of child development that are normal and adequate, and on which school skills and knowledge can be built.

There was a widespread view that children with well-developed native languages experience greater success in learning English. Children with strong cultural and linguistic identities have high self-esteem and psychological health, both of which contribute positively to learning.

Community respondents commended what they saw as an increasing number of institutions integrating intercultural knowledge and understanding into curriculum documents.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholder respondents also suggested that various policies and programs were still failing to meet the specific and complex needs of most African Australians, particularly new arrivals.

A number of stakeholder respondents provided various examples of good practice programs currently being implemented by both federal and state governments:

Multicultural Programs Unit, NSW Department of Education

The Multicultural Programs Unit operates across the NSW public school system. It uses a multi-pronged approach including strategic advice and support to schools and regions on multicultural policies; programs and services such as

anti-racism education; English as a Second Language (ESL) education; culturally-inclusive curriculum; migration and settlement services; refugee support programs; community relations and community harmony and translation and interpreting services.

The Unit has a state-wide network of multicultural/ESL consultants and community information officers working on the ground and also coordinates programs such as the Refugee Students Assistance Scheme, the Cultural Exchange Program and Youth Partnerships with Arabic-speaking and Pacific communities.

Please see:

www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focusareas/multiculted/contacts.php

Several other respondents referred to state government policies around **multicultural education**. Multicultural education ensures that all students have access to inclusive teaching and learning experiences.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to government and education policies were addressed by a quarter (26%) of the submissions.

Comments relating to the ability of the Government's education policies and programs to meet the needs of African Australians include:

- 510 hours of English is generally not enough to enable African Australians to fulfil education goals
- the needs of youth need to be better addressed
- government policy is unlikely to identify African Australians as a separate groups and the complex needs of individuals need to be recognised.

7 Health

7.1 Overview

This section highlights the outcomes of the consultations in relation to health and health related issues for African Australians.

The right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is an inclusive right, extending beyond healthcare to the determinants of health, freedom from violence and discrimination, and access to health-related information and education.

It contains both freedoms and entitlements:

Freedoms include the right to control one's health, including the right to be informed and free from non-consensual treatment and experimentation.

Entitlements include the right to a system of health care that guarantees equity in access.

As part of the discussion on health issues, a series of focused consultations with relevant organisations were held, including a number of disability and mental health services:

- two focus groups with staff and managers at the Victorian Foundation House for Survivors of Torture
- one focus group with staff and managers at the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
- one focus group with staff at Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities (ADEC)
- Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS) (South Australia) were also involved in organising a focus group for the Project with members of the African women's support group.

Interviews were conducted with individual staff and managers at:

- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA)
- City of Melbourne.

It should be noted that questions relating to communities' experience of mental health services were met with concerns by the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) who subsequently submitted formal correspondence to the Australian Human Rights Commission. Despite concerns raised, the FASSTT reiterated their support for the project and their commitment to being involved in the research.

7.2 What are the main areas of concern for African Australians in regard to health, well-being and health care

(a) In their first year after arrival in Australia

(i) Community

Responses varied depending on one's entry to Australia, for example, under the refugee and humanitarian program or via another migration program. There were, however, a number of common areas of concern in regard to health, wellbeing and health care. These were largely associated with the settlement process and included:

- experiences of culture shock
- breakdown of family ties and community cohesiveness
- language barriers
- changes in food and diet resulting in health problems
- difficulties in accessing sources of traditional foods or finding halal foods
- poor appetite
- dental/oral health needs
- nutrition-related illnesses
- social isolation as a result of moving away from extended family networks
- ongoing medical problems as a result of FGM
- loss of employment or "under-employment" and its impact on wellbeing
- lack of access to culturally appropriate health services
- inter-generational conflicts
- breakdown of traditional cultural lifestyles and values
- discrimination and racism.

Language barriers were frequently cited as a critical issue particularly in terms of ensuring effective communication with health professionals:

"When people don't speak English then they either don't get help for their health problems or they go to the doctors and try to understand as much as possible. It's not good when the doctor or other health professionals don't use an interpreter."
(Community Participant, WA)

Sensitivity surrounding health issues, in addition to understanding medical terminology, can make understanding or communication difficult even with the use of interpreters.

The experience of culture shock and its impact was frequently cited by community respondents as having profound impact on their health and wellbeing:

“It is very hard to just find yourself completely without all the things you felt comfortable about. All the things that felt like your home, your family, your culture, it’s all cut off from you. And then you haven’t even got time to think about it because you are out there trying to find housing, employment....”

(Community respondent, NSW)

Other factors involved in poor health include overcrowded living conditions and a lack of access to immunisation, health care facilities and education for those who spend lengthy periods in the refugee camps.

Many community respondents referred to issues related to oral health, and their apprehensions about visiting a dentist, as some had never had dental care with the majority never exposed to common preventive measures.

Stress and tensions relating to intergenerational issues were repeatedly raised by community respondents. Children and adolescents frequently become language brokers as their English skills often advance more rapidly than those of adults. Community respondents were concerned at the speed with which their roles as parents changed, and the experience of being displaced further by their children.

A number of respondents also stressed the point that six months of IHSS services was insufficient, and that withdrawal of service often meant that many did not continue to attend appointments relating to the maintenance of their health.

Finally, experiences of discrimination, racism and in some instances outright hostility were also cited. Repeated exposure to either actual or perceived acts of discrimination was reported as having an ongoing negative impact on personal wellbeing and on interpersonal relations both with family and with the broader Australian community. Coping strategies varied considerably:

“I think the hardest thing about being discriminated is when you are really not sure that you are being discriminated against. I go through this talk in my head that says I should stand up against it, but then I start to feel unsure – maybe it’s me and then I just get angry that I even have to go through this.”

(Community respondent, SA)

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders identified similar issues to those identified by community respondents. The following key areas of concern were highlighted, with particular reference to newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants:

- Specific health conditions that are epidemiologically different such as higher rates of infectious diseases (such as malaria and tuberculosis), and nutritional deficiencies such as vitamin D and Vitamin A,

“Some women who have been in refugee camps for a long time may not have had the opportunity to learn from mothers or aunts things like how to cook for their families and so on. This means then that they struggle with things like nutrition for their babies and children, so we find there are nutritional problems that come up”
(Stakeholder, WA)

Some clients were reportedly suffering from a wide range of chronic illnesses including hypertension, heart disease and diabetes, and several stakeholders expressed the view that these often remained untreated.

Psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress

disorders due to prolonged exposure to war or violence were repeatedly identified by stakeholders as a key issue:

“The way that people respond to torture and trauma is complex, and often linked to transition. Some people struggle, but most get through it. There is a percentage of the community where they have not had the supports, and so therefore are more affected.”
(Stakeholder, NSW)

Stakeholders expressed the view that health issues were often made worse by the fact that most newly arrived community members tend not to be familiar with the health and community services system and as such were less likely to follow up on health concerns.

A small number of stakeholders expressed the view that health screening conducted overseas were inadequate and that conditions such as anaemia, Vitamin D deficiencies, and various infectious diseases were not being properly detected.

(iii) Public submissions

Information regarding health issues for African Australians were offered by almost half (44%) of the submissions.

According to the submissions, the main areas of concern for African Australians in regard to health, wellbeing and health care are:

- lack of knowledge of good hygiene practices
- lack of knowledge regarding sexual health
- lack of knowledge about nutrition
- overeating due to the availability of food
- cultural beliefs in the value of sugar, cocoa cola and palm oil
- some children have arrived with the effects of rickets due to a lack of calcium in their diet and inadequate exposure to sunlight
- vitamin D deficiencies
- resistance to healthy dietary changes
- lack of knowledge about the importance of exercise

- some adult inactivity is resulting in obesity and diabetes, and worsened by depression
- lack of interpreters are problematic in some areas
- the practice of African Australians politely agreeing that they understand doctors when they do not
- some African Australians become overwhelmed and confused about using the medical system when service provision is not systematic and appropriately clear.

(b) In the longer term

(i) Community

A number of community respondents were of the view that many of the health related issues identified during the first year of settlement, when not properly identified or addressed, continued to intensify and become more acute. Inability to successfully navigate the health system was also identified as having a significant impact on access to services.

Additional issues included:

- ongoing social isolation – continued grief in relation to the loss of extended family support systems
- drug and alcohol abuse, particularly by disengaged young people
- under age pregnancies/multiple and/or unplanned pregnancies
- changes in families and roles contributing to family breakdowns and family conflict
- loss of cultural identity
- family violence issues
- intergenerational conflict.

A number of issues specific to women were also raised, including accessing antenatal and postnatal care and the issue of postnatal depression:

“Some women may not have had contact with a doctor when they are pregnant because of different cultural practices and beliefs about pregnancy and childbirth, or because they still lack the confidence to get this service. This can happen even after three or four years of arriving in Australia.”
(Community participant, SA)

Refer also to the following sections of this document for additional information about specific issues for women.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Similar to the views expressed by community respondents, stakeholders stressed the need for early intervention in order to prevent long-term health problems.

Several respondents said that psychological issues do not cease when refugees reach their country of settlement. In fact for many, psychological distress may intensify as they deal with the stressors of the early resettlement period.

“Mental health is very much neglected during this time unless it is an extreme problem. Immediately upon arrival, most African Australian refugees are highly motivated to get housed, obtain employment, ensure that their children are schooled, and so on. Only after these things have been put in place, do people then find that mental health issues are emerging. This could take three, five, even ten years to identify and address. Sometimes it may never be properly identified.”

(Stakeholder, Vic)

Stakeholders expressed the view that cultural reluctance to discuss issues of a personal nature often meant that people did not seek treatment, and so the problems exacerbated leading to other problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown and family violence.

Stakeholders also identified issues for children and adolescents who may have been subjected to pre arrival trauma, particularly if those experiences have not been properly identified:

“We see some of the younger children in particular experience real problems at school, and teachers or other professionals not identifying what the real issue is, and they either end up withdrawing or launching into bouts of rage which leads them to the principal’s office.”

(Stakeholder, NSW)

Other issues for children that were identified by stakeholders included delayed growth and development because of nutritional deficiencies.

The issue of suicide and self-harm was raised by some stakeholders, with a small number making reference to recent examples of suicides within African Australian communities.

In Tasmania, a partnership has been formed between the Mental Health Team of the University Department of Rural Health based in Launceston, and the Phoenix Centre, the specialist service for survivors of torture and trauma, based within the Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania). The primary goal of the project is to increase the capacity for prevention, intervention and post intervention management of suicide-related crises in refugee and other vulnerable migrant communities and associated support services in Tasmania.

(c) Does the Australian health care system adequately meet the needs of African Australians, especially newly-arrived refugees? Please provide some examples.

(i) Community

Responses to this question varied from state to state, and both positive and negative experiences were cited.

Most community respondents from Tasmania were extremely positive about their experiences of the health system, citing specific programs that were perceived to have improved both access to services and the quality of service provision.

Particular mention was made of the **Bi-Cultural Community Health Program**. This program was seen to assist those who are newly arrived in Tasmania, especially refugees, to make informed decisions and independently access appropriate health services.

Other community respondents from different states and territories, however, were more likely to express the view that the health care system was falling short of meeting the needs of African Australians, especially newly-arrived refugees. Specific gaps identified included:

- Medicare processes not well understood by community members
- lack of appropriately qualified interpreters, particularly within hospital and GP settings
- high medical costs – sometimes also the result of confusion in relation to programs such as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- inappropriate or stereotyped responses by health professionals; lack of cultural sensitivity.

Most respondents were of the view that African Australians should be offered the same level and type of health care as the general population, including a balance between health promotion, disease prevention and treatment services.

Most explicitly stated that they valued doctors who listened to them, and almost all mentioned this quality when describing a good experience with a doctor or the health system more generally.

Both state and federal governments in Australia are implementing a number of strategies to aim at addressing the health care needs of recently arrived refugee communities. Positive programs provided by community respondents included:

Refugee Health Nurse Program – is intended to optimise the long-term health of refugee community members through promoting accessible and culturally appropriate health care services that are responsive to changing patterns of refugee settlement.

Please see:

www.refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/referral/Refugee-Health-Nurse-Program

Good Food for New Arrivals – a nutrition awareness program designed to facilitate and improve access to sound and relevant information by newly-arrived humanitarian and refugee families with young children (Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors Inc. (ASeTTTS) WA).

Please see:

<http://goodfood.asetts.org.au/>

The Refugee school health project (Vic) – a key entry point for newly-arrived children under 12 and their families to health and welfare services.

Refugee Maternity Service at the Mater Mothers' Hospital – was developed in response to an unmet community need and is based on a women and family centred care model that supports appropriate health care, psycho-social support and resources for women of a refugee background birthing at Mater Mothers' Hospital.

Please see: <http://brochures.mater.org.au/Home/Brochures/Mater-Mothers--Hospitals/Refugee-Maternity-Service>

FaRReP Program (and other state equivalents) – the project focuses on the prevention of FGM and increasing the access of affected women to information and services to improve their sexual and reproductive health. FaRReP works to build trust with women and communities to promote the wellbeing and human rights of women and girls.

Please see: www.health.vic.gov.au/vwhp/farrep.htm

It is important to note however, that social and family networks, including faith networks, were identified as being the most positive in terms of improving immediate and long-term health of African Australians:

"What your community can give you in terms of support and breaking down isolation, strangers cannot. There really is no replacing these sources of support."
(Community leader, SA)

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholder responses also varied significantly depending on the extent to which particular specialist health programs had been implemented in the state or territory.

Several stakeholders identified a number of clinical service gaps which are particular to newly-arrived refugees:

- lack of acute community based mental health services able to identify, engage and manage refugee issues

- cessation of support for clients by settlement service providers after six months leading to inadequate follow up management for health conditions – hinders ongoing access to health care
- shortfall of specialised medical assistance in some areas/regions across Australia – inadequate number of appropriately skilled GPs
- complexity around the Medicare enrolment processes leading to lack of access to Medicare funded services and Pharmaceutical Benefits Schemes
- inadequate access to specialised screening and treatment services
- lack of suitably up-skilled bilingual/bicultural workers in primary health care support roles.

A small number of stakeholders raised the issue of child and adolescent health, suggesting that there has been little attention given to the development of a systemic approach to child and adolescent health issues, although there continue to be services developed in response to identified need.

Several respondents suggested that negative experiences of health care overseas can be a factor which may also affect access to care in Australia.

Examples of positive health care initiatives or responses included:

- timely on-arrival health assistance to new arrival refugees through prompt initial needs assessment and referral to appropriate primary health services by settlement service providers
- school lunches are a new concept for many new arrivals. Parents and children may require access to information and support to help them adjust to the cultural transition of providing lunch at school.

Overall, programs that maintain a holistic approach, recognising that nutrition and health cannot be separated from other goals and needs were identified as being more successful in meeting the needs of African Australians.

(iii) Public submissions

A number of submissions stated that the Australian health care system in their local area does adequately meet the needs of African Australians, including newly-arrived refugees. Examples include:

“In Queensland... most families are linked to a local GP who is experienced with newly arrived refugees. This has benefits as they have a commitment to good information and are more aware of health problems that are endemic in Africa. Many we have worked alongside.”

Most submissions, however, stated that the health concerns of African Australian communities were not adequately addressed.

“The general practical model of health service in Australia is not ideal in terms of meeting the needs of newly arrived African Australians.”
(s16)

Major restrictions to equitable access to health care for migrant and refugee women identified were language and cultural barriers.

(d) As an African Australian, do you generally find Australian health services good quality and are staff professional and polite?

(i) Community

Responses to this question varied considerably, with examples of both negative and positive experiences provided.

Negative experiences included:

- discrimination and stereotyped responses
- lack of interpreter – reliance of non-medical family members resulting in wrong diagnosis
- lack of awareness of health professionals, particularly in relation to pre-arrival experiences of refugee and humanitarian entrants
- inadequate cultural skills and knowledge of professionals
- problems with translation and miscommunication

Several community respondents stressed the need for health professionals to spend more time finding out about clients' family and community relationships, carefully explaining diagnoses and treatments, and listening to, incorporating, and facilitating community views on health issues and traditional treatments.

African Australian women, particularly those who identified as being Muslim, reported experiencing widespread discrimination and disadvantage in relation to accessing appropriate health care, particularly pre natal and peri natal health care.

Positive experiences included:

- health professions accessing appropriate interpreters
- health professionals taking the time to explain the health issues
- the use of bi-cultural health workers who had an understanding of the cultural issues
- health practitioners showing respect for traditional methods of healing
- provision of gender specific health practitioners.

(e) Please comment on any gender-specific or youth-specific health issues for African Australians.

(i) Community

Women

Community respondents raised a number of specific health concerns in relation to African Australian women. These included:

- sexual health issues amongst newly-arrived young women, particularly unplanned pregnancies
- lack of traditional and family support networks, particularly apparent during pregnancy and child birth experiences
- refugee women may have suffered from poor nutrition during early pregnancy which may give rise to health problems
- prior exposure to particular infectious diseases, such as malaria, hepatitis or TB, that can complicate childbirth
- under representation of women in programs, such as the chronic conditions self-management strategy
- inadequate translation services for women who could not speak English
- in the absence of the extended family to help with care giving, women with infants have little opportunity to move beyond the domestic sphere and are isolated from the wider community
- provision of specialist services and multidisciplinary care for women with complex mental health or social problems, including substance misuse and domestic violence, generally experienced as inadequate.

Issues related to FGM (female genital mutilation) were specifically identified by many of the women only focus groups that were conducted across each of the states and territories. Issues included:

- mismanagement of care during pregnancy and labour
- lack of appropriate levels of clinical knowledge and skills by midwives.

Attention needs to be paid to ensure continuity of care, maximising verbal communications and challenging stereotypical views of women from affected communities.

Many African Australian women said that they prefer to see health professionals of the same gender, particularly for matters surrounding sexual and reproductive health.

Several consultation sessions were conducted with older African Australian women. Many within those sessions said that they were largely unaware of the range of services that might be available to them and that English language proficiency increased their vulnerability to poorer health outcomes.

One project that sought to specifically address issues for older African Australian women was the ***Inspired Arts Project***. The women are from the Horn of Africa Senior Women's Program and many have arrived in Australia under a *Women at Risk* program.

Youth specific health issues

Respondents identified the follow issues as impacting on the health and wellbeing of newly-arrived children and young people from African Australian backgrounds:

- loss of family members
- dislocation
- little or no experience of school, or very disrupted schooling
- racism and discrimination
- drug and alcohol abuse
- lack of nutritional knowledge
- sexual health issues: lack of information, early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases
- dealing with conflicting norms and expectations from their own culture and that of the new culture
- low confidence and low self-esteem
- torture and trauma recovery
- difficulties in establishing trust and friendships
- suicide.

A number of young people said that there was an urgent need for health programs that specifically target young African Australians and that recognise and celebrate their resilience. For example, the **refugee health clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital** plays a key role in assessment and care of newly-arriving refugee children and young people.

There are a number of other programs in each of the states and territories that have an interest in young people's health and wellbeing which have a particular focus on refugee young people, including some school nurses and school focussed youth services. There are also funded youth worker positions under the DIAC settlement grants program.

Young people spoke strongly of the desire for better futures and opportunities to make their communities and families proud, but felt that they had to contend with discriminatory and stereotyped attitudes on a regular basis.

There were a number of examples of projects aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of young newly-arrived African Australians. These included:

The Sudanese ‘Lost Boys’ Association of Australia

(SLBAA) is a not-for-profit organisation which provides recreational programs and support networks for Sudanese youth living in Australia. One of the programs the group runs is the leadership training and mentoring program which develops leadership and communication skills for newly-arrived Sudanese young people from across Victoria.

Please see: www.lostboys.org.au

Ayen’s Cooking School

This is a project of Supporting Survivors of Torture and Trauma in South Australia which aims to improve the nutrition, health and wellbeing of young male Sudanese refugees living in Adelaide by teaching them how to prepare and cook food. The cooking and nutrition classes provide an opportunity for social interaction with the local Sudanese community, help participants rediscover their cultural identity and assist in the adjustment and settlement process.

The needs of newly-arrived African Australian young people are different to the needs of second or third-generation young people and this was particularly emphasised by young African Australians born in Australia.

Sport, recreational, and artistic programs were seen to be the most effective in terms of addressing some of the specific health issues that may emerge from discrimination and racism.

(f) What are the issues for African Australians with disabilities in relation to the Australian health care system?

(i) Community

Community respondents raised a number of issues related to African Australians with disabilities, including:

- limited understanding of the health needs of people with disabilities amongst health providers
- stigma within communities can prevent carers from accessing appropriate support services
- cultural issues in relation to disability
- issues around child care, particularly for single women with disabilities, or women who have children with disabilities
- social isolation, difficulties accessing education and anxieties about the future are some of the other challenges confronted by young people with disabilities.

“There isn’t a lot of work done in African communities because they think that you shouldn’t discuss disabilities in the public realm. There is a view that it should be a responsibility that is carried by the family rather than government.”
(African Disability Support Worker)

There are also a range of cultural issues in relation to disability that need to be addressed, such as the fact that in some languages there is no overall word for ‘disability’.

“The concept of disabilities isn’t something that you would respond to in any formal way. It would be a traditional approach, and the community would just absorb it into the community. Health and illness is something that comes from God and there is nothing you would do about it.”
(Community Participant)

Community respondents were of the view that African Australians were not likely to be aware of the range of services and supports available and lack the knowledge necessary to access appropriate services in relation to disability.

(ii) Stakeholders

There were a number of specific consultation sessions that were conducted with agencies/organisations that had a specific focus on working with people with disabilities. Participating organisations included:

- Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities (ADEC) (Victoria)
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA).

Specific feedback was also received from Melbourne City Council, who had recently undertaken research in relation to the experiences of African Australians with disabilities and their carers.

Each of these stakeholders provided considerable insight into the range of issues impacting on people with disabilities from African Australian backgrounds.

Broadly, the issues identified included:

- African Australians with a disability face many disadvantages and neglect including family and personal humiliation resulting from discrimination
- cultural factors such as stigma and different attitudes towards disability within some African Australian communities
- service access and availability continues to be a major issue
- many families supporting people with disability may make the difficult decision to leave behind a family member in order to build a life in Australia
- the current migration health assessment may give rise to unjustifiable indirect discrimination against refugees and migrants with disability

- there is general unfamiliarity with respite services and the distrust of paid carers who might be insensitive to Muslim practices.

Organisations such as multicultural advocacy providers and multicultural resource centres played an important role in connecting people and providing a vehicle and opportunity for people to have a voice. ADEC staff spoke about the Somali Education project with the Somali community in the Northern Region in 2008/09. The project identified a number of specific issues for African Australians with disabilities including:

- the Somali community responds quite well to information and advice provided by their local Sheiks and Imams
- educating sheikhs and Imams could also help to reach the community members whom are unable to attend education sessions due to time restraints
- there is evidence that Somali refugees settled in Western countries have low rates of access to mental health services.

The researchers in the Somali project discovered that different ways of categorising mental health problems are used by this group, in comparison to Australian mainstream health providers. Difficulties prior and subsequent to their forced migration from Somalia were perceived to be major causes of distress.

It was found that many of the participants felt that health services were inappropriate for some mental health problems, as these situations were viewed more as social or spiritual problems than illnesses.

7.3 Mental health and wellbeing

(a) If you used a torture, trauma and rehabilitation service, did it help to meet your needs? Do you have any suggestions for improvement to the service?

Note: As noted in the introductory part of this section, concerns were raised by the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) in relation to this question. Despite concerns raised, FASSTT reiterated their support for the project and their commitment to being involved in the research.

(i) Community

Torture and trauma services provide specialist psycho-social recovery and support services for people who have experienced torture and trauma in their countries of origin or while fleeing those countries.

Advice received from DIAC highlighted that torture and trauma services are more likely to be of use from six to 18 months rather than during the initial six months when entrants are experiencing culture shock, adjusting to acculturation, learning English, and being assisted in a multitude of practical tasks during the settlement process.

Responses in relation to the above question of satisfaction with torture trauma services tended to be generic, with only a small number of community respondents making specific references to their own personal experiences of torture trauma and rehabilitation services. Generic responses primarily related to cultural issues associated with categorising stress related experiences as constituting 'mental health'.

Feedback regularly received throughout the consultations highlighted people's concerns that current approaches are too heavily weighted toward mental health considerations, which tend to individualise and pathologise complex processes.

Comments in relation to barriers to accessing services were also frequently made. These included:

- communication difficulties
- cultural differences and cultural misunderstandings around mental health concepts and experiences
- services' lack of sensitivity and cultural understanding
- The mental health needs of older people in the African communities has been largely neglected
- In some communities a lack of understanding and the stigma attached to mental illness may prevent individuals or families from seeking help.

Several respondents suggested that information about the torture trauma services needed to be disseminated more widely in culturally appropriate and responsive ways as there was a lot of misunderstanding about their role and the services that they provide.

Of the very few respondents who shared their personal experiences of services, these were both positive and negative. Positive experiences included:

- having cultural and religious considerations taken into account
- alternative health services provided
- opportunity to talk to others in own language
- normalising of the experiences.

Negative experiences included:

- feeling that you are having to tell your story a few times was stressful
- having to attend sessions that don't feel comfortable.

Although cultural factors provide many complexities for resettlement they also provide strength and resilience to communities. Feedback received from respondents in most states and territories said that mental health services are not appropriately resourced to provide continuity of care and culturally sensitive assessment and interventions.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Focus groups were conducted with staff and managers at:

- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House)
- The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS).

These groups provide a range of services including:

- medical and primary health services
- health promotion
- counselling and advocacy
- community capacity building.

Considerable feedback was provided in relation to the above question from service providers and other related agencies.

Much discussion revolved around the concepts of torture and trauma and approaches used in specialist services.

Respondents strongly rejected the view that providing a service to respond to trauma amounted to pathologising clients:

“It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions following a traumatic event.”

A strengths-based approach was promoted by respondents as the most effective way of providing effective quality services to the client groups:

“What we do now, is work with human potential. We educate services about the potential that people can bring.”

This included a range of group activities for torture and trauma survivors who aim to assist and increase both the individual and community capacity to improve overall mental health, by identifying and building on internal strengths, resources and skills:

“We try to find solutions to community issues and strengthen community groups and structures as part of a community development and community capacity approach.”

Community development is a critical strategy in sustaining the support given to survivors of torture and trauma. Community Development Programs also aims to work with other service providers to respond to a wide range of community needs by providing culturally appropriate support and services.

Another key focal point for discussion with stakeholders was the importance attached to building the cultural capabilities of mainstream mental health services:

“We have a critical role in contributing to service development and the planning and development of programs that will enhance service delivery by mental health service staff to people from African Australian backgrounds.”

Several stakeholders also highlighted the fact that torture trauma services and their staff reflected the communities that they worked with:

“If you look around STARTS there are people working from many of the communities – having someone who understands how the communities work. Community leaders can work with the worker.”

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to African Australians’ mental health and wellbeing were addressed by over a third (38%) of the submissions.

The submissions revealed a number of pertinent issues relating to the mental health and well-being of African Australians. They include:

- African cultures usually do not recognise mental health as a medical issue requiring attention:

“...there is not a concept of mental health or the therapeutic intervention of counseling in traditional African communities. Therefore symptoms of mental illness are not recognised as this and when the individual becomes sick the community response is to generally be one of hostility and to isolate them as a threat.”
(s60)

- The inability of the mental health system in Australia to adequately service African Australian communities:

“Consultations conducted in 2005 on behalf of the Across-Government Working Party on Settlement Issues for African Humanitarian Entrants found that African humanitarian entrants were not receiving adequate treatment to overcome the impact of torture and/or trauma experiences. Specialist mental health services were overloaded and did not provide for the scale of demand for long-term treatment. In addition, there was no provision of services to provide torture and trauma counseling for children aged five to twelve years.”
(s55)

- A lack of appropriate mental health service provision is likely to result in compounding mental and physical health issues, social isolation, increased rates of alcohol and drug abuse, and increased incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour.

(b) How do the effects of family separation impact upon the mental health and wellbeing of African Australian families?

(i) Community

Most community respondents agreed that the effects of family separation upon the mental health and wellbeing of African Australian families were significant and overwhelming:

“Mental health issues of one family member affect the whole family.”
(Participant, community focus group, Vic)

Several respondents were of the view that many newly-arrived members were overwhelmingly preoccupied with locating lost family members, desperately trying to find out whether they were dead or alive and therefore unable to make any long-term plans.

Another issue raised was the impact of fear for family remaining in the country of origin and under potential threat on the mental health of refugees.

(ii) Stakeholders

Service providers and others who work as counsellors with refugees reiterated the importance of adequate access to family reunion, primarily with one’s spouse and children, as an essential component in the recovery from trauma, for mental and emotional wellbeing and successful settlement.

Stakeholders also stressed the deleterious effects of family separation on the health and wellbeing of African Australians. Having family present can ameliorate the psychosocial effects of traumatic events and gives newly arrived communities the emotional resources to begin to rebuild their lives in Australia.

Those most affected by family separation are the most vulnerable – women, children and the elderly. For instance, in the absence of the extended family to help with care giving, women with infants have little opportunity to move beyond the domestic sphere and are isolated from the wider community.

(c) How do you feel your mental health and wellbeing has changed since coming to Australia?

(i) Community

Some community participants highlighted that their mental health and wellbeing had deteriorated significantly as a result of a number of key factors including:

- family breakdown, including intergenerational conflict
- inappropriate interventions by service providers, particularly in relation to children

- racism and discrimination.

Other related issues included:

- unemployment and underemployment
- access to affordable and appropriate housing options.

Some women, who are also Muslim and African, felt that their mental health and wellbeing had deteriorated and that many did not feel that things would improve again.

Concerns relating to suicide in communities were also raised by some community respondents.

(ii) Stakeholders

Several stakeholders were keen to reflect on the implications of past approaches to responding to the mental health needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants:

“Refugees who arrived 20–30 years ago, their mental health needs were often not addressed and as a result these people now have exacerbated mental health issues...”

Several stakeholders were still of the view that many mainstream mental health services are still lacking cultural competency in working with CALD clients, particularly African Australians, and there continues to be a lack of use of interpreters.

Several stakeholders also raised the importance of meeting important settlement needs such as employment, education, access to health care and appropriate housing, as essential to ensuring improved health and wellbeing overall.

(d) How can the stigma attached to mental health be addressed in African Australian communities?

(i) Community

The issue of stigma associated with mental health was discussed in a number of community focus groups, particularly in Victoria and NSW. Community respondents raised the following issues:

- stigma can have very serious negative impacts on people, families and whole communities and adds to the burden of living with a mental illness
- in some cultures certain health issues, such as mental health, are not discussed
- the structure of one-on-one counselling is also not familiar to some cultures.

Suggestions in relation to addressing stigma included:

- developing more creative ways of increasing community awareness in relation to the impact that settling in a new country has on mental health
- utilising cultural values and belief frameworks that empower communities to address the issues in ways that are most appropriate for them
- respected community leaders, especially spiritual and religious leaders in most communities, were identified as a crucial resource when dealing with mental health issues
- increasing opportunities for participation in services and activities by assisting with transport.

One strategy that was suggested involved the increased use of local media in particular ethnic community radio and newspapers as a way of promoting messages about mental health.

Peer mentoring programs for young people were cited as particularly effective in challenging stigma. The example was given of the **Multicultural Centre for Mental Health and Well-Being in Queensland** which is currently conducting a peer mentoring program for young, newly-arrived African refugees living in Brisbane.

In collaboration with the local African community, the Centre will train older established African youths to act as mentors for young newly-arrived African refugees, many of whom have limited family support. On arrival, these younger refugees will have immediate access to support from their older peer mentors to help them adapt to life in Australia.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders highlighted the stigma associated with mental health amongst many African Australian communities, and stressed the need for more comprehensive public information and education for African Australians, particularly in relation to:

- mental health risk factors
- how to prevent mental illness and promote mental health
- how to seek assistance.

Stakeholders stressed the need to develop effective communication strategies to demystify mental health, including the translation of information in all relevant language groups. The translated information needs to take into account the different understandings of mental health in different cultures.

Better engagement with elders, community and spiritual leaders to gain their respect and trust and to receive their input regarding how people in their communities view mental health and mental illness was also highlighted.

Stakeholder respondents also reiterated the need for early intervention and prevention programs that target newly arrived young refugees, who are at risk of

developing mental health and behavioural problems, and may be at risk of coming into contact with the juvenile justice system.

(e) Can you provide best practice examples of how to treat sustained mental health issues for African Australians?

(i) Community

Several focus groups highlighted the need to recognise the resilience of many refugees, even after serious trauma.

A repeated success factor in relation to responding effectively to mental health issues was ensuring that the approaches were ‘family inclusive’. An example was provided where three communities (Liberian, Sudanese and Somali) were supported to develop and implement their own ideas about how best to meet the needs of their families and their communities.

The project was considered to be highly successful in terms of community building, with each group using the opportunity to strengthen and expand their own network:

“The real success was that it involved community members themselves and it didn’t ignore the fact that our communities are really suffering.”

The **Families in Cultural Transition** was also cited by community respondents as a good practice example of responding in sustained ways to mental health issues. The (FICT) program is a 10 week series of workshops designed to help newly arrived refugees learn about Australia and settle successfully in their new country.

As well as finding out about Australian culture and systems, participants talk about how their torture and trauma experiences may affect them and their families. They also learn about organisations that can help.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders referred to the following projects as examples of responding in a sustained way to the mental health needs of African Australian communities:

Stepping Out of the Shadows: Promoting Acceptance and Inclusion in Multicultural Communities in QLD – this project between Multicultural Mental Health Australia and Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities – is aimed at reducing stigma that exists around mental illness and increasing mental health awareness in multicultural communities in Queensland. There are currently 12 communities that have Bicultural Mental Health Promoters who are working directly with them to raise awareness of stigma around mental illness, and running free group education programs with interactive activities in a range of community languages.

Please see: www.adec.org.au/Steppingoutoftheshadows.htm

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) – provides a range of counselling and other services for refugee survivors of torture and trauma, including the refugee mental health clinics at Brunswick and Dandenong.

Please see: www.foundationhouse.org.au

Complex Case Support (DIAC) – supports refugee and humanitarian entrants where pre-migration experiences, severe physical and mental health conditions, or crisis events after arrival in Australia present significant barriers to successful settlement. The intention of the program is to provide flexible, tailored, local responses to meet the individual needs of people who have particularly high levels of need which cannot be met through existing settlement services. A panel of more than 30 organisations has been set up to deliver CCS services, and referrals must be made through DIAC who will allocate cases to panel providers depending on the identified need.

Please see: www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/government-programs/settlement-programs/ccs.htm

(iii) *Public submissions*

Suggestions for improving torture, trauma and rehabilitation services given in the submissions include:

- research and develop best practice methods for providing culturally appropriate and effective trauma counselling for African humanitarian entrants
- extend access to counselling services for new arrivals to a minimum of two years
- establish an orientation program where refugees are introduced to service providers
- partner counselling services with other key settlement service providers, such as education and general health, to provide a more coordinated and holistic service
- develop partnerships between schools and torture and trauma counselling services
- make STARTTS more face-to-face and utilise interpreters
- make sure interpreters are completely neutral; do not use relatives or friends
- train medical practitioners, allied health workers and pharmacists in using STARTTS
- inform all new arrivals about doctor confidentiality, and use translated brochures and DVDs to promote understanding about doctor confidentiality, privacy information, informed consent and how to make treatment decisions.

7.4 Access to health services

(a) What are examples of successful ways to explain the Australian health care system to newly-arrived Africans?

(i) *Community*

Community respondents made reference to a range of ways in which information related to the health care system was successfully provided to newly arrived African Australians. Broadly these included:

- support and strengthen the ability of individuals, families and refugee communities to improve their health and wellbeing outcomes
- information sessions provided in the language of the audience
- participation and involvement from communities themselves to help them better adjust to their new lives
- fostering connections with cultural, social and religious groups of their own ethnic background
- using a variety of methods of support that extend beyond just counselling models
- training and utilisation of bicultural community trainers
- ensuring the availability of female carers within the antenatal period
- gender specific interpreters in the delivery of health services
- bridging courses for overseas trained and qualified health professionals.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholder respondents made reference to a number of strategies and programs aimed at improving awareness amongst African Australians of the health care system.

Examples included:

- Refugee Health Nurse Program
- The Refugee School Health Project
- Refugee Maternity at Mater Mothers' Hospital.

Most stakeholder respondents also stressed the importance of building capacity and expertise of mainstream and specialist services and health care practitioners in refugee health care.

Since July 2007, the **Refugee Youth Active and Connected with Everyone (RYACE) program** has been building individual and community resilience for refugee youth from Melbourne's northern and western suburbs. Spectrum

Migrant Resource Centre runs the program's activities, which include: basketball, art classes, water safety training, healthy eating talks, one-on-one counselling.

Please see: www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/Refugee-Youth-Active-and-Connected-with-Everyone-RYACE.html

(iii) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to African Australians access to health services were addressed by close to half (43%) of the submissions.

Main areas of concern for African Australians in regard to accessing health services in Australia highlighted in the submissions include:

- language difficulties and lack of available interpreters
- lack of interpreting services available (s69)
- restricted access to Medicare and private health insurance due to citizenship status and low income
- lack of timely access to specialist services when needed due to lack of private health cover and low income
- females are less likely to access health services due to cultural principles
- the cultural stigma associated with accessing mental health services exacerbate problems
- some African Australians do not understand the importance of maintaining a regular GP which results in incomplete medical histories and poor continuity of care.

(b) Even though African Australians may know how to access certain health services, they do not always utilise all the services that they are offered and entitled to. What can be done to change this?

(i) *Community*

Most community respondents challenged the notion that cultural barriers were greater than lack of awareness of services; with most insisting that the biggest barrier to accessing services for most of the community is a lack of information.

Community participants did say that the lack of cultural appropriateness of a service would deter them from utilising or accessing that service.

Community respondents attending an ethno specific session made reference to what they perceived to be an important element in traditional Oromo thinking:

“There is a belief that a person who has mental health issues is believed to possess an ayana, which is a special divine agent that can descend upon people, but also means a

person's character and personality. In the traditional Oromo society, the Kallu is the religious leader who, can investigate the causes of the disorder and advise what to do.”

Other barriers identified included factionalism in communities which sometimes meant that interpreters from within those communities would not be called to provide interpreter services. Religious differences might also impact on patterns of service utilization.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders also identified cultural issues as having a significant impact on utilisation of particular health services amongst African Australians:

“When Africans migrate to live in Australia they bring with them their understanding of health, their customs and beliefs. These may be in direct conflict with the approaches taken by western health providers.”
(Stakeholder, SA)

Several stakeholders suggested that a significant proportion of African Australian women only access care when their condition becomes acute, with a generally low participation rate in preventative health care measures.

Culturally appropriate education materials empowering healthy lifestyles, encouraging preventive care and explaining the intricacies of health system utilisation would be of benefit.

Providing refugees with a package of information in their own language through settlement support services on arrival in Australia could address this need. This might be a very efficient and effective way of conveying information which otherwise may not be automatically provided by GPs or other primary health care providers who may not have the resources available at the time of consultation.

(iii) Public submissions

Some examples of services that are addressing the general and mental health needs of African Australians include:

- The Drug and Alcohol Office in WA is offering interpreting services to callers to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service
- The Victorian Refugee Health Network Model
- The Logan Refugee Clinic in Queensland
- Transcultural Mental Health NSW provides cultural sensitivity and awareness training for medical workers
- Migrant Health Clinics
- Princess Margaret Children’s Hospital
- Community based refugee health nurses

- The Western Australia Migrant Health Unit
- The Multicultural Services Centre in North Perth has established a community based specialised mental health service
- The North Metropolitan Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service cater to the specific needs of CALD families
- The South Metropolitan Area Health Service (Mental Health)
- ASeTTS in WA provides specialist services to promote wellbeing of torture and trauma survivors
- The WA Perinatal Mental Health Unit at King Edward Hospital consulted with refugee women and produced resources in Iraqi, Sudanese and Ethiopian languages explaining mental health issues associated with the perinatal period.

(c) How can interpreting and translation services be improved to provide better access and assistance to African Australians in the health sector?

(i) Community

Community respondents agreed that limited English language proficiency was a common barrier to accessing health information and services:

“People in our communities worry that they may not properly understand what the doctor tells them, or that they can’t adequately explain the nature of their health complaint, and so anxiety wins out, and they end up not going to see a health care professional at all.”

(Community leader, Qld)

As such, the use of health interpreters as required was identified as critical to ensuring safe and effective health care and treatment.

A number of gaps in relation to interpreting and translating services were identified, these included:

- hospital staff that do not access TIS interpreters for people with language difficulties
- family members (including children) are still being used as interpreters by health workers
- limited availability of interpreters, particularly in some of the more recent African languages
- lack of adequate funding for interpreters
- confidentiality is sometimes breached.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholder consultations provided anecdotal information on the inconsistent use by the broader health system of professional interpreter and translating services for people who cannot speak English, including refugees.

In addition, stakeholders reported difficulties in accessing qualified interpreters onsite during consultations with newly-arrived African Australians.

Stakeholders highlighted a number of good practice examples. These included:

The Doctors Priority Line

The Doctors Priority Line is a free telephone interpreting service which helps medical practitioners to communicate with their non-English speaking patients.

Please see: www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/free-services.htm

Free interpreting services to pharmacies

Under this federal government initiative, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship provides free telephone interpreting to pharmacies through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) to help them communicate with culturally and linguistically diverse Australians about PBS medications.

Please see: www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/free-services.htm

7.5 Culture and health

(a) What are some important issues/facts about being from African backgrounds that would be helpful for Australian health service providers to know?

(i) *Community*

Community respondents suggested that the following issues/facts about the backgrounds of African Australians would be helpful in terms of improving cultural responsiveness by health providers:

- supernatural/spiritual healing and natural remedies are highly valued
- strong belief in the ancestral spirit and animal spirits (especially birds)
- rituals are performed regularly
- during health crisis oracles are sought out to identify the offended spirit and determine the proper remedy
- belief in the 'evil eye', malevolent person possessing supernatural powers

- sickness or disease are often explained by superstition: individuals may be unwilling to share personal information (such as how many children they have) due to superstitious belief that the information might be used by the 'evil eye' to cause harm
- they may object to a blood transfusion because Sudanese think blood is life and someone not have the authority to transfer life to another person
- chronic diseases are considered punishment from either god or the ancestor whose spirit is not satisfied with the family
- mental health problems are attributed to witchcraft from within the extended family
- medical treatment is resorted to when spiritual healing does not bring the desired outcome
- women are not normally examined by a male practitioner
- people tend to seek treatment only when they are very sick (the concept of appointment to be seen by a doctor is 'strange')
- when a patient is admitted to the hospital, it is a social obligation for friends and family members to visit
- birth control may be seen as contrary to the cultural value of bearing children
- people expect a fast cure and may stop treatment if there is no quick benefit
- the shame in the girl's family is shared by all family members.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholder respondents reiterated the view that there is a lack of awareness of the health needs and cultural issues of African Australians by most health agencies and health practitioners.

Many of the above issues were also cited by stakeholders. Some further additional issues highlighted the following:

Many Africans incorporate traditional practices with western medicine:

"This means that they will do both things, that is they will find the traditional healer if there is one in the community and then they will go to the western GP as well. The problem will be ensuring that the two approaches are aligned."

They will consult the spirits of ancestors while taking antibiotics, they will take traditional medicines along with conventional medicines, they will practice letting blood while taking malaria treatment. This was a very important fact for health care providers to know.

In addition, more time is required by GPs in negotiating the management of health issues due to differences in beliefs about the causes and treatment of illness, and due to the need to educate refugees in how to use the health system (for example, where to seek emergency assistance should their illness deteriorate, how to call an

ambulance, how to book follow-up appointments of adequate consultation duration, how to request the use of an interpreter at a consultation, and how to fill original and repeat prescriptions from pharmacies).

Several stakeholders cautioned about the danger of health care providers assuming that once they had attended a cultural information session on a particular ethnic group, that they would no longer need to update their knowledge of the community.

Finally, the issue of collaborative and integrated health responses was reiterated. Collaborative partnerships in developing services and programs which are culturally responsive to African Australians are important, particularly for those who are newly arrived were highlighted.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to culture and health were addressed by a third (35%) of the submissions.

The submissions revealed a number of important issues that Australian health service providers should consider when treating people from African backgrounds, including:

- limited access to basic vaccinations in Africa, such as childhood vaccinations
- unhealthy food preference, for example, sweetened drinks and over use of oil
- the limited (quantity, quality and range) traditional diet may not contain all nutritional needs but are initially preferred to the wide range of food available in Australia
- susceptibility to nutrient deficiencies and outcomes for example, rickets
- sickle cell is more common in people from African backgrounds
- psychological effects of trauma
- many African Australians are unfamiliar with our health care structure, such as the range of services available, where and how to access different services, and the terminology used
- some African Australians are more likely to seek assistance from leaders from their own community than from strangers, so community leaders should be kept informed of important health updates, particularly relating to mental health services
- topics relating to mental and sexual health are considered taboo by many African cultures
- some females may have undergone 'female genital mutilation' prior to arriving in Australia which will impact their health care requirements.

(b) What training and support should be put in place to assist health professionals to provide culturally-appropriate services to African Australians?

(i) Community

Clearly, differences in culture, value systems, education, backgrounds, arrival in Australia – whether as migrants or refugees, and their settlement experience all impact on how many African Australians might approach health care providers and how they make decisions regarding their health care.

Community respondents suggested a number of training and support programs that could be put in place to better inform health care providers of these cultural issues and their impact. However, a primary prerequisite according to most community respondents was the need to ensure community participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of effective, responsive and appropriate health care.

Other approaches identified included:

- the implementation of appropriate cultural competency ‘training’
- establishing a culturally diverse workforce by employing bilingual staff or staff who have an understanding of other cultures
- developing partnerships with multicultural and ethno-specific agencies
- access to appropriate language services
- building relationships based on mutual trust

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders generally agreed that further work is needed to build the capacity of mainstream services to appropriately manage health issues relating to newly-arrived African Australians, particularly refugees. This includes upskilling of GPs, refugee health nurses and other nursing and allied health staff to support delivery of specialist services for refugees.

A range of training programs and providers can be located. Following are just a few that were highlighted during the consultations:

Foundation House has a series of training modules for health and community services for working with refugees. This includes quarterly training days for refugee/community health nurses.

Please see: www.survivorsvic.org.au/home/index.htm

Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health – provides training for A range of service providers, in particular community health and disability services on cultural competence and working with interpreters.

Please see: www.ceh.org.au

Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit – provides training and secondary consultation for mental health services.

Please see: www.vtpu.org.au

(c) What can governments, NGOs, communities and health services change to improve the interaction between an African Australian and the health care system?

(i) Community

Community participants who responded to this question identified the following actions that could improve the interaction between African Australians and the health care system:

- primary health care systems should focus on wellness and person-centred care, and should address inequalities in primary health care access
- involving members of African Australian communities in advisory committees/health boards and so on as equal project partners.

Several community respondents warned of the common example whereby mainstream services engaged African Australians in the project until they received funding:

“In collaboration with the community develop program with clear goals, started from the community by the community but after they got the funding it became an agency project, they employ non-African worker. They still collect clients to take photos and attract funds for their agencies.”

(Participant, community focus group, NSW)

The value of various government funded place-based partnership initiatives which bring together multiple sectors and provide a vehicle for tackling health inequalities by addressing the broader determinants of health in a deliberate and coordinated way was identified by a number of respondents.

Several community respondents made reference to health networks that had been established to ensure the delivery of more holistic health care.

One example cited was the **Victorian Refugee Health Network** which provides a forum for health services and practitioners to work collaboratively to address the needs of newly arrived migrants and refugees. The Network brings together a wide range of representatives from the health, settlement and community sectors who actively participate in the projects and initiatives of the Network. This work builds on the many activities and programs around the state, past and current, to support refugee health and wellbeing.

Please see: www.refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/Home/Home.htm

The **Refugees and Primary Health (RaPH) project** is a partnership between key refugee health services, primary and tertiary care providers, divisions of general practice, settlement support services and refugee communities. It is funded by Queensland Health through Connecting Health in Communities (CHIC). The project is managed by the Mater UQ Centre for Primary Health Care Innovation and works closely with the Refugee Health Queensland Service. The project is focused on developing information and referral pathways to support primary health care professionals working with refugee communities and has compiled a list of key partners and web resources. Refugee communities as partners include: Queensland African Communities Council (QACC), Queensland Sudanese Community Council.

Please see: www.materonline.org.au/Home/Services/Refugee-health/Refugee-and-Primary-Health-Project.aspx

An **Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) special interest group Nurses for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NRAS)** has been established in Victoria and held their first meeting in late 2007. This group seeks to provide a forum for nurses who are interested in the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, including those who may work with them or volunteer to assist them. It is beneficial for nurses who work in a variety of clinical settings and who may have intermittent contact with refugees and asylum seekers, for example, schools, emergency departments, local councils, and community health centres as well as general health settings.

Please see: www.anfvic.asn.au/sigs/topics/9064.html

Occupational Opportunities for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (OOFRAS) is a network of occupational therapists working together to develop a field of practice that responds to the occupational needs of refugees and asylum seekers. It is a non-profit, volunteer-run organisation coordinated and supported by occupational therapists for occupational therapists. It is based in Brisbane, but has members from around Australia and is linked with networks internationally.

Local committees, working groups and networks on refugee health have been established in a number of areas of high refugee settlement, in metropolitan and rural areas. Some groups meet regularly and others on an as-needs basis. A number of areas have also conducted refugee health forums.

Please see: www.oofras.com/index.php?page=blog&blog_section=list_posts&blog_category_id=32

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders identified a number of gaps that would need to be addressed in order to improve the health outcomes overall for African Australians. These included:

- lack of integration and communication between settlement services and health services in some areas
- identified need to build these relationships to develop a better understanding of roles and responsibilities and to work together to build the health literacy of new arrival refugees
- identifying and training GPs to work with refugees in newer settlement areas.

Other suggestions related to the implementation of better support and referral pathways:

- build capacity of the hospital based service to respond in a culturally competent manner (i.e. workforce development during orientation and training on how to access interpreters)
- frameworks and measures to implement cultural competence should be aimed at providing health environments focused on the cultural safety of the client
- government should ensure that newly arrived refugee women receive comprehensive health assessments, thereby ensuring preventive health measures (such as immunisations) are undertaken, and that referrals are made to appropriate services to prevent the progression of chronic conditions
- without effective coordination and referral between service providers and across service silos, it is easy for gaps to arise where the needs of some individuals are not being met.

(iii) Public submissions

Suggestions made in the submissions for Governments, NGOs, communities and health services to improve the interaction between an African Australian and the health care system include:

- ensure health professionals use accredited health interpreters when necessary
- make sure African Australians are adequately informed of their rights and understand the health system
- providing health professions with specialised training and support to assist them in providing more culturally appropriate services to African Australians
- employ more bilingual disability workers.

7.6 Discrimination and health

(a) Can you provide examples of how African Australians are treated differently in the health sector?

(i) Community

There were many examples provided by community respondents of what was perceived to be differential treatment by the health sector. Many of the experiences cited relate particularly to maternity issues and pre and post natal care and support.

One of the most common issues raised was the failure of the health care provider to provide accredited interpreter services. This can give rise to a range of complexities and miscommunication about procedures that are actually taking place. Examples ranged from having the wrong dental work happen to leaving a doctor's appointment with severe anxiety about the status of their health or that of their children.

Some respondents also explained how despite some English fluency, direct translations of particular words or health concepts may be completely at variance with the cultural background of the patient or client:

“In the Somali language the word for pain is the same as the word used for illness.”

There were many examples given where children were inappropriately used as interpreters in a range of health care settings.

Other examples cited included situations where interpreters had been arranged without any discussion or consent of the client, resulting in either the wrong dialect or feelings of having their privacy breached.

Community respondents also shared numerous anecdotal experiences relating to discriminatory treatment by some health care providers. Examples shared included:

- Incongruent beliefs and expectations between the patient and health professional leading to misunderstandings and confusion
- derogatory statements made about the number of children that the client had given birth to
- assumptions that all African women were circumcised
- several respondents from a range of different states spoke generally of not having input into major health decisions, including not being asked or listened to about what their wishes are regarding family planning
- some of the women's focus groups raised issues related to FGM and referred to examples of women who are 'infibulated' reportedly being made to feel ashamed during various health related procedures
- some community respondents discussed experiences, particularly during pre natal care, where medical professionals did not consult them about their birthing plans, even when an interpreter had been made available

- some respondents reflected on experiences of being in hospital and being made to feel embarrassed about members of the community attending in large numbers with offers of food and support
- examples of challenging reactions by hospital staff and other medical practitioners to women bringing midwives or traditional birth attendants with them during birth were also occasionally shared during the women's focus group discussions:

“The doula came with [her] in the hospital as in my country it is not the men who come in, but all of the extended network of women. So here, we think this might be alright but sometimes this is not allowed.”

- the lack of multilingual information relating to major health issues was also cited by several community respondents.

Overall, community respondents stated that indications of friendliness and respect on the part of the health practitioner or provider went a long way to ensuring better rapport and communication with African Australians.

(ii) Stakeholders

While stakeholders said that some African Australians were receiving differential treatment in a variety of health care settings for some this did not necessarily amount to intentional discrimination and racism, but may be the result of cultural assumptions, stereotyping or miscommunication on the part of the health provider/practitioner:

“So much of the health needs that are emerging with the new communities are just not that well known or familiar to so many of the health practitioners out there, particularly the GPs and other health specialists. This area has traditionally always had a very homogenous Anglo Saxon community and so the issues presenting are completely new. It's more likely to be cultural ignorance than discrimination.”

Several stakeholders were able to provide good practice examples of improved accessibility and inclusion, these include:

- **The Refugee Health Assessment Template** and other resources, developed under the auspices of General Practice Victoria and endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- **The Launceston Project** is an example of a project that has been designed with attention to the interaction of culture and trauma, and the long-term cycles of settlement for refugees.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to discrimination and health were addressed by around a tenth (13%) of the submissions.

Some examples of discrimination provided in the submissions include:

- some African Australians enduring unacceptably long waiting lists to see specialists
- the use of African Australian patients with unusual diseases as teaching examples in hospitals without being informed or asked for their consent
- medical services not providing adequate access to interpreters
- some medical and health service providers not treating African Australians as individuals.

(b) What is the impact of this discrimination?

(i) Community

Many examples were provided by community respondents clearly demonstrating how health outcomes deteriorate when health professionals do not provide care that is culturally appropriate or the patient is not properly engaged and consulted. Other impacts included:

- loss of trust leading to avoidance in the future even when health needs might be quite dire
- safety is compromised through the failure to understand cultural issues, including things like previous experiences of trauma, including sexual assault
- feelings of being treated with disrespect and disdain
- medical mismanagement may lead to negative health outcomes
- feelings of alienation from the broader Australian society.

The range and number of cases cited during the consultations highlights perceived inadequacies in the health system, despite in some instances, the existence of comprehensive multicultural and access and equity policies.

For example, despite numerous efforts to improve access to interpreter services, people repeatedly said that many health services, including large health institutions, continue to neglect to use them during medical consultations and medical procedures.

(ii) Stakeholders

Overall, most stakeholders emphasised the need for cultural awareness training, and also identified structural and organisational blocks that need to be addressed, including hospital policies such as visiting rules etc.

7.7 The effect of religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability

(a) Are the experiences of African Australians, in regard to health, different based on religion, age, gender, sexuality or disability?

While new arrivals can experience the same challenges as other Australians in accessing health care services, including the limited availability of and access to health professionals, community respondents highlighted how this is compounded by the physical and psychological health issues that may be particular to the experiences of being a refugee or from the experiences of migration itself. These issues were seen to have significant and deleterious effects on women, young people and people with disabilities generally.

For women, social isolation was identified by community respondents as being one of the greatest challenges facing them, particularly those who may be here without extended family or come from smaller minority African communities.

Social isolation of the women had reportedly impacted negatively on things such as maternal wellbeing, parenting capacity and the availability of avenues for generating social networks. This also then impacted on children's wellbeing and development.

Muslim women also identified as having very specific and all too frequently negative or problematic experiences when interfacing with the health system at large.

It is important to highlight, however, that many within the diverse Muslim African communities also spoke of their religion and faith as a source of personal strength.

Many women who have undergone FGM in their countries of origin highlighted different experiences with health professionals:

"Health care providers are in positions of power and should not be make judgments about women who have undergone this procedure. There are many reasons for why women in our communities have undergone these things, including things like social acceptance and marriageability, so these things need to be understood"

It is important to note that several community respondents also highlighted a number of excellent examples of culturally responsive and respectful programs and practices in a number of different states and territories:

"While highly successful programs relating to support for women from communities where female circumcision and FGM are practiced, some newly-arrived women are not aware of their existence..."

(i) Public submissions

Information relating to the effects of religion, age, sexuality and disability in reference to African Australian's health issues were addressed by one fifth (20%) of the submissions.

Submissions cited that **disability services** often do not meet needs of African Australians living with disabilities. Reasons for this include:

- refugees with a disability are usually unaware that support services are available to them
- refugees with a disability often will not admit they are disabled because they fear they will be returned to their country of origin
- service providers wrongly assume that strong community support structures mean individuals don't require additional service
- disability funding structures limit the providers' ability to offer services to emerging communities
- **Sexuality** is a difficult issue to address within African communities as homosexuality is a taboo topic, and practising homosexuality is a criminal offence in some African countries.
- **Gender issues** impact some females' ability to access health services, including:
 - Females usually find it culturally inappropriate to be serviced by a male practitioner
 - Many health topics are considered taboo for females
 - Females may not receive money or permission from their husbands or other male relatives to access particular health services
 - Females are less likely than males to have received formal educational experiences prior to settlement, exacerbating language difficulties and resulting in them requiring more assistance in understanding information about health issues and services
 - Women with children who do not have suitable childcare options available may not seek medical assistance because they do not wish their children to witness the appointments.

7.8 Government and health

(a) What actions can governments take (or what targets can government set) to ensure African Australians are more healthy, can better overcome any physical or mental health issues from their refugee or migration experience, and can thrive upon arrival in Australia:

A number of overarching features were identified through this project as required in building an effective and sustainable model of care for refugee populations. These include:

- refugee health service models are integrated within the broader health system
- services are easily accessible to key settlement areas

- local context drives the application of regional service provision
- services are affordable or free of charge for refugee families
- adequate levels of administrative support are available to coordinate service delivery
- availability of qualified interpreters
- primary care involvement (including GPs and refugee health nurses) is essential
- clear pathways between specialist and primary care services are established
- clearly documented communication protocols between providers facilitate streamlined transition through the care continuum for refugees
- care coordination for refugees with more complex health issues
- service provision minimises duplication and number of follow up appointments
- consistency of screening/assessment processes
- service models facilitate simultaneous care to both adults and children (i.e. family centred)
- clear pathways facilitating transition to culturally competent mainstream services are developed (for example, mental health and maternity care).

(i) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to government and the health of African Australians were addressed by one fifth (19%) of the submissions.

A number of recommendations are provided in the submissions for the government to ensure African Australians are more healthy, can better overcome any physical or mental health issues from their refugee or migration experience, and can thrive upon arrival in Australia. They include:

- conduct standardised health and immunisation assessments on arrival
- employ more tropical disease specialists (familiar with diseases from Africa)
- conduct more HIV awareness programs
- provide cultural competency training for medical personnel, including training that encourages the appropriate use of interpreters (not family or friends and being gender sensitive)
- ensure cultural competency training on health issues for Africans generally, and refugees specifically, take into account the need to treat each patient as an individual
- provide community leaders with training on how to access the health system so they may better advise and assist their local communities

- conduct community education sessions on the health system and relevant issues, including addressing the stigma associated with mental health and the need for women to address women's health concerns
- form partnerships with schools to provide better access to torture and trauma counselling for young people
- inform health professionals about the types of health problems faced by refugees that they may need to screen for
- advise new African Australians about nutrition
- provide translated information on the dangers associated with alcohol and drugs
- ensure pharmacies have a system in place to confirm that medication labels and instructions are understood (including the use of interpreters and translated information when needed)
- encourage local communities to increase their sense of wellbeing by actively celebrating their cultures and networking with other local communities to share cross-cultural celebrations that foster mutual respect and support
- ensure all new arrivals are advised of medical tests required for entry into Australia.

8 Housing

8.1 Overview

Housing is an important part of the settlement process for the newly arrived migrants and refugees. Everyone has the human right to a secure place to live, which is fundamental to living in dignity, to physical and mental health, and to overall quality of life.

The human right to housing is explicitly set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other widely adhered to international human rights treaties and Declarations.

Housing rights include:

- legal security of tenure
- availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure
- affordability
- accessibility
- habitability
- location
- cultural adequacy.⁹

While the impacts of housing shortages and affordability affect all prospective home owners and renters, the challenges are magnified for members of new migrants and refugee communities, particularly those who are newly arrived.

New migrants and refugee communities are among the most disadvantaged when it comes to accessing safe and affordable accommodation to meet their basic needs. The difficulties confronted by newly-arrived African Australians are further compounded by barriers in the form of racial and religious discrimination, exploitation and intimidation when it occurs.

Issues related to housing and housing affordability featured repeatedly in the community consultations, particularly the shortage of suitable dwellings for larger households such as African Australian families with four or more children.

⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Housing, homelessness and human rights*. At www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/housing/index.html#housing (viewed 19 January 2009).

8.2 What is the experience of African Australians, especially new arrivals, in regard to housing assistance and support?

(i) Community

In seeking responses to the above question, it is important to note that eligibility for settlement support services varies depending on the categories of entry for newly-arrived African Australians. For example, different refugee categories are eligible for different levels of settlement services, especially on arrival accommodation and housing assistance.

A range of agencies offer various levels of brokerage to assist clients to access the private rental market. Generally, service providers utilise a range of solutions to deliver housing outcomes, including head-leasing, community based housing and shared housing arrangements.

Broadly, the range of housing assistance and support that might be provided includes:

- IHSS Accommodation Services
- SGP programs (through Migrant Resource Centres and other settlement support services)
- independent, not for profit organisations
- state and territory governments – for example, housing assistance/Departments of Housing public housing systems
- tenancy advisory services
- other relevant agencies.

Community respondents said the services that offered the following assistance and support were of most benefit:

- locating an actual place to rent that was affordable and adequate to their needs
- attended appointments with them to inspect properties – this included providing assistance with transport to help get to the appointments
- assistance with filling out application forms and entry condition reports
- assistance with nominating referees
- provided culturally appropriate and relevant information (including through the use of an interpreter) in relation to tenancy agreements, including rights and responsibilities of all parties
- assistance with bond and rent in advance through state and federal government funds
- assistance with emergency relief.

The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) program plays a vital role as an initial on-arrival support program, assisting newly-arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants to settle in Australia. Under the IHSS, refugees accepted under the Commonwealth Humanitarian Program are eligible to receive intensive settlement assistance for the first six months after arrival.

The IHSS *Accommodation Services* helps entrants to find appropriate and affordable accommodation and provides them with basic household goods to start establishing their own household in Australia. In summary, *Accommodation Services* provide:

- fully-subsidised rent and utilities for the first four weeks after arrival
- suitable and affordable accommodation
- a package of basic household goods
- tenancy training.

Community respondents highlighted the following key issues in relation to housing assistance:

- The current six months of accommodation support is too short and most newly arrived African Australians are not able to locate affordable accommodation on their own at the end of that time period. Once exited from IHSS, refugee and humanitarian entrants are at a serious disadvantage when competing for housing in the private rental market. As such, most community respondents suggested that the period be extended to 12 months.
- Many humanitarian clients have never had to rent or look for housing before, let alone in an Australian context:

“It’s just a complete shock when you are out on your own trying to find somewhere for you and your family to rent. We are just not ready to do this after just six months, when we are also trying to learn the language, put our children into schools, try to find work.”

(Community Respondent, WA)

- During the period of accommodation support, effective tenancy training and support is essential to ensure later success in the housing market. Structured tenancy training sometimes falls short of providing entrants with the knowledge and skills to meet their everyday tenancy obligations, and navigate the private rental market with minimum assistance.
- Many workers have limited knowledge of tenancy and tenancy laws, and often have learned from experience. This can at times fall short in meeting the information needs of newly arrived families and communities. It is important that training be developed specifically for those working with humanitarian clients in the area of tenancy law, dealing with property managers and real estate agents, the role and availability of public housing and the complexity of the housing market.

- Some services provide emergency financial relief which enables case workers to dispense one-off \$80 grants to assist refugees, often for immediate housing needs such as rental payments. Emergency Housing Funds which are designed to provide clients in crisis with a grant or a loan to address needs such as paying a bond or other housing expenses can be extremely helpful.
- When support workers attend appointments with real estate agents and help with the application they are more successful in locating rental properties, and less likely to experience discrimination.
- Although there are some housing initiatives which are funded under the Settlement Grants Program (SGP), the program's priority areas are community orientation and development. Some community respondents suggested that there be more accommodation support programs established and funded under the Settlement Grants Program.
- Many public housing high rise estate tenants have little or no contact with agencies, community groups and service providers – due to limited English skills, limited access to information, limited awareness of the way things are done or through culturally different ways of doing things.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders highlighted a number of housing assistance and support programs aimed at enhancing housing options and pathways for African Australians. However, almost all stakeholders reiterated the point that while these services are valuable, they are not adequate or able to meet the housing needs of African Australian communities in the midst of the growing crisis in the housing market place where there is a severe shortage of affordable housing.

The following assistance and support programs were identified by stakeholders as being of benefit to newly-arrived African Australians:

- intensive case management support through the IHSS program
- developing strong relationships with local real estate agents.

Stakeholders expressed the view that there were a number of gaps that needed to be addressed if such support and assistance was to be maximised:

- ongoing information and practical education, rather than just the six month intensive support up front, would better equip refugees with the necessary knowledge and skills to prosper in the private rental market
- transport and attendance at property inspections greatly improves the chances of the client getting access to the rental property, and yet these are often not funded as part of the support provided, particularly through the SGP.

Stakeholders also identified that the task of finding accommodation for new arrivals is becoming increasingly difficult in many states and territories, occupying a great

proportion of providers' time, with no substantial increase in funding to sustain the level of intense support and assistance.

Case management formed a significant proportion of the support provided to newly-arrived African Australians, particularly those who were refugee and humanitarian entrants. Case work support includes assisting clients to complete applications for both public and private housing, bond loans and other financial assistance. Specifically, caseworkers provide letters of support, assist with obtaining the required documentation, directly advocate for the client and explain tenancy rights and obligations to their clients.

Caseworkers also assist refugees to search for private rental properties, accompany them at inspections and provide transport for those clients who are unable to drive or use a street directory, even though such transport assistance is unfunded.

Accommodation support through **SGP programs** provide education and information sessions on housing, renting, house maintenance and assistance with application forms. This service is available for the clients who have been in Australia less than five years.

One organisation initiated a support network known as the '**Private Rental Education Volunteer Program**' to assist refugees to access private rental properties.

One organisation engaged effectively with local churches, so that community members could house refugee clients who were particularly desperate to find housing.

SGP funding has been made available for programs aimed at tenancy education. SGP programs organise various workshops on different topics aimed at providing newly-arrived African Australians with skills and information about housing.

Development of these and other skills can make a significant impact in improving the prospects of newly-arrived African Australians finding suitable accommodation in the private rental market, and ensuring that their rights are respected.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to the housing needs of African Australians were addressed by almost half (46%) of the submissions.

The experiences of many African Australians, especially new arrivals, in regard to housing assistance and support, as discussed in the submissions, include:

- lengthy waiting times to secure public housing
- overcrowding leading to family breakdowns and poor health
- homelessness.

(a) What are the most significant concerns for African Australians in relation to housing?

(i) Community

The most significant concerns for African Australians in relation to housing identified by community respondents, including:

- housing availability
- housing affordability
- reliance on private rental
- long delays in obtaining public housing/difficulties in registering on priority list
- problems in finding suitable accommodation for large families
- problems obtaining references and raising bond money as tenants
- repeated rental increases
- overcrowding
- maintenance and reporting repair issues
- problems gaining access to bridging accommodation, such as transit flats.

Community respondents repeatedly highlighted concerns related to discriminatory practices on the part of real estate agents. There were many stories of real estate agents and landlords who did not supply details of vacant properties to newly-arrived immigrants.

Social isolation was another major concern, particularly for single mothers:

“I had to go far away because there was nothing close to the community that I could afford. I am feeling very lonely.”

Isolation is increasing largely because of the cost of housing which forces many newly-arrived communities to move away from infrastructure, support and amenities, which can result in increased stress levels.

Another factor of concern and one that has the potential to impact negatively on the family and the family unit is the extent to which respondents spoke of overcrowding. There were examples where up to 20 people were living in a two-bedroom house just so that they could be together and continue to support one another.

Several stakeholders also stated that overcrowding was the result of high rising costs of renting, and so people simply couldn't afford to rent without the support of the whole family.

Another key issue that was raised related to the overall standard and quality of housing provided to African Australians, particularly new arrivals. There were

numerous examples provided of poor accommodation, no heating or cooling systems, broken windows and so on:

“For a long time I would just fix it myself with my own money because I didn’t know what my rights were. The real estate agent didn’t bother to tell me either.”

People who were newly-arrived spoke of being asked to sign six and 12 month tenancy leases within days of arriving in Australia with no real understanding of what they were signing, of the rental accommodation system or of their rights and responsibilities.

Many respondents were unwilling to assert their rights as tenants or to pursue complaints through formal processes.

(ii) Stakeholders

Issues raised by stakeholders included:

- discrimination against African Australians by real estate agents
- new arrivals lack rental or employment histories
- there is generally little or no awareness of tenancy rights and responsibilities
- refugees and humanitarian entrants immediately placed in cheap (affordable) private accommodation in poor outer-suburban areas lacking appropriate services and transport.

Challenges associated with family sizes and housing availability were identified by stakeholder respondents as an area of continued concern. Stakeholders referred to situations where large families had to be split between two properties just to get some kind of decent housing.

It is clear that the high cost of private rental accommodation is having a severe impact on the successful settlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants. Not only does it cause serious financial hardship, it also negatively impacts on refugees attempting to maintain employment or keeping their children enrolled in the same schools. During the consultations it was not uncommon to hear of families having to move every year due to unaffordable rent increases.

Limited and infrequent public transport can make it difficult or impossible for newly arrived families to access other services, attend doctor’s appointments, or go to language classes or even take the children to school.

Stakeholders did highlight that a number of initiatives had been implemented by various state and territory governments which provide assistance to newly arrived, particularly refugee and humanitarian entrants, with searching, applying and maintaining rental properties.

(iii) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to access to housing were addressed by two fifths (42%) of the submissions.

Some of the major issues affecting African Australians access to housing highlighted in the submissions were:

- lack of available public and private housing in general
- lack of public housing suitable for larger families
- the negative impact of some Council settlement regulations:

“Families would also like to be located in proximity to one another but some councils view concentrations of public housing tenants of particular nationalities as problematic.”

(s55)

- unattainable application requirements imposed by many real-estate agents (including prerequisite rental histories and referees).
- fear of being separated from established community support

“There is a reluctance... to leave the Auburn and Parramatta areas as a strong African community has been established here, there are relevant support services and children are settled in schools in the area. This security and stability is highly valued by members of these communities, many of whom have lived in and fled war torn countries in recent years.”

(s8)

- limited understanding of home loans and how to purchase property
- home loan rates and repayments are beyond many African Australian incomes.

(b) How common is homelessness (including ‘couch-surfing’, rough sleeping and short-term hostel accommodation) amongst African Australians?

(i) *Community*

Community respondents were of the view that homelessness was becoming more of a reality as costs increased and family obligations continued.

Issues such as family breakdowns, overcrowding and unemployment were seen as significant risk factors in terms of homelessness.

Some community respondents indicated that many newly-arrived African Australians may live temporarily with friends or family thereby masking the extent to which ‘homelessness’ really was an issue for them.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Service provider stakeholders agreed that newly-arrived refugees were at particular risk of homelessness particularly given the conditions under which some were living:

“So there is the situation where one family is living with another, and there is now probably up to twenty people in that house which really only fits five people and there is the ongoing financial stress, with the young ones possibly pushing all the wrong buttons, and then you get the family breaking down, and the bread winner moving out, and there you have it – homelessness. Not that hard to achieve really when you are faced with those conditions of living conditions.”

Stakeholders confirmed that an increasing number of young people from African Australian backgrounds were homeless, but disagreed that it was a result of culturally inappropriate interventions.

Stakeholders also raised issues related to domestic violence and homelessness and expressed the view that this was becoming an increasing area of concern:

“The issue of crisis accommodation for women who are newly-arrived refugees experiencing domestic violence is a big barrier because often it’s a short term solution that means they will end up going back to the violent relationship.”

One strategy to mitigate the impact of relationship breakdown is the ‘**Stronger Families Relationships Program**’ implemented by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). This program is designed to support families to avoid relationship breakdown and possible subsequent homelessness.

(c) **Searching for housing can put significant stress on families. What support is required to minimise the stress on African families?**

(i) *Community*

Community respondents agreed that stress and uncertainty in securing and maintaining appropriate and affordable housing can be particularly detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing. Several community respondents also referred to the fact that trying to locate accessible and affordable housing meant that they were forced to move to the outer suburban areas where community supports were not available.

Community respondents also reiterated that long waiting lists for public housing were also a significant contributor to family stress and pressure.

Suggestions for improvements included:

- extra support by providing one month free rent and fully subsidised utility connections and costs in the first month of arrival for humanitarian community individuals or households

- development of Tenancy Support programs so that newly-arrived communities can receive practical assistance to find a suitable property, apply for, accept an offered tenancy, move in and maintain their accommodation
- extend the IHSS program up to 12 months for those families who need additional time to settle in
- public housing and community housing stock to be significantly increased
- enhanced options in relation to transitional housing options with support
- specifically allocated housing or units/campus for humanitarian clients
- greater protection from excessive rent increases
- enhanced options for women and children escaping family violence in terms of short-term emergency and crisis accommodation.

(ii) Stakeholders

Several stakeholders expressed the view that many newly-arrived African Australians, particularly humanitarian entrants, were not adequately informed prior to their arrival of the situation and context they were arriving in, particularly in relation to the reality of the housing shortage.

Many stated that information about housing in Australia needs to be advised repeatedly and throughout all the stages of settlement.

Stakeholder respondents tended to raise similar suggestions for improvement and change as those identified by the community stakeholders above.

One suggestion was the extension of models such as the **Refugee Transitional Housing Program** in the ACT in other states and territories. The TTHP matches refugees with vacant public housing properties listed for redevelopment. The program is a joint initiative of Housing ACT, Companion House and Centacare and assists up to eight families at a time by offering them six-month temporary housing while they seek permanent accommodation.

8.3 Access to housing

(a) What barriers do African Australians face in accessing appropriate and affordable long-term housing?

(i) Community

Community respondents identified a range of barriers facing African migrants in Australia including:

- lack of housing stock/lack of suitable housing options
- racial discrimination – both direct and indirect

- lack of knowledge of the workings of the private rental system
- problems finding suitable accommodation for large families
- problems obtaining references and raising bond money as tenants
- English language skills
- lack of awareness of their rights and responsibilities as tenants
- lack of personal transport/access to public transport
- lack of financial and social capital
- option fees imposed by real estate agents.

Community respondents reflected on the difficulties they had encountered in trying to access housing options, particularly private rentals. Many participants reported that directing newly-arrived people into private rental accommodation created enormous financial difficulties.

Racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, was the most frequently cited barrier identified by community respondents in relation to accessing affordable and appropriate long-term housing. Many community members reported racial discrimination by the landlords and real estate agents against African migrants:

“They will tell you to your face that the property is no longer available and if you wait long enough you will see someone with the right coloured skin be told that they can go and inspect the very same property you wanted to look at.”

There were also many examples provided by community respondents of being denied private rental housing due to their family size.

There is no doubt that the lack of rental and employment history in Australia for newly-arrived African Australians presents a real obstacle to obtaining private rental tenancies. Without referees, it is extremely difficult to secure rental properties.

(ii) Stakeholders

It was reiterated by most stakeholders that access to housing by most newly arrived African Australians has become critical. Similar barriers to access were identified.

- (b) In the private rental market, real estate agents and landlords require evidence of prior rental history in Australia. This poses a major block to newly-arrived African families as they cannot compete with ‘more desirable’ applicants who have such rental history. In what ways can real estate agents and landlords be more inclusive of newly-arrived African families?**

(i) Stakeholders

Several stakeholders referred to a variety of programs in different states where housing support agencies were building relationships with local real estate agents

and successfully replacing the need for rental history with that of a guarantee by the support agency. These 'head leasing' arrangements were reportedly gaining support and being implemented in a number of locations, both formally and informally.

Strategic partnership arrangements between community providers and real estate agencies in some localities have also contributed to reducing discrimination and ultimately alleviating the stress and burden on African Australian families themselves.

Rental guarantee programs such as the one being piloted in New South Wales have the potential to lower the level of risk perceived to be associated with low income and related vulnerabilities, and assist in the maintenance of tenancies in private rental markets.

The New South Wales Tenancy Guarantee Program provides landlords with up to \$1,000 to cover damage or the excess on the insurance policy in the case of severe damage that may occur during the tenancy.

Please see:

www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Forms+Policies+and+Fact+Sheets/Policies/Tenancy+Guarantee+-+RES0011A.htm

Stakeholders also highlighted the recently implemented **Access to free Telephone Interpreter Service for Real Estate Agents and Landlords** managing properties with African Australian tenants.

The Migrant and Refugee Rental Housing Assistance Project undertaken by the Migrant Information Centre in Eastern Melbourne with the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre, began out of the significant difficulties and disadvantages that migrants and refugees have in securing long-term and affordable housing in the private rental sector.

Please see: www.miceastmelb.com.au/housing.htm

(c) What type of education/training could assist real estate agents, landlords and public housing officers to better service African Australians, in particular, new arrivals?

(i) Community

Most community respondents expressed the view that real estate agents would benefit from the following training and information:

- anti discrimination laws
- cultural awareness, including coverage of both pre arrival and resettlement experiences
- mediation with real estate agents/landlords.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders expressed similar views in relation to the type of training that could be provided to real estate agents, landlords and public housing officers to improve service responsiveness.

“Providing real estate agents and landlords with a level of awareness on the experiences of newly-arrived African Australians, particularly refugees experiences will help in breaking down communication barriers.”

Another strategy to address access barriers is for settlement workers to establish productive working relationships with individual real estate agents.

One suburban settlement agency hosted an all day ‘Housing Expo’ which brought together refugees and representatives from banks, real estate agents and DHS. The event was designed to inform the mainstream business and community groups about refugee communities and to encourage interaction between these groups.

8.4 Housing rights and discrimination

(a) Can you provide examples of discrimination experienced by African Australians in the private rental market and/or in the public housing sector?

(i) *Community*

Many community members reported perceived racial discrimination by the landlords and real estate agents against African migrants. This includes:

- discrimination based on race and discriminatory perceptions that they will be poor tenants
- stories abound of real estate agents and landlords who do not supply details of vacant properties to newly-arrived immigrants
- Other instances of discrimination related to the failure of real estate agents to properly attend to repairs and general maintenance. In some instances, examples were given where real estate agents exploited people’s lack of awareness by requesting expensive replacements for things they were generally not responsible for
- Community respondents also gave examples where bond money was not returned due to the fact that they had not filled out the initial conditions report properly or they were told that it was required to fix damages that did not actually exist.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

Like community respondents, stakeholders also cited numerous instances of perceived discrimination both within the private rental market and public housing.

"I had an incident with housing where I spoke to the real estate agent that she said what is the background of your client and when I said African she said that unfortunately because an African person last rented the property they trashed it. Unfortunately the actions of a few become representative of all of us".

(NSW)

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to housing rights and discrimination were addressed by a third (34%) of the submissions.

The submissions highlighted a number of barriers which prevented African Australians from formally pursuing their legal rights in relation to housing. They included:

- lack of knowledge and understanding about housing rights and anti-discrimination laws
- legal proceeding taking too long
- lack of trust in the legal system to protect their rights
- Fear of being evicted.

(b) What is the impact of this discrimination?

Community respondents unanimously agreed that the impact of discrimination in housing was widespread and significant.

- the lack of adequate housing is an obstacle to social inclusion and integration
- increased risk of homelessness
- discrimination can significantly limit access to accommodation
- employment prospects are critical to the ability of refugees to provide housing for themselves
- impact on health and wellbeing
- Impact of family wellbeing.

(c) Many African Australians are not aware of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. What other important housing-related information do African Australians need to know, and how can this information be provided?

(i) Community

Community respondents agreed that there is a need for more appropriate, low level literacy tenancy education about what is involved in tenancy for support workers to provide.

They said tenancy education needs to be given greater emphasis, since it is central to newly arrived communities' integration to Australian culture, establishing security, settling in to employment or education and connecting to other agencies and organisations. The tenancy education program should involve development of specific resources targeted to African Australian communities at different stages of their settlement in Australia.

Respondents said the materials should include what is involved in establishing a tenancy, tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, how to maintain a property, how to exit a tenancy and what to do when things go wrong.

Since many recently arrived humanitarian communities are often experiencing 'information overload', it is important the information is given in a timely and culturally appropriate way.

Good practice examples cited during the consultations included:

The '**Housing Club**' – a support group designed to train refugees to complete rental applications and to use the internet for house hunting.

Tenancy DVD – The Migrant Resource Centre in Fairfield, Sydney, has produced a DVD on how new migrants to Australia can avoid pitfalls when they sign rental agreements with landlords and real estate agents.

The **Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland** had a program called Community Partners in Tenancy which provided training in tenancy law to people, mostly from African communities, who then deliver tenancy workshops.

(ii) *Stakeholders*

A number of programs were cited as good practice:

The Residential Tenancies Authority in Queensland has provided funding to support projects that assist African refugees in Brisbane, Logan, Gold Coast and Townsville. Refugees from a range of African communities, including Sudanese, Burundi, Somali, Rwandan and Congolese communities have benefited from a range of community education strategies undertaken by the Residential Tenancies Authority. These include the translation of information booklets into four African languages and the training of bilingual workers about the laws applying to renting in Queensland. The Authority is committed to implementing targeted information and engagement strategies that support African refugees to understand their rights and responsibilities when renting in Queensland, and prioritises emerging communities for funding within its grant scheme.

Please see: www.rta.qld.gov.au

The Australian Red Cross was funded to run **the Sudanese Sustaining Tenancies, Building Communities program**. It was a short project that aimed to combat potential homelessness of Sudanese refugees in Toowoomba,

Queensland. Knowledge of tenancy was to be improved through a peer leadership network and culturally-appropriate community resources.

Another short-term program, the **Logan TAAS Multilingual Fridge Calendar project** was developed by the Youth and Family Service (Logan City) Inc. The program produced a calendar to put on the fridge. It was translated into languages used in Burma, Congo, Sudan, Tanzania, and Burundi. Tenancy advice and information was also printed on the calendar.

The **Peer Tenancy Learning project** was provided to humanitarian settlement clients across Brisbane by the Multicultural Development Association Inc. This project was focussed on assisting people to understand and complete housing documents and forms such as Tenancy Agreements and Entry Condition Reports.

8.5 The effect of religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability

(a) Are the housing experiences of African Australians different based on religion, age, gender, sexuality or disability? Please provide reasons in your answer.

It is important to recognise the specific housing needs of particular groups, such as single people, young adults and large families.

Refugees who are single mothers were identified as a particularly vulnerable client group, which struggles to secure appropriate accommodation in the first place. Single mothers reportedly find it very difficult to attend private housing inspections due to difficulties in arranging child minding, as well as the distances and costs of travel involved.

In relation to domestic violence, women are particularly vulnerable when seeking access to accommodation, including crisis accommodation.

Access to housing by people with disability is severely compromised by the unwillingness of landlords or real estate agents to meet possible requests for property modification.

Multicultural young people are at increased risk of homelessness due to the refugee and migration experience and the pressures this can have on individuals and families.

(i) Public submissions

Only a small number (5%) of submissions provided information relating to the effects of religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability in reference to housing.

The housing experiences of African Australians can also differ according to an individual's age, gender or disability. For example:

- Females without husbands are less likely to secure rental properties than women with husbands
- Young males without families find it harder to secure appropriate and affordable accommodation
- People with disabilities requiring housing that accommodates their disability have far fewer suitable housing options available, and usually do not have funds to pay for necessary renovations themselves.

8.6 Housing sector support

(a) How can governments and NGOs better regulate real estate agents and landlords who service African Australians?

The regulation of real estate agents in the letting of residential property, including the application of risk-assessment practices in each state and territory occurs, principally, through the statutory licensing of real estate agents.

Statutory licensing requirements impose on those involved in the sale, leasing and collection of rents for residential property a requirement that all industry participants meet, inter alia, minimum educational and operation experience levels, and minimum levels of acceptable professional practice.

In addition to these requirements for the licensing of agents, there are statutory and industry based provisions that regulate the conduct of real estate agents in each state. The Real Estate Institute regulates its membership with a code of professional practice in each state. This provides for ethical dealing between agents and with customers and clients. In particular, with respect to leasing, it places an obligation on members not to discriminate or act unconscionably.

Constitutionally, it is the states and territories that are responsible for residential tenancy legislation. Each jurisdiction has specific legislation concerning the rights and responsibilities of landlords (lessors) and tenants, and of real estate agents and other property managers acting on behalf of landlords.

While each state and territory has established its own sets of legislative standards and processes for regulating landlord and tenant's relations, most of the Acts are compatible and cover a similar range of issues.

In the main, contemporary Australian tenancy laws have tended to focus on 'balancing rights and obligations' as their main purpose, and have aimed at ensuring basic conditions and processes, rather than taking a strong consumer protection role.

In the absence of any legislative right to housing, the decision to accept or reject an application for a tenancy lies exclusively with the landlord or their agent/property manager. Unlike the public sector, there are no bureaucratic requirements to specify eligibility or accountability of process; rather, the power lies wholly with the rental housing provider. Although some level of transparency may be provided through the use of standardised application forms, there is no prescription concerning how the

provider may or should choose between two or more equally 'qualified' applicants. This makes the application process one of the main sites of competing interests.

(i) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to housing sector support were addressed by one fifth (21%) of the submissions. They reflected the responses from stakeholders and community.

(b) A person's housing situation (including the search for housing) can compromise other important needs such as health care, education and employment. How can services be better coordinated to ensure that all vital needs of African Australians are met?

It is important to encourage and recognise the need for specialised, flexible and multi-faceted approaches and models which promote targeted responses for different communities, as well as recognising considerable differences in local and regional issues and needs, with regard to housing.

There is an urgent need for providers to establish networks to share knowledge, improve referral, reduce service duplication and help identify trends, issues and solutions in their respective states/territories.

There remains a need for further research to identify and promote existing successful local and/or regional strategies, and more fundamentally to develop a comprehensive housing strategy to address the specific needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants.

This strategy should include investment for a greater supply of transitional and priority housing, refugee transition hubs and semi-independent units. State and territory governments should play an important role in such developments.

Generally there is a need for government agencies to better resource effective advocacy mechanisms to improve housing and housing services for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Community reference groups should be established to ensure that tenants from refugee backgrounds have the opportunity to contribute actively and meaningfully to discussion on housing issues.

9 Justice

9.1 Overview

Engaging with the legal system emerged as one of the most significant areas of concern for African Australians in the community consultations.

While feedback in relation to the legal system was actively sought throughout all of the consultations, a number of targeted consultation sessions with individuals and organisations specifically involved or engaged in the legal system were also undertaken. These included:

- members of the NSW Police Cultural Diversity Team
- focus group with Justice For Refugees Community Educators – Department of Justice
- Office of the Child Safety Commissioner – conducted two workshops with communities
- NSW Department of Justice and Attorney General – Manager, Diversity Unit and Sudanese Community Liaison Officer.

Other stakeholders involved in the consultations included individuals from:

- community legal centres
- human rights advocacy bodies
- private legal practitioners
- legal aid commissions.

MyriaD Consultants and the community representatives on the Steering Committee also attended a one day forum in March 2009 organised by the African Think Tank Inc (ATT) entitled '*Maximizing the potential of African-Australian Youth: A Community Model to bolster health and legal support*'. A focus group was conducted at the forum with a number of young people in attendance.

9.2 Do you have any comments/ observations/ stories on the experience of African Australians (including African youth) with the legal and justice systems?

(a) Community

Engaging with the legal system emerged as one of the most significant areas of concern for African Australians in the community consultations.

Through the national consultation numerous comments and observations were provided in relation to the experiences of African Australians with the legal and justice system.

Broadly, key issues related to:

- experiences of discrimination and perceptions of being targeted by police – leading to poor relations with police and transit officers
- no early and diversionary programs for those at risk of offending/re offending
- young people experience difficulties in accessing affordable legal assistance leaving them in situations where they may end up self-representing
- driving infringements, particularly issues relating to driving without a licence
- impact and influence of (negative) pre arrival experiences with law enforcement/legal system
- child protection and family related laws – negative experiences particularly relating to the intervention of child protection agencies
- limited awareness of the laws regarding family and domestic violence – particularly within newly-arrived communities
- overall lack of knowledge and awareness about rights, responsibilities and obligations under the law
- lack of familiarity and understanding of procedural matters relating to legal process, including fines, court orders, warrants and so on
- impact of language, cultural and social barriers
- under reporting as victims of crime.

There were also examples provided by community respondents of positive experiences with the legal system and police, particularly following racist attacks on the communities. These will be detailed further on in this section.

(i) Lack of awareness of the law

There was overwhelming agreement amongst most community respondents that levels of awareness amongst African Australians of the Australian legal system and its laws was extremely low. This included both civil and criminal aspects of the legal system.

Examples of situations where community members had inadvertently breached the law due to their lack of awareness or understanding of the Australian legal system were also frequently cited.

Areas of law most commonly cited included criminal law, child protection law, family law, anti discrimination law, tenancy law, domestic violence laws, and consumer law.

Lack of access to information on what constitutes an offence, coupled with limited awareness of avenues for redress, were also identified by various community respondents as sources of considerable confusion and misunderstanding. This lack of knowledge means that African Australians can quickly find themselves involved in a legal issue, leaving them feeling shocked, anxious and confused:

“Many of us did not know that you needed a license to be able to drive. How easy it is here to get into problems with the law.”
(Community respondent, NT)

Participants highlighted that communities have limited access to information about anti discrimination laws and complaints mechanisms and strongly recommended that greater effort be made by anti discrimination bodies to provide culturally appropriate and translated information on these issues.

“Our young people getting into trouble with the law and then we worry about their future. They are here for a better future. We want to follow the law but the law here [is] different and so hard for us to understand. Older people need to know more too but it is the youth who really need to know so that they don’t have problems with police because they don’t know the system here.”
(Community respondent,” (Vic)

Young people in the focus groups agreed that they had very limited awareness of their rights and responsibilities and the role of courts, police and legal services.

Service providers and stakeholders reiterated the importance of building ‘legal literacy’ among African Australian communities. They suggested legal information should be shared with communities on an ongoing basis.

(ii) Experiences with police

Community members made repeated references to what was perceived to be mostly negative experiences of African Australians, particularly youth, with the legal and justice systems. Broadly, they related to:

- perceptions of racial profiling by police
- over policing and saturation of police in public spaces where young African Australians frequent
- extended surveillance by federal police

Anecdotally, many of the young people reported being the deliberate target of police and security guards, and more recently transit officers.

Generally, both first generation and second generation young people regarded their experience with police and transit officers as negative.

“I don’t think there is a day where I haven’t been asked to move on, or police have come over to us and asked us why we are hanging around. We do go around in big groups, but that is normal for us.”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group, NSW)

Community respondents raised repeated concerns in relation to the stereotyping of African Australians by police in a range of jurisdictions.

“I think the police officer on the street still thinks that all Sudanese young people are part of a gang and that that they are all into organised crime and violence. While it’s not every police officer, there is still a culture that exists.”
(Community leader, South Australia)

There is no doubt that the issue of confidence in the police as a mediating factor in the reporting of racist violence is important because it has the potential to offer an opportunity for intervention. Participants said programmes are needed to determine effective methods by which confidence in the police might be improved.

(iii) Racist violence towards African Australians and low levels of reporting of crime

Community respondents provided numerous examples of being subjected to assaults, including racist violence, in various states and territories across Australia.

Experiences of violence and harassment took many forms ranging from serious assaults to the more frequent incidents of racial abuse and threatening behaviour, damage to property, including damage to mosques and churches. Many referred to the stereotyping in the mainstream media and its impact as a ‘trigger’ to acts of discrimination and racism.

Perceptions of safety and security are a significant factor in the successful settlement and psychological wellbeing of all newly-arrived communities. Many community respondents stated feeling increasingly subjected to racist violence and most said they were not confident that this could be properly managed by law enforcement authorities.

Verbal abuse is an aspect of everyday racism for many in the consultations, but on the whole respondents did not consider it worth reporting to the police because they felt that they either cannot or will not deal with it.

NSW community respondents raised numerous concerns in relation to incidents of attacks where African Australians have been verbally abused, had eggs thrown at them and have been pelted with beer bottles from passing cars.

Some community respondents made reference to racist leaflets attacking members of the Sudanese and other African communities that had been distributed in various places in states and territories, for example, around Liverpool and Hoxton Park in NSW and in Melbourne, Victoria. This was becoming an increasing regular issue for Sudanese and other African communities to confront.

Many of the young people consulted, particularly those from Sudanese and Somali backgrounds, stated that they had been subjected to regular assaults, such as being pushed and shoved in public places, including schools, because of their appearance.

Several of the youth focus groups (more specifically in Victoria and NSW) also raised issues related to religious discrimination.

There were numerous examples given where people had been assaulted but did not report the assault to police. There were a number of reasons provided by respondents for their non-reporting, including fear of authorities, fear of being seen to be “making trouble”, but the primary reason given was the lack of confidence that the matter would be properly investigated and followed up:

While there was a general reluctance to report racist incidents by many of the older community respondents participating in the consultations, younger people were more willing to speak about their experiences. Younger people also emphasised the role that they could play in successfully managing or exacerbating incidents.

(iv) Courts

Community respondents highlighted their lack of understanding of Australia’s court system, and expressed concerns in relation to the impact that this lack of awareness was having amongst some community members:

“One woman from our community went to the Family Court. She thought she was going to make the court tell her husband to stop drinking. She was told to fill out some forms and to see a lawyer. She speaks some English so no interpreter was arranged for her. In the end she finally realised she was going through divorce proceedings!!”

Courts in Australia were also perceived as being intimidating and extremely formal when compared to the practice of customary law and customary practice as experienced in some countries of origin.

Feedback received from community respondents highlighted that there was an overrepresentation of young people from African backgrounds in minor public order offences such as loitering, disorderly behaviour or fare evasion.

Concerns were raised within the Victorian consultations in relation to what was seen to be tense relationship between the Somali community, particularly young people, and the police and courts.

A number of positive references, however, were made to recent initiatives that had been taken by various courts and judicial officers with the aim of improving levels of awareness amongst newly-arrived communities of the courts. These programs also aim to enhance mutual respect and trust between communities and the judiciary. One such example is the moot courts that have been organised by the Victorian Magistrates Court:

“The judge [magistrate] showed us the court room and she showed us how the court works. We all got a chance to sit in the witness box and understand more about how the court does things. This is good because I don’t feel frightened of the court anymore. So many in my community are very frightened of the court.”
(Community Respondent, Vic)

Other events referred to included presentations by judges and court officials to community meetings, dialogue sessions between community leaders and visits to the courts and tribunals.

Several community members and leaders also raised as a key concern from the constant negative media representation of incidents involving members of the African Australian communities:

“It doesn’t matter that it was one Sudanese, or one Somali, or one Ethiopian who might have done the wrong thing and broken the law. We all end up being targeted as a problem by the media and then the Australian public as a whole.”
(Participant, community focus group, Tas)

(v) *Child protection*

Child protection laws and what were perceived to be highly inappropriate and discriminatory interventions by child protection agencies featured in almost every community consultation meeting:

Respondents highlighted that many in the communities were often unaware of the Australian definition of the legal rights of children at 16 years and then again as young adults at 18 years.

Many community respondents suggested that child protection was not fully explained to them or how the laws work in Australia. Stakeholders also reflected the need for ‘legal literacy’ and more information to be provided to improve people’s awareness in this area:

“In terms of child protection issues, one of the issues that we deal with is that people come in and they have no idea of the law, and the issues around child protection. When they come into the country, they immigration department funds a number of agencies, and they have these services for a number of months. They are told a bit about what life is about but certainly nothing around parenting or child protection issue”
(WA stakeholder)

(vi) *Legal aid and legal services*

Issues related to access to legal services, including legal aid and legal representation, were raised by a number of stakeholders in various states and territories as an issue of growing concern, particularly for those who want to bring family out to Australia.

Respondents raised a number of barriers to accessing immigration specialists, the most significant being that many in the communities cannot afford immigration lawyers or migration agents. Legal aid is not provided for these cases and the various Refugee and Immigration Legal Centres that have been set up across the country do not have sufficient funding to be able to assist families who may be in this situation.

Several African community workers and leaders also spoke of the increasing number of people from within their communities who were ‘self representing’ as they did not understand that they could get free legal advice, or apply for legal aid in some instances.

Some respondents commented on what they perceived to be an increased engagement with community based legal services around the development of collaborative models of legal education and legal support, including co-location of services. Co-location of services was seen to be a particularly effective way of outreaching African Australians who were not likely to be aware of the legal service, but who are engaged in activities organised through the migrant resource centre. As such, they are more likely to feel comfortable in accessing the legal service in the event of some legal issue arising:

“This has been a good way for people to know that they can get legal advice instead of just ignoring the problem. There are so many times when I know people in our community have just thrown a paper away not knowing that it was a court order.”
(Community respondent, WA)

Other collaborative examples include **the NSW Legal Assistance Forum (NLAF)**, which promotes collaboration and coordination in the development of legal services in NSW which has established a ‘Working Group on Access to Justice for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities’. The overall aim of the NLAF CALD Working Group is to improve legal services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities by focusing on engagement between the legal and migrant services sectors. The working group has been working with Blacktown Local Court on the feasibility of free legal information and basic legal representation service for the Sudanese community. They have also developed a Sudanese Community Legal Resource/Referral Guide.

There is also an initiative with the Victorian Bar which provides complimentary support to **Spare Lawyers for Refugees**. The Bar Legal Assistance Scheme provides an extensive service for the administration of legal claims through the court system in Victoria.

(vii) *Access to interpreters*

Issues relating to language barriers and difficulty accessing interpreters in some African languages and dialects featured in many of the community consultations:

“One of the issues is that there is a lack of adequate interpreters in some African languages such as Swahili and Kirundi. When people deal with courts it becomes a problem. Sometimes hearings have had to be adjourned to ensure that interpreters can be made available but sometimes it just isn’t possible.”
(Community worker, NSW)

During the consultations a small number of respondents also highlighted experiences where court hearings being held at local courts/magistrates courts had proceeded even though the interpreter had not arrived:

“I didn’t understand much of what was going on. I said I was alright about the court starting because I was worried about wasting the judge’s time.”

A number of courts are adopting policies in relation to the use of interpreters as a way of preventing these scenarios from occurring.

(b) Stakeholders

Both ‘legal’ and non legal stakeholders were able to provide examples of experiences with the legal system. Overall, these did not appear to be as negative as those examples provided by community respondents. Indeed, there seemed to be a fairly even balance provided of both positive and negative experiences, particularly examples where the legal system and those working within it were actively committed to improving legal outcomes for African Australians:

- African Australians, particularly humanitarian entrants appear to have only a minimal understanding of the justice system and processes in Australia – queries were also raised in relation to the extent to which pre-arrival information about the legal system is provided.
- Lack of understanding of laws regarding issues such as family violence, the implications of violent conduct and of police involvement in domestic violence situations, and the process of the justice system in relation to offences, charges and restraining orders.
- Perception that new arrivals appear to have a pre-determined view of the law enforcement system and law enforcement officers that sometimes leads to misunderstanding and confusion – this is particularly applicable to refugee and humanitarian entrants who may have a fear or mistrust of the police.
- Community policing awareness programs across various states and territories targeting newly arrived African Australians through information and education programs on rights and responsibilities were seen be successful in improving levels of awareness within communities.
- Relationship building activities, particularly through sporting programs designed to engage young disengaged youth, were also identified as contributing to improved police and community relations.
- Implementation of successful programs such as the ‘Justice for Refugees Program’ administered through the Victorian Department of Justice, and the Sudanese Community Liaison Office Position at the NSW Attorney General’s Department were identified as also contributing to more positive and informed interactions between communities and the legal system as a whole.

“I think it is fair to say that the legal system becomes a negative experience when people are not provided with the information they need to be able to navigate the system properly. But we are seeing more and more recognition being given to the importance of legal information, and I think this is improving the interaction with the law for newly arrived Africans considerably.”
(Stakeholder representative, NSW).

Police respondents spoke of their frustration in relation to the low levels of awareness of the law amongst some African Australian communities suggesting the need for better and more coordinated information. An example was provided where police were participating in orientation programs for newly-arrived humanitarian entrants through the IHSS program.

The program operates at the **Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre and Centrecare Catholic Migrant Centre (CCMC)** in Western Australia and targets new arrivals and covers a general introduction to policing in Australia and an overview of the Australian justice system. In addition, police officers are regularly invited to address new and emerging community groups on issues of concern, such as family and domestic violence, intergenerational conflict and family conflict resolution.

While the lack of availability of interpreters, particularly in the languages of the most recently arrived African Australians was undoubtedly an issue of concern, several service provider stakeholders indicated that there were still the ongoing problem of getting police and the courts to actually use interpreters.

Importantly, stakeholders still stressed that significant time and effort has been recently invested by police across a range of jurisdictions in addressing tensions between police and young African Australians.

(c) Public submissions

Over a third (36%) of the submissions raised issues relating to the legal and justice needs of African Australians.

While a few positive stories of African Australians' experiences with the legal and justice system were given in the submissions, most emphasised a lack of adequate understanding and appropriate accessing of the Australian legal and justice system by African Australians.

9.3 What concerns do African Australians have about the Australian legal and justice systems?

(a) Community

Community consultations revealed a number of concerns in relation to the legal and justice system. Broadly, these included:

- increasing number of young people interfacing with the legal system, particularly the criminal justice system
- impact of child protection laws and interventions by child protection agencies on families
- deteriorating relations between police and African Australian young people
- lack of appropriate diversionary programs for African young people

- community safety, particularly regarding racial violence directed towards young African men and women
- lack of awareness in relation to Australian laws and the corresponding fear that people may break the law inadvertently
- lack of cultural awareness/sensitivity on the part of law enforcement agencies and staff, particularly police and sheriffs
- negative fallout in the broader Australian community as a result of media coverage of particular incidents.

The issue of young people's increasing interactions with the legal system, particularly the criminal justice system, was taken up by the **African Australian Think Tank** (ATT) as part of a one-day forum entitled 'Maximizing the potential of African-Australian Youth: A Community Model to bolster health and legal support'. The forum also sought to explore the range of strategies required to better assist young African-Australians to integrate into the wider Australian society more successfully and subsequently eliminate or prevent the circumstances under which they become involved with the police and the criminal justice system.

A key recommendation emerging from the forum was the need for government recognition and valuing of the principle and practice of African-Australian control of programs for African-Australians, not just having external programs and services being 'delivered to' African-Australian communities. Another key recommendation related to the urgent need for training and education, particularly for police and those working within the justice system.

Community members and leaders in other states and territories also shared examples of activities being undertaken to address the growing number of young people interfacing with the criminal justice system. While the range of activities varied, all were underpinned by the belief that communities themselves needed to be at the forefront of such initiatives:

"We are always keen to involve ourselves with the good work that police and community organisations are doing to address issues of shared concern between us, such as the tragedy that is affecting our young people who are so disconnected from us and from the community as a whole... but this should be done in close consultation with us, and not done to us. The doing to us has not worked."
(Community leader, NSW)

Conversely, concerns were also raised about young people as victims of crime, such as mobile phone theft, thefts from vehicles, and assault (often perceived to be racially motivated).

Concerns were particularly expressed by focus groups conducted with members of diverse Somali organisations who expressed a sense of increasing vulnerability in relation to racial and religious violence:

"I know that I stand out wearing the hijab and being African, and I have definitely thought about removing it ... my parents have begged me to as they are worried it

makes me an easy target... but I think why should I have to do this in a country that is supposed to be free and a democracy.”
(Participant, Youth focus group, Vic)

As concerned as community members were about both the possibilities of young people being victims and perpetrators of crimes, they were also equally quick to point out the remarkable achievement of so many young African Australians. Comments relating to their strength, their courage and their resilience were frequently made during community consultation sessions.

(i) Child protection

Of equal concern to communities was the issue of child protection. Community respondents report that child protection issues are creating stress and hardship for many African Australian families, particularly those who are more newly arrived:

“I am not talking about saying that we should be allowed to abuse our children. That is wrong. What I am saying is that we need to know more about what it is that I am doing, like expecting my children to take responsibility and do work around the house and look after their younger brothers and sisters. I am told here that is exploiting them. For me that is giving them responsibility and getting them to understand that they are part of a whole family and a whole community.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, WA)

Many community members expressed frustration, anger, dismay and despair at the impact that child protection interventions were having on their families and the number of out-of-home care placements involving African Australian children.

Examples of what were perceived to be inappropriate and discriminatory actions taken by child welfare and child protection agencies across various state and territory jurisdictions were consistently made at almost every community consultation.

A young woman shared the following experience which reflected many others conveyed:

“At school they asked us if we have money. We don’t know about the money, but they told us that the money was ours. I know that my mother uses the money for us, and we don’t know about money. Also at home we only eat in the morning and at night, and so in Australia we don’t bring lunch, but then the school called my mother and told her she had to go to see the counselor because we were not given food.”
(Participant, Youth Focus Group, NSW)

(b) Stakeholders

While the issues that were raised during the stakeholder consultations and interviews mirrored many of those raised in the community consultations, there were differences both in terms of how the respective groups represented the issues and the priority placed on them.

For example, stakeholders on the whole were of the opinion that young African Australians were getting caught up in the criminal justice system largely as a result of intergenerational conflict and the impact of pre arrival trauma:

“It’s not surprising that young Africans would be caught up in the legal system. The young people we work with are really disaffected and disengaged both from their families and their communities. They are torn between trying to settle in a new country with different cultural norms and expectations, and also manage the cultural expectations of their families. There are very different ideas for example about independence, and this causes considerable culture clash between the young person and his or her family.”

(Stakeholder, NSW)

Overall, however, key issues identified by stakeholders included:

- limited levels of awareness amongst many African Australians, particularly newly arrived in relation to laws relating to family violence, family law, child protection, driving, and consumer issues
- increased targeting by police, particularly what is increasingly perceived by some as ‘racial profiling’
- reluctance to complain about or seek help to resolve a legal problem
- lack of awareness of the existence of community legal centres or availability of legal aid
- lack of trust or belief that the law or legal system will offer any real protection, given past experiences
- lack of available interpreters, particularly in more newly-arrived languages
- limited or no awareness of road laws, including the need to have a drivers licence.

Stakeholders spoke more frequently of the need for information and education programs aimed at building legal literacy amongst African Australians, particularly those who are newly arrived:

Several respondents across a number of different states stated that there is an urgent need for greater resourcing of parenting programs to address issues such as child protection and improve information and access particularly for African humanitarian entrants.

(c) Public submissions

The main concerns of African Australians regarding the Australian legal and justice system, as indicated by the submissions, include:

- the Australian legal system is very different to the legal systems in some African countries
- language difficulties

- family breakdowns due to changing roles of authority and other problems caused by living with two cultures (traditional and Australian)
- older and younger people have different needs and expectations in relation to the law
- Police and community relations was also identified as an area of growing concern, with several submissions suggesting the need for greater trust building programs and activities, particularly targeting young people.

9.4 Rights, justice and the law

(a) As an African Australian, do you feel protected by the Australian legal and justice systems?

(i) Community

While responses varied from state to state, and from region to region, the majority of those who responded to this question were either 'unsure' or did not feel protected at all. Greater levels of concern and dissatisfaction were recorded in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

On the whole, Muslim women (across each of the states and territories) were even less likely to feel protected than non Muslim women, citing their visible difference, particularly in relation to the wearing of religious dress, and increasing both their vulnerability to public assaults and the likelihood of a "stereotyped view" of Muslim women.

Reasons provided by participants for their lack of confidence in the law's protection ranged from the belief that the law was for 'white people' through to deep cynicism about the law as an institution. This view was often based on pre arrival experiences.

Those who felt protected by the law were indeed able to recount experiences where either police, or other relevant authorities responded to complaints with respect and followed up appropriately.

(b) What services exist to explain to African Australians what their rights are when they are involved in the legal and justice systems?

(i) Community

Responses to this question varied depending on years of residence or settlement, with those who had been settled in Australia for longer being able to identify a number of different services, including:

- community legal centres
- community legal aid
- migrant resource centres or other settlement service providers

- African Australian welfare services or support networks
- private practitioners
- court support workers/programs
- community neighbourhood centres
- community organisations delivering legal information programs
- local councils
- relevant government departments.

A number of women in various ethno specific focus groups also identified the women's health service, including maternal and child health care centres.

For those more newly arrived, particularly those who had arrived as refugee or humanitarian entrants, levels of awareness in relation to the range of services available to assist in the provision of legal information was extremely limited with most citing the following organisations/agencies:

- IHSS provider
- police
- Centrelink
- migration agent
- community or religious leader
- Family/friends (having arrived prior).

(ii) Stakeholders

Sources of information identified by community respondents were very much repeated by service providers and other stakeholders.

A number of stakeholders were also able to provide information in relation to their own particular services and programs, including:

The Legal Services Commission, in partnership with the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia and the Multicultural Communities Council of SA Inc, received a grant from the Law Foundation of South Australia to assist it to administer a project to enhance access to and understanding of Australian family law for CALD Communities.

Please see: www.lsc.sa.gov.au/cb_pages/CALDprojects.php

Justice for Refugees Program within the Victorian Department of Justice which employs community educators to develop and disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate justice-related information in partnership with refugee communities about the legal system.

Victoria Legal Aid has a multi-lingual telephone information call centre that fields over 70,000 calls per year. It provides legal information and referral in 14 languages. Each language, has its own phone number which is promoted through local ethnic media and ethnic organisations.

Please see: www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Fairfield City Council and ICE (Information and Cultural Exchange) are developing a DVD in Dinka, Arabic and Swahili to raise the awareness of newly-arrived communities about the Australian legal system.

Please see: www.ice.org.au/projects/fairfieldstories

Other services identified included:

- human rights organisations, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission and other state equivalents
- community legal centres
- pro bono legal centres
- private practitioners
- police
- court network or similar court support organisations.

Similar to the feedback received from several community respondents, a number of stakeholders also stressed the point that the mere availability of services or information sources did not guarantee effective reception of information.

(iii) Public submissions

A small number of submissions discussed the availability of some services to explain to African Australians what their rights are when they are involved in the legal and justice systems, including:

- NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee
- Legal Aid Commission of NSW
- The Refugee Advisory and Casework Service
- Balmain for Refugees
- Community Legal Centres.

Overall, however, the submissions highlighted a lack of appropriate services available to explain the legal and justice system.

(c) Can you provide examples of any incidences where the rights of African Australians were denied in the justice and law enforcement setting?

(i) Community

Numerous examples were offered of incidents where the rights of African Australians were perceived to have been denied in the justice and law enforcement settings. Examples related to the following themes:

- racial profiling/targeting of African young people by police
- perceived acts of victimisation by police, including alleged acts of discrimination/racism
- disbelief/disrespect exhibited by police or other law enforcement agency
- lack of follow up by police to reports of violence
- interpreter not made available
- information relating to rights/remedies not provided
- inadequate or inappropriate referrals to support services
- receiving fines issued by transit police without providing opportunity for explanation
- over scrutinised by custom officials at airports.

“On the one hand we are being told to report crimes, but when we do, and it happens to actually be against us, then there is a very different reaction. The number of times I have heard people in the community tell me that there was nothing done... no follow up or anything... It’s just not good enough.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, Qld)

(ii) Stakeholders

Most stakeholders consulted highlighted that much work had been done in addressing perceived disadvantage within the legal system, including the implementation of various programs designed to enhance access to justice for African Australians. Examples such as the **Justice for Refugees Program** within the Victorian Department of Justice were cited as demonstrative of improved approaches.

However, several community legal centres, and a number of youth organisations made reference to a number of incidences where the rights of African Australians were denied or breached in some way. Examples include:

- young people being harassed by police – examples of ‘heavy handed approaches’
- interpreters not being provided or offered

- people being directed to sign ‘official’ forms by police without any explanations provided.

(d) What factors can contribute to negative interactions between African Australians and law enforcement?

(i) Community

Community respondents identified a number of factors that contribute to negative interactions between African Australians and law enforcement, including:

- perceptions of bias and differential and unequal treatment by police by African Australians
- mutual distrust and misunderstanding of each other’s background
- stereotyped views of African young people
- lack of understanding of the role of police leading to suspicion and confusion
- inadequate knowledge of laws thereby attracting the attention of police
- previous pre arrival experiences of corrupt and abusive police and legal systems.

Another key factor highlighted was the way in which the lack of cultural knowledge, particularly on the part of police, can act (sometimes inadvertently) to create further distance between communities and police. Community respondents strongly advocated for the need for police to understand community dynamics and splits within communities, and not simply assume that everyone with the community is the same:

“It really bothers me that police think all Sudanese people are the same and they all speak the same language... Sudanese. Well there is no Sudanese and our ethnic and cultural differences between us are actually really big. Dinkas are different to the Nuer, who are different again to the Bari or the Chollo. A bit more of an understanding of that might mean that they don’t end up aggravating something or adding to a tension that might be there.”
(Participant, community focus group, Vic)

The other cultural factor highlighted related to gender issues:

“For instance, a woman may not tell a police officer who is male that she is experiencing domestic violence because it might be culturally inappropriate for her to share that kind of information with a man.”
(Participant, Community Focus Group, SA)

(ii) Stakeholders

Feedback received from stakeholders in relation to the above questions reflected many of the factors identified by community respondents.

(iii) *Public submissions*

Critical factors contributing to negative interactions between African Australians and law enforcement, as highlighted in the submissions, include:

- some African Australians mistrust and fear police due to negative pre-arrival experiences
- some African Australians come from countries that do not have established laws and have trouble comprehending a concrete legal and justice system
- some African Australians' perceptions that they are not being treated the same as other Australians by law enforcers.

9.5 Access to the legal and justice systems

(a) What barriers do African Australians face in accessing the legal and justice systems?

(i) *Community*

Community respondents identified a number of barriers faced in trying to access the legal and justice system, including culture shock for them when they first encountered the Australian legal system:

"In the lowland [of Eritrea] there was no court or police. A committee of people decides. In the case of fighting, hitting, causing serious injury, the family contact each other and try to solve the problem... Only older men can be on the committee... The committee decides on the value of the injury. For example if a person is killed about sixty cows are sent to the victim's family. One quarter of this amount is required for injuries to the teeth and eyes. Hair and broken skin is a similar amount, one cow, butter or money. The two families talk and then apologise."

Another important barrier identified by community respondents was the possible expectation, particularly by those who are newly arrived, of alignment with the legal system in their countries of origin and that of their new host country:

"Sometimes people have these expectations of the law that you know are based on their home country ideas and on cultural values. Things like the dowry and expecting that if there is a divorce, the court will order the return of the dowry."
(Community leader, WA)

Barriers identified as being specific to women included:

- the legal system's lack of sensitivity to the particular needs of African Australian women, particularly Muslim women, either in the provision of culturally appropriate services or in the dissemination of information about the legal system and how to access available services
- the insufficient attention to gender issues in legal interpreting
- the inadequacy of legal training for migrant/ethnic workers

- lack of access to interpreters, in particular female interpreters
- limited financial ability to fund their own legal actions and the limited availability of legal aid.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholder respondents highlighted similar barriers to those identified by community participants.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to African Australians access to legal and justice systems were addressed by a third (33%) of the submissions. The main barriers highlighted included in the submissions were similar to those for community and stakeholders.

(b) What information about the legal and justice systems should be provided to African Australians to empower them? And when is the best time to provide such information (e.g. when a person is in the legal system, or at different time)?

(i) Community

The provision of legal information and education effectively increases people's knowledge of the law and encourages greater access to the legal system and a more just outcome. For most African Australians consulted, increasing their knowledge of the law was seen as a key priority.

When asked to identify the type of information that they would require there was almost unanimous agreement that child protection and family law, including domestic violence laws, were the most important. This differed for young people who were particularly interested in receiving information about police powers.

The key subject areas in order of frequency of citation included the following:

- child protection laws
- laws relating to family and domestic violence, including family law
- anti discrimination laws
- laws related to the driving of motor vehicles
- information about the role of police, including laws related to police powers
- laws related to 'anti-social behaviour', particularly where there may be cultural differences in how this is understood
- consumer and tenancy issues
- alcohol and drugs related matters.

“We should know more about what the law says about the way that we discipline our children. We do not want to hurt our children, but we have cultural ways of guiding them in the right way... it’s hard to know then which way I am allowed to do this in this country.”

The need for a culturally sensitive approach to assessment and intervention was strongly emphasized by most community respondents.

Community members also wanted to know more about consumer protection laws to prevent people within their communities being exploited and subjected to various unethical consumer practices, including signing contracts without fully understanding the nature of the contract.

A number of community respondents in NSW cited the **Think Smart campaign** as a good practice example of an effective community education initiative. The program is aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of consumer rights issues by community members from amongst CALD communities in New South Wales.

Timing

Community respondents emphasised the point that they are often inundated with vast amounts of written and verbal information relating to living in Australia and that it is extremely difficult to be able to absorb all the information in a very short space of time.

Legal information needed to be delivered over a period of time and should not just be a one-off community information session.

A number of respondents stressed the need for sessions to be flexible and be offered after hours as well. The provision of childcare would also significantly enhance the ability of women to participate.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders raised similar areas of need in relation to legal information with a particular emphasis on laws relating to family violence and child abuse, consumer protection and tenancy arrangements.

“Newly arrived communities don’t really understand their rights and so they tend to get ripped off when they are signing up for something. Consumer protection information is actually really vital to these communities because they are often not in a financial situation to be buying the things that they get conned into.”
(Stakeholder, NT)

In relation to how and when legal information should be provided, most stakeholders agreed that access to legal information and advice should occur at the earliest possible time.

(iii) *Public submissions*

Suggestions given in the submissions included:

- provide information on the legal and justice system during the settlement process, including:
 - translated written information
 - translated instructional DVD
 - verbal education sessions in primary languages.

(c) Following on from the question above – how, or through what mechanism/s, can information about the legal and justice systems be best provided to African Australians?

(i) *Community*

Community legal education plays a key role in enhancing the ability of newly-arrived communities to better understand the Australian legal system.

Community respondents repeatedly stated that community input into the development of legal information and education strategies should actively seek to involve the community. This would ensure greater relevance to the community:

“Communities know what the issues are and they can help make the information culturally relevant. Sometimes the words that are used in English can be translated wrong so getting communities to check it is also good to stop people getting confused.”

Many of the examples provided by community respondents of effective methods by which legal information can be delivered were community developed and community driven, and often in partnership with legal and paralegal organisations.

Below are some good practice examples that were cited:

The Switchboard Project

The Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning Program (SAIL) is a volunteer, non-profit organisation that provides free English support and community services to the Sudanese refugee community in Melbourne. Blake Dawson’s Melbourne switchboard team assists SAIL by providing a dedicated switchboard service which connects members of the Sudanese refugee community with SAIL.

Strengthening Youth – Australian Oromo Community Association in Victoria

The aim of the project is to address the large number of African youth who are unemployed or not undertaking study and having problems integrating. The project proposes to educate and mentor at risk African youth about the community. The project will include the local police, local council and

community leaders. The project will focus on encouraging, empowering and assisting African youth to further their education and personal development.

Please see: www.oromocommunity.org.au

Community respondents said that they preferred to receive information through the following modes of communication:

- face to face presentations
- on site visits/court open days
- information could be provided to the community as part of their English language class
- community radio as an effective way to broadcast messages
- African media
- church/mosque.

There was also very strong support for the idea of developing visual resources such as a video or DVD. Participants felt that innovative resources such as these would be especially beneficial to those with low literacy competence.

On site visits and court open days were identified by several stakeholders as effective ways of increasing community awareness of Australian courts and tribunals.

For example, as part of Refugee Week 2009, the **Refugee Review Tribunal** hosted open afternoons in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Visitors received an insight into RRT operations with mock hearings and presentations on legal and research work.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders highlighted a number of activities aimed at improving levels of awareness around the legal system. Effective programs to educate those new arrivals should be:

- engage community bilingual staff
- customised for different groups of new arrivals to address specific barriers faced by each group and not one size fits all
- delivered in creative ways to facilitate successful settlement service.

In terms of effectiveness, stakeholders stressed the need for more comprehensive approaches that extended beyond the mere provision of legal information:

“There is no point doing the DVD’s and getting your glossies out if you don’t have the capacity to follow up when people then present with the whole range of legal issues that they have. You have to be able to back it up with a community development approach and one that is about prevention.”

Prevention and early intervention approaches to information and legal education were considered essential to ensuring the success of information and awareness sessions targeting newly-arrived communities.

Several stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring that appropriate approaches to the provision of legal information were utilised in relation to young people:

“There is an assumption that you can use the same information strategies with young people as you do with adults. We know from experience that they don’t read the brochures or the pamphlets. They want interactive information. Sometimes even done through other means like sport.”

Indeed several programs involving sport and the arts were identified as having considerable success in increasing young people’s awareness of the law and reducing the risk of negative involvement with police and the legal system:

“Young Africans seem to love sport and music and by using what they enjoy and getting them involved in a more structured way, we can get them to understand things like rules and the law. This is about prevention by using the range of protective factors.”

There were many examples provided of programs and projects primarily aimed at improving levels of awareness of the law and the legal system amongst African Australians, particularly those who are newly arrived:

“Consumer Affairs Victoria educates newly-arrived migrants about their rights and responsibilities as Victorian consumers. I think their presentations really have helped to protect them from unscrupulous traders and have managed to reduce exploitation by traders which unfortunately we see all too often these days.” (Stakeholder, Vic)

Examples cited include:

Renting, Shopping, Money: a teaching resource on consumer issues for migrants – an initiative of the NSW Government’s Think Smart program – the NSW Office of Fair Trading developed the resource with the ACL Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Consortium.

Please see:

www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/About_us/Publications/RSM_Cover_and_introduction.pdf

Multilingual Tenancy Kit – the NSW Office of Fair Trading produced this kit in partnership with Auburn Diversity Services.

Essendon Community Legal Centre – informs newly-arrived migrants and refugees and disadvantaged households about driving laws and helps them obtain their L-plates and P-plates through a driving education program.

Please see: www.communitylaw.org.au/clc_essendon

The **ANU Migrant and Refugee Support Project** is part of the Student Social Justice Initiative in the Law Reform and Social Justice Program at the ANU College of Law. The MARS Project gives law students an opportunity to work with newly-arrived migrants and refugees who need support and guidance in dealing with daily legal and administrative requirements, such as form-filling, letter-writing, registration and licensing, and access to information.

Please see: <http://law.anu.edu.au/lrsj/mars.asp>

African Sessional Workers Pilot Project – NSW DoCS and Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre – Local African community members in Sydney’s west have been recruited and trained by the MRC to work with DoCS caseworkers and help DoCS work better with African families and communities. There is a pool of sessional workers representing five communities and covering fourteen languages, who casework staff can engage for support when they are working with families from African communities.

The **NT Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC)** provides legal advice on family law, criminal law, immigration, civil law, domestic violence and child protection. NTLAC has established an outreach service at the offices of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory for African Australian communities living in the northern suburbs. Recently NTLAC also launched a legal resource kit for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the Northern Territory.

Please see: www.ntlac.nt.gov.au

Legal Education Awareness Project – The project is supported by key service providers with well established links to African youth, including Lutheran Community Care, Multicultural Youth SA, African Communities Council, Blue Light (SAPOL), Adelaide Secondary School of English and the Australian Refugee Association’s Youth Working Party of African Workers’ Network amongst others. It provides legal education to African youth in South Australia. LEAP stemmed from a series of consultations with African communities, settlement service providers and South Australian Police which highlighted the many challenges faced by African youth.

Please see: http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au/cb_pages/LEAP.php

Family Law for African Communities – Legal Aid Queensland has trialled an education kit on family law specifically for African Australians who are newly arrived. This kit will become one of the tools in the agency’s community education program in regions with large African refugee communities.

(iii) *Public submissions*

Public submission highlighted that when conducting community education sessions ensure that:

- the sessions have a positive and friendly atmosphere

- the sessions are located away from police stations or other imposing locations
- additional ‘women only’ sessions are conducted
- interpreters are available
- it is clearly explained that the laws being discussed apply to all people in Australia and provide examples to demonstrate.

There is a need to:

- establish partnerships between local law enforcement and local communities
- conduct informal information sessions

“Armidale Sanctuary has been proactive in this area by recently inviting the local police (community relations and domestic violence officers) and Dinkas to meet informally and talk about the Australian law. This has been a huge success with increased understanding on both sides, and the police becoming regarded as friends.” (s12)

- provide information on the moral values underpinning the justice system to foster greater understanding
- employ African Australian mediators trained in legal and justice knowledge to assist new-arrivals
- recruit more African Australians into the justice system.

(d) What can be done to decrease the level of non-reporting of crime by African Australians?

(i) Community

Overall, community respondents conveyed the view that many African Australians, particularly those who are newly arrived, are less likely to report crimes committed against them and identified a number of barriers which included:

- language
- fear of deportation and permanent separation from family members
- lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the police in dealing with crime
- fear of not being taken seriously by law enforcement or other agency
- fear of repercussions
- social and cultural barriers.

Suggestions made by respondents to improve the reporting of crime included:

- training of law enforcement officers

- need to make services to victims more accessible
- information about Victim Support and other support services should be communicated more effectively to African Australians, including general raising of awareness and informing victims after a crime
- peer education should be explored as a way of communicating information.

Most respondents emphasised that improved relations with police would greatly enhance the communities' confidence in reporting crime.

9.6 Combating family violence

(a) What are effective strategies that can be used by governments, NGOs or service providers to combat family violence issues for African Australians?

(i) Community

Community respondents suggested that government and community agencies needed to give greater consideration to the following issues to better combat family violence issues:

- pre arrival experiences, particularly for those entrants who have spent considerable time in refugee camps prior to arriving in Australia, needed to be better understood by services when providing support to victims of family violence
- changing role of families, including the roles of men, women and young people perceived as impacting on the occurrence of family violence, particularly violence being perpetrated by young people against their elders
- generally, older women perceived current legal and service interventions in family violence as inappropriate and as contributing to an exacerbation of the issue in their communities
- information in relation to family violence is often based on 'Western' notions of 'family'
- distrust of government institutions is perceived to be increasing
- barriers to reporting family violence may be based on a range of fears, including fear of policing organisations, expectation that children may be removed, or that women will be removed from their family homes
- there are very few options for men who use violence to seek assistance, including a lack of bilingual counsellors or support workers.

The majority of respondents also expressed the view that African specific organisations should play a more significant role in preventing family violence.

“ethno specific and multicultural organisations are more likely to identify family violence issues during the settlement support process than mainstream services and yet are

rarely identified as key partners in the dissemination of family violence messages or campaigns.”

An example was provided of a project that was undertaken by African women for African women and their families:

Liberian Women’s Story Telling

The program was for Liberian women living in Victoria to meet with each other, build relationships and learn more about Australian culture. Project activities included support from mentors, workshops to build relationships and storytelling and music sharing among the women. The women’s stories will be recorded and collated into a combined document for the wider community. Some participants were of the view that changes in women’s roles in the early resettlement period can have a significant impact on family dynamics as refugee men come to terms with the demands on women outside of the home and women’s greater social and economic power.

Importantly, the use of religious or faith leaders to promote the messages around family violence was identified as being particularly effective as religious leaders are often well recognised, respected and trusted. Furthermore, they tend to be deeply rooted in the community and so their messages are often regarded as genuine and important to consider.

All community and religious leaders who were consulted spoke of the importance of engaging leaders in disseminating information on family violence:

“The role of the religious leader in the community is most important. I often take the opportunity in prayer to talk about what the Koran says in relation to issues of family and family violence. I remind people that there are very clear messages that say this violence is wrong. People listen to this. This is why you must involve people like myself. They are more likely to come to an Imam than anybody else.”
(Religious leader)

Several community leaders highlighted that when developing information about family violence, it is important to tailor the information to individual communities, rather than fall into the trap of targeting ‘African communities’ as “if we were all the same”. Furthermore, they highlighted that the person delivering the message about family violence and family violence prevention to communities should be “well known, credible, trustworthy, and a member of the targeted group”.

Additional suggestions of effective information and communication strategies included:

- new and emerging communities should not be seen to have the same information and communication needs as older, more established communities. New communities have specific language and cultural needs that necessitate specialist approaches to the design and delivery of information

- care should be taken in ensuring the particular communities do not feel that they are being targeted as ‘problem’ communities
- recognition of pre arrival experiences, including torture and trauma, should be integral to the design of community information strategies around family violence
- information and community awareness programs should incorporate culturally relevant notions of family
- there is a need to adopt a whole of community approach to family violence, which should involve the participation of men and women in the communities
- translated written information is extremely limited in reaching communities for a range of reasons including issues of literacy
- ensuring that relationship building, including building trust in government and policing organisations, is central to the awareness and communication strategy
- the use of religious leaders is critical in challenging attitudes to family violence
- working closely with bilingual workers and community leaders in the development of key messages and the delivery of community awareness programs is essential to the success of any family violence information strategy
- information strategies should include community capacity components aimed at improving the skills of bilingual settlement support workers in addressing family violence
- education is seen to be more effective than legislation in addressing issues of family violence.

The collaboration between mainstream providers and ethnic community representatives was seen as essential in developing acceptable culturally appropriate and responsive programs.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders identified similar strategies in relation to combating violence with most agreeing that interagency responses were preferred.

Several respondents also suggested that there needed to be a greater focus on prevention, in particular on raising awareness of family violence and changing the social attitudes, beliefs and systems that sustain violence.

The use of bilingual/multilingual workers was repeatedly identified as a key factor in the success of various community education programs. Bilingual workers serve as important connectors between members of their community and the mainstream agency to promote key messages to groups that have traditionally lacked access to appropriate and relevant information.

The role of men in communities was also identified as an important strategy:

Men should be targeted through culturally appropriate preventative programs, including education programs on domestic violence and Australian law, during the early settlement phase.

The **FECCA White Ribbon CALD Project** was cited as a good practice example. Funding was provided to FECCA by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to develop resources that would assist in building capacity for new and emerging community organisations.

Please see: www.fecca.org.au/Submissions/2008/submissions_2008045.pdf

Another program referred to by stakeholders was the **Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants (FRSHE)** funded by FaHCSIA. These programs are designed specifically for families who have entered Australia under the Humanitarian Entry Program. Services are open to adults, young people, parents and their children. These services aim to address the needs of each family member and provide information about life in Australia, including customs, laws and the role expectations of males and females to help families to adjust to Australia's culture. The services include community development; relationship education and skills training; counselling (includes family therapy); support; and information and referral.

Please see:

[www.ema.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/\(F6A8546F15C09260ED4A166FB5832F54\)~FRSP_bro5_v3.PDF/\\$file/FRSP_bro5_v3.PDF](http://www.ema.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/(F6A8546F15C09260ED4A166FB5832F54)~FRSP_bro5_v3.PDF/$file/FRSP_bro5_v3.PDF)

The **Northern Migrant Resource Centre** has developed and implemented a number of culturally appropriate programs and services aiming at enhancing awareness of family violence issues within CALD communities. These include a men and family relationships program; parenting in a new culture program; and Sudanese parenting and family support program.

(iii) Public submissions

Issues relating to combating family violence amongst African Australian communities were addressed by close to a third (30%) of the submissions.

The submission suggested a number of strategies that Governments, NGOs or service providers could employ to combat family violence issues for African Australians. They include:

- provide separate information sessions for men and women, in addition to general sessions, so participants are able address topics that they would be too uncomfortable to discuss in the presence of the opposite gender
- education sessions should be run through schools and other organisations dealing with African Australian youth
- encourage and support community leaders to address family violence issues

- conduct positive parenting classes to equip African Australians with information and skills to support and discipline their children using non-violent methods
- employ more bilingual law enforcement officers and social workers to better communicate with families requiring intervention and assistance.

9.7 Cross-cultural training

(a) Do workers in the justice system and law enforcement receive adequate cross-cultural awareness training? If not, what type of cross-cultural training is required?

(i) Community

Community respondents were generally of the view that cross-cultural training was urgently required for most law enforcement agencies including the Courts.

There was a view that while there were some good examples of cultural awareness programs that were being delivered, there needed to be much more done within a range of legal settings:

Community respondents also highlighted the need to extend beyond cross cultural training to employing African Australians within the legal system.

The example of the **Department of Justice (DOJ) Scholarships for tertiary students from refugee backgrounds** was raised during some of the Victorian consultations. Participants learn about the justice system and visit courts where they hold discussions about the impact of crime on victims and the community. They develop basic skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, and learn to build confidence, greater levels of resilience and self-reliance, and respect for the community and the rule of law.

Another example provided was the work that the **University of Western Sydney (UWS) School of Law** was doing in relation to establishing a pilot court support project at Blacktown Local Court. The Community Restorative Centre (CRC) has provided training to volunteer students free of charge.

(ii) Stakeholders

Stakeholders identified a number of cultural awareness programs across different components of the legal system. Some examples cited included:

The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration held an annual conference, 'Cultures and the Law'. Representatives from emerging communities discussed cross-cultural court room experiences in the session 'Emerging Communities: Court Users' Experiences'.

A **Local Courts Cultural Diversity Resource Kit** was incorporated into the Client Service Skills manual provided to participants who attended the Client Service Skills Training for Local Courts' staff.

A number of sessions at various local and **Magistrates Courts** (Vic and NSW).

NSW Judicial Commission – The Equality before the Law Bench Book provides NSW judicial officers with statistics and information about the different values, cultures, lifestyles, socioeconomic disadvantage and/or potential barriers in relation to full and equitable participation in court proceedings for nine different groups of people.

Please see: www.judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/equality

Building Cross-Cultural Competence in Victoria Police Probational Constables is a specifically tailored training program to facilitate the introduction of new members from CALD backgrounds into Victoria Police. The project is targeted towards Probational Constables – it introduces future officers to cultural differences by building their cultural competence.

There were also several programs related to working with interpreters in the courts that were also identified. For example, Dr Sandra Hale, Associate Professor at the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of Western Sydney, regularly conducts seminars for judicial officers in a range of jurisdictions on working effectively with interpreters.

(iii) *Public submissions*

Issues relating to cross-cultural training for workers in the legal and justice systems were addressed by close to a third (30%) of the submissions.

While a number of agencies, including Victoria Police and Dandenong Police, do provide examples of productive cross-cultural training for workers, the submissions highlighted an overall lack of adequate cross-cultural awareness training for workers in law enforcement and the justice system.

(b) **How can governments, service providers and communities work to break down the fear and mistrust of authority that is felt by many African Australians?**

(i) *Consultations*

Examples provided included:

Sudanese Leaders and the Family Court – Sudanese Community Leaders brought their culture to the Family Court in a day of lively discussion and debate. The day was facilitated by **Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau** and the staff of the **Family Court** in Dandenong.

Victoria Police ‘Connecting Africans to Industry’ project involved hosting 12 young African Community members for two days as they visited several Police Units to gain a better understanding of these areas. It is hoped that such initiatives will give young African Community members the incentive to join the Victoria Police. Other initiatives by Victoria Police include:

- **New and Emerging Communities Liaison Officers Program** will greatly enhance police capacity to work with newest communities. The program has five positions concentrating on community development initiatives and building bridges of understanding between new and emerging community members and Police – based at Dandenong, Northcote, Keilor Downs, Moonee Ponds and a position based at the VPC specifically focussed on working on family issues across the metropolitan area.
- Please see: www.immi.gov.au/gateways/police/officer-profiles/emerging-clo/

Attorney General’s Department NSW Sudanese Community Liaison Officer

This program provides advice to the department on strategies to improve services to the Sudanese community. The position will coordinate education campaigns and advise on policy development to ensure the Department better meets the needs of the Sudanese community.

The Hobsons Bay New and Emerging Communities Youth Leadership Program

This is a partnership project between Hobsons Bay City Council, Victoria Police, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Westgate Migrant Resource Centre and the Altona Traders Association. The focus of the program is to link newly-arrived young people to other communities, social support and emergency service providers, in order to promote their understanding of life in Australia, build trust and encourage these young people to be ambassadors within their community.

Please see:

www.immi.gov.au/gateways/police/case-studies/victoria/hobsons-bay

(ii) Public submissions

Recommendations made in the submission to improve community relations between African Australians and the wider Australian community included:

- network with African Australian communities to develop positive media strategies which:
 - provide positive images of African Australians
 - provide a voice for African communities

- includes developing websites
 - develop partnerships between community leaders and local law enforcement to better meet the needs of the local community
 - conduct more informal consultation sessions for African Australian communities with police to foster trust and understanding
 - develop partnerships between local law enforcement, African Australian communities and the wider Australian community to support and foster respect for cultural celebrations
 - establish more youth groups that are culturally aware and supportive.
- (c) Do you know of successful models of African community and law enforcement relationships?**

Community participants would like to see working models for engaging African communities promoted and built upon, such as

Equatorian Community and Welfare Association

The 'Sudanese Community Model' of working with the police, which led to the development with Blacktown City Council of the Blacktown Emerging Communities Action Plan.

Please see:

www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=05736ADD-E7FF-0ADF-9866-653B6E7278A5&siteName=blacktown

SA: Multicultural Youth South Australia (MYSA) and Adelaide Local Service Area – SA Police

The project aims to develop a youth specific resource which outlines pertinent issues relevant to Australian Muslims (i.e. religious considerations, how to engage effectively with young people and contact details of culturally appropriate community service organisations available to support Muslim youth) to be distributed widely with SAPOL.

Please see: www.mysa.com.au/projects.html

Queensland Police Service

The Queensland Police Service, in partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, coordinates an annual Football Cup for young people from diverse backgrounds. This event kicked off in 2005, originally to engage Sudanese young people in sport, and has evolved to celebrate diversity within the broader community and partnerships with police. The 2007 event involved 24 teams from diverse backgrounds and was attended by 4500 people. It was also supported by a number of government and community agencies. The event received the Queensland Police Service Bronze Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented and Partnership Policing.

Please see:

www.immi.gov.au/gateways/police/case-studies/queensland/love-game

(i) *Public submissions*

Examples of successful relationships between African Australian communities and local law enforcement and the justice system raise in the submissions include:

- **Dandenong Police and the local Dinka community**

“The Dinka community has asked for more meetings [to talk about Australian law] and the relevant police officers have said they are willing to meet on Saturdays in their own time. This echoes the type of relationship the Dandenong police have encouraged, and seems by far the most effective in establishing a positive trusting relationship and knowledge of the law.”

(s12)

- **Victoria Police MLOs and local African communities**

“Multicultural Liaison Officers appointed within Victoria Police have been praised as a very positive initiative, in addition to visits to African countries by Police to enable them to have a much greater cultural understanding.”

(s60)

- **HRC legal workshops**

“The NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee strongly supports the provision of hands on information sessions, like the free legal workshops conducted by HRC, in order to empower African Australians with information about their rights and responsibilities as Australian citizens.”

(s66)

- **Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sudanese Working Group**

“The Sudanese working group is chaired by Police, building trust between African Australians, Police and service providers.”

(s13)

10 Additional issues

10.1 Cultural maintenance, cultural heritage and values

Note: In addition to the general community focus group, a specific consultation workshop was conducted in partnership with Multicultural Arts Victoria involving MAV staff and five African Australian artists. The outcomes of the workshop are set out separately at the end of this section.

Issues relating to cultural maintenance, cultural heritage and values were addressed by around one quarter (23%) of the submissions.

Multiculturalism recognises the right of all Australians to enjoy their ethnic identity and cultural heritage, including language and religion, and the right to equal treatment and opportunities regardless of their backgrounds.

Discussions relating to the theme of maintenance of culture, cultural heritage and cultural values featured consistently in most of the community consultations. Participants overwhelmingly emphasised the importance of retaining their links with each other and their culture, religion, values and language.

Overall, the key issues raised by community participants included:

- African cultures are diverse and reflect a wide range of values and behaviours
- African cultures are often represented in negative and stereotyped ways as uncivil or third world
- there is a need to ensure that there are rights around culture and cultural practices where this is aligned with broader Australian laws
- the preservation of cultural diversity and cultural heritage are crucial components of the settlement process and social inclusion generally
- African Australian Muslim women experience particular challenges in trying to maintain cultural and religious values, particularly in relation to dress code.
- culture and cultural and religious practices for many in the community are vital to survival and are the lifeblood of the community
- the retention of cultural family values was regarded as vital to keeping families connected and healthy
- while culture and cultural values should be protected, there is a corresponding need to recognise that some practices that are sanctioned by tradition could be in conflict with human rights
- the role of African organisations and other grassroots/representative African groups/bodies play a vital role in the maintenance of culture within the context of Australian society

- the Australian community could benefit from more cultural exchanges with African Australians
- mainstream media (professionals and content) should be more reflective of cultural diversity
- children and young people may experience particular challenges in trying to negotiate between cultures and cultural frameworks
- language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. First language maintenance should be actively supported and promoted and benefits to improved learning should be emphasised
- linguistic diversity should be viewed as an asset
- creative arts is increasingly regarded as a method of participation and inclusion – interactions also build social networks and reduce social isolation
- engaging with creative arts has enabled young people to explore culture and identity in safe spaces
- music is an important part of the communities' intangible cultural heritage and preservation is essential
- the role of local government in the promotion of cultural diversity is significant.

(a) African cultures are diverse and reflect a wide range of values and behaviours

Most respondents stressed the need to promote the message to the mainstream that Africans and African cultures are not homogenous, but extremely diverse and varied:

“Africa has a massive diversity of ethnic groups and roughly about 2 000 different languages spoken in 53 countries. This diversity is very much reflected here in Australia amongst the African Australians.”
(Community respondent, Vic)

An example of the breadth of diversity is reflected in the annual **Celebration African Cultures Festival** held in Auburn, NSW. The event promotes cross-cultural understating and community harmony within the new local African communities. It also strengthens the diversity of African cultural heritage in the local area and promotes cultural diversity to the wider community. The event is a community initiative of the Somali Welfare and Cultural Association and other key local organisations. The Festival brought together over 20 different African cultures to celebrate their individual traditions, music, food, arts and crafts.

Despite the need to recognise levels of diversity within communities, there was, however, some discussion within several of the community focus groups, around whether there were ‘common’ African ‘values’, with many agreeing that some of the following could be said to be broadly characteristic of most African Australian communities:

- importance of family and the preservation of family values
- greater emphasis given to the collective rather than the individual as a whole – strong community bonds
- respect for elders where they are often asked for advice, families usually desire elders' approval for any major decision, elders also settle household conflicts.
- strong values and belief systems
- religion an important part of day to day life for many.

(b) the preservation of cultural diversity and cultural heritage are crucial components of the settlement process and social inclusion generally

Newly-arrived people of refugee background bring many experiences, qualities and skills to this country. Many African Australians believe that many of their contributions have not been visible or utilised. Their wellbeing, their hopes and aspirations can only be realised if they are given the opportunity to share the wealth of their cultures, their own skills and experiences so as to contribute to Australia's multicultural development.

An example was provided where collaboration between several services and members of newly-arrived communities resulted in the establishment of important cultural development programs throughout which effective and successful settlement could be better supported.

The **MRCSA** with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts SA, numerous local government councils, the Adelaide Festival Centre, the SA School of Art, University of South Australia, private sponsorship and immense amounts of ongoing volunteer work by staff, and the communities themselves use cultural development as an integral and critical component of their settlement program for newly-arrived people of refugee backgrounds.

The program is an example of one that supports new and emerging communities to engage in the arts through the development of their cultural initiatives. Music, song, dance and craft events are supported through workshops, developmental activities and creative expression. Communities are also assisted to link with mainstream arts organisations, venues and events so that they can develop their capacity to further their own training, skills development and cultural activity.

(c) Culture and cultural and religious practices for many in the community are vital to survival and are the lifeblood of the community

Participation in cultural rituals that provide support and assign value and respect for a new mother may promote enhanced mental health during the peri-natal period. Traditions often include ceremonies and celebrations in recognition of the role and importance of motherhood.

Within the context of cultural traditions there is a strong sense of community support for pregnant women:

“A pregnant woman in Ethiopia/Eritrea holds a great deal of respect and special standing in the community. Ethiopian society validates the important role of motherhood.”

(Community leader, Vic)

Women expressed anxiety, sadness and a sense of grief at being unable to undertake traditional rituals and ceremonies in Australia.

(d) The retention of cultural family values vital to keeping families connection and healthy

There are several aspects of cultural heritage and cultural values that African Australian parents said they wanted to be able to transmit to their children. The foundation of values relating to the family environment is one arena in which parents said they have an important role to play.

The retention of family values was seen to be conducive to a harmonious family atmosphere and to contribute to successful settlement of the family overall. For the overwhelming majority, intergenerational problems and other related adjustment difficulties and challenges within the family were the direct result of inadequate support for the retention of family values.

(e) While culture and cultural values should be protected, there is a need to recognise that some practices that are sanctioned by tradition could be in conflict with human rights

An example of a successful approach to using a strength based approach to culture was the initiative undertaken by the NSW FGM Program. This initiative grew out of suggestions from community representatives with the intent of celebrating what is good and strong in cultural practices, and speaking out against the practices which adversely impact on the physical and mental health of girls and women and eventually on families.

Over 350 women, who had no previous contact with the NSW FGM Program, from seven communities, responded to the invitation from bi-lingual community workers to attend a series of “celebration and commitment to change” events.

During these events women examined the cultural practices across the globe which impact on women’s mental and physical health, examined the teachings from two faith groups on the traditional practice of FGM, the NSW legislation against the practice and the NSW Education Program on FGM program.

Several community members also reiterated the point that cultural diversity must exist within the Australian legal framework, and that some cultural practices which might seem innocuous or irrelevant could in fact be breaking the law.

(f) The role of African organisations and other grassroots/representative African groups/bodies play a vital role in the maintenance of culture within the context of Australian society

Overall, community respondents emphasised the significant role that grassroots ethno-specific African Australian organisations could play in supporting newly-arrived African Australians in settling successfully in Australia. A particular approach that many of these organisations have used is a strength-based approach to culture and cultural diversity.

Participants made reference to a number of African organisations who were actively engaged in promoting culture and cultural resilience. These groups organise a range of cultural events, including:

African Women's Group NSW – African Women Dinner Dance – organises events for all African Australian women to attend and to showcase African culture.

The **Dinka Literacy Association** supports the maintenance of Dinka culture and language and seeks to teach Dinka literacy to the Sudanese community. The Dinka-English Picture Dictionary is an initiative of the Dinka Literacy Association.

(g) Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. First language maintenance should be actively supported and promoted

There is growing awareness that languages play a vital role in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Language preservation has also been promoted as contributing to building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving cultural heritage.

Language is not the only way of maintaining culture, but it is a vital part of the process of settlement and integration.

Multilingualism among African populations is common. People often speak more than one language of their country of origin as they may have used a local lingua franca or official language in some contexts in addition to one or more languages of their family and local community.

The issue of maintenance of language(s) of origin was one that drew wide support, but also wide debate, particularly in relation to ensuring that there was an appropriate balance between supporting communities with English language acquisition and promoting the ongoing learning of community languages.

One organisation committed to language preservation is the **Dinka Language Institute**. The Institute promotes the benefits of literacy within the community, and develops initiatives to enable adults and children to maintain their mother language.

(h) Creative arts as a method of participation and inclusion

Through film, music, and other creative initiatives, art can provide a safe environment for participants to interact and explore complex social and cultural issues.

Good practice examples of programs that are successfully engaged communities and contributed to reducing social isolation include:

IMPALA

IMPALA was established by community members who arrived in Melbourne from the D.R Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. This African community group has used culture, heritage and traditions to support one another as they adjust and adapt to their new life in Australia.

Please see: www.multiculturalarts.com.au/events2007/impala.shtml

VCAM's Centre for Cultural Partnerships and the Horn of Africa Communities Network

In 2007, the Centre for Cultural Partnerships at the Faculty of the VCA and Music (VCAM) and the Horn of Africa Communities Network established an Arts Partnership Project. The program of activities was designed to establish, demonstrate and evaluate the value and impact of:

- active participation in creative arts as an artistic and community capacity building developmental process
- personal and collective professional arts development through the involvement of professional artist and teachers, addressing traditional and contemporary artistic expressions in African drumming, film, dance and music, linked and woven together through the art of storytelling
- the alignment of mentors to assist individual and collective inter-cultural awareness and cultural knowledge
- the role and integration of elders as cultural custodians, interpreters and inspirational leaders.

Please see: www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/hornofafrica

Sierra Leone Women – Wan Word Inc.

Sierra Leone Women Wan Word is a voluntary organisation, which was set up in 2003 with the aim of empowering Sierra Leonean women, providing information addressing settlement issues, providing moral and emotional support to each other, fostering unity as well as contributing positively towards multiculturalism in Australia. The organisation has produced a book and CD The Living Word that contains the experiences and stories of the women during the war in Sierra Leone and as refugees in Guinea.

(i) Engaging with creative arts has enabled young people to explore culture and identity

A number of examples were given of arts projects involving young people from African Australian backgrounds. A number of projects that were cited draw on storytelling traditions to allow the young people to explore and integrate their past and present experiences. By telling their stories through theatre, film and other media, the young people can become the bridge between their African community and the wider Australian community and they can take pride in being both African and Australian.

Feedback from the community suggests that some of these projects were particularly successful in generating important opportunities for intergeneration dialogue between elders in the community and young people:

“This project was different because it was for young people, but it saw young people as part of their families and their communities. All of us were involved, and now we feel that we can share and support our young people.”
(Community Leader, Vic)

The development of short web-based films have become a popular medium for community-based arts projects. The following examples were cited:

Culture is our Future: Lamine Sonko

This web film presents artist Lamine Sonko's creative approach to working with primary schoolchildren and he introduces the value of culture within traditional drumming and dance from his country Senegal.

Please see: www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/digitalstorytelling

Cry for Darfur: Vivian Deng and Jose Consul Junior

The case of Darfur might be viewed by many as a far away scenario. But the global experience shows that the best way to ensure social stability is to ensure the protection of fundamental human rights, based on the rules of law.

Our Tenderness: Shahin Shafaei

Our Tenderness is a web film created with South Sudanese young women from the refugee community which settled in the City of Greater Dandenong. The film communicates the issues of survival and encourages us to move beyond making judgments based on what the eye can see because it is an imperfect tool.

Please see: www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/digitalstorytelling

Theatre-making as storytelling is a powerful vehicle for communities to find their 'collective voice' and integrate their community experiences into a series of shared narratives that can evoke a new sense of social cohesion, belonging and civic pride. A number of examples were shared:

Theatre for Change

This is a forum theatre program working with Horn of Africa youth in Melbourne's outer metropolitan communities, St Alban's and Dandenong. A two-week intensive period of workshops is held in each community culminating in the presentation to the community of a theatre piece, which addresses an issue identified by the program participants. Workshops community participants will explore issues of settlement, inter-cultural experience and cultural identity and this will finally culminate with a theatre piece for public presentation. Through a process of audience intervention, forum theatre encourages community dialogue about the issues raised. The 'Theatre for Change' Project is a community theatre project that has been funded by VicHealth's Social Participation and Social Cohesion Program.

In another example cited, photography as an effective means of cultural expression for young people was provided.

Snapshots of a New Life

Snapshots of a New Life is a project where young people explored their bicultural background by photographing and researching stories from their families and their community members.

(j) Music and dance is an important part of the communities' intangible cultural heritage and preservation is essential

Music is part of all cultures' intangible cultural heritage. Preservation of this important aspect of cultural heritage is particularly important for African Australians.

In one focus group, a number of Sudanese women highlighted their fear that due to the lack of extended family networks and elders who were often the transmitters of culture that they were at great risk of forgetting their culture and cultural rites.

Similar concerns expressed by other Sudanese women in Victoria prompted the establishment of the **Sudanese Women's Singing Group**. The group provides women of Sudanese background with opportunities to gather together and to maintain the important cultural practice of singing together as a group. The weekly group provides a consistent opportunity for women to get together to recall, share and rehearse traditional songs. In this way, cultural heritage is maintained and the group provides important opportunities for valuing traditional culture in a new country.

A similar project is also run in **Brimbank**, an outer suburb of Melbourne where Sudanese women are getting together to record traditional folk songs and lullabies. The process of gathering together has reportedly created important opportunities for increased connectedness within the community; increased connection to services and subsequent improvements in mental health and self-esteem, while working towards the maintenance of this important cultural heritage.

Dance has also always been a central facet of African and African Diaspora culture. Several respondents stated that the significance of dance in the African culture reflects an intrinsic cultural orientation toward physical expression and creativity. One example is the:

Dambai Dancing Group

Dambai Dancing Group was established in 1998 by Akon Deng Shok and was the first performance group in Melbourne for the Sudanese community. The group's performances are aimed at showcasing the rich cultural experiences of Sudanese people. Dambai's repertoire includes the traditional cultural songs that are featured on special occasions within the Sudanese community.

Please see: www.akm.net.au/dambai

(k) The role of local government in promoting cultural diversity is significant

Various local government Councils have Cultural Development Grant Programs which aim to encourage and support the creative based initiatives of artists and communities.

Respondents in the Victorian stakeholder workshops referred to the **Expanding Cultures Conference** which essentially 'triggered' a whole host of initiatives around cultural development and local communities, particularly support for African Australian communities. One of the key aims of the conference was to explore the changing shape of community cultures and their impact on local government in Victoria, Australia and overseas, and to examine the arts as a vehicle for strengthening communities and facilitating social inclusion, particularly amongst newly arrived communities.

Examples in other states of innovative partnerships between local councils and communities were also provided. Below are some examples:

Blacktown City Council – Blacktown Arts Centre African Theatre Education Kit

The Blacktown Arts Centre developed a play called My Name is Sud (Soo-d) written over a two-year period by a Sudanese youth group mentored by a professional dramatist. The play deals with racism, intergenerational conflict, the differences between African and Australian culture, cultural isolation and trauma. The project will professionally film the play and develop an educational resource kit for distribution to the western Sydney high schools. Screenings of the DVD in schools will be accompanied by a talk and Q&A sessions with Sudanese community representatives.

Brisbane City Council – It's not all Black and White: An African Story

The Council developed an educational kit: It's not all Black and White: An African Story, featuring the lives of new and emerging African communities in

Brisbane. The Council designed the kit to be used to educate the broader community about new and emerging African communities and reduce inaccurate preconceived racial stereotypes. The kit aims to help Brisbane people begin to get to know and support new residents from Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan by welcoming and including African peoples in the life of Brisbane.

Please see:

www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/empowering_refugees/_pdf/19-an-african-story.pdf

Community respondents strongly recommended that future government policies enshrine a solid commitment to promoting multilingualism and linguistic diversity.

(i) *Focus Group with African Musicians – Multicultural Arts Victoria*

The following section is based on consultations undertaken with five African musicians at the offices of Multicultural Arts Victoria in mid 2009. The group included artists originating from Sudan, Ethiopia and Burundi. Their experiences ranged from being well established artists before arriving in Australia to being young musicians attempting to establish a career in music in Australia. Three artists were female and two were male.

Themes of isolation and lack of acceptance strongly influenced the messages young African artists wanted to express through music and other forms of art. Consultations revealed that many were using music to voice their experiences of racism and rejection experiences in particular through the education system and interactions with the justice system.

Artists involved in consultations believed that the ability to continue to make music was just as critical to recording the histories of their communities as it was to promoting messages of peace and understanding. Younger artists in particular had found that music provided an outlet for their experiences and gave them the only opportunity they had to be heard, however minimal that opportunity may be. They also believed it was a very effective approach to positively influencing youth within their own communities.

"I want people to hear my life story. Maybe that will make them understand us. Our life history is in our music."

In terms of artistic recognition, All African musicians involved in the consultations expressed much frustration around the fact that their genre of music was consistently referred to as 'world music', a term they believe was used to refer to any type of music that fell outside the mainstream.

"I'm a song writer and performer... our music is put in this small box called world music. When they don't know about a type of music they just call it world music. There are radio stations, community radio stations that have a weekly program where they play music from this 'genre' so if you are lucky you get a couple of hours a week. Why can't we get the same air time? It's like TV, we never see an African face on the TV."

Some participants noted that SBS had done better than any other media group in increasing exposure to African artists; however, they were also concerned that this just reinforced that African artists were not considered part of the mainstream.

African artists believed their physical appearance and accents were further barriers preventing their participation in the arts. It was not uncommon for these artists to experience ridicule when singing in English with many now avoiding doing so. They also spoke of the emphasis they perceived the Australian music industry placed on physical appearance, something they had not come across as artists in their homeland. Many of the artists consulted believed that this was a barrier they would never overcome.

“Art is like humanity for us. We find it hard to communicate with business people because that is not what our music is about. Our art involves culture, sound and language and we can express ourselves any way we want. Image and attitude are the culture of music here. This is so different to us.”

“If it wasn’t for Multicultural Arts Victoria we would never have had the opportunity to express ourselves artistically.”

Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV)

The Emerge Festival concept developed out of community consultations undertaken by the Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) in an effort to identify needs and barriers impacting the involvement of African communities in the arts. MAV became increasingly concerned about the lack of visibility of African artists. A series of dialogue opportunities involving African community artists revealed that language used within the arts sector was a particular barrier. Community perceptions around what constitutes an ‘artist’ also differed in critical ways.

The engagement process revealed a number of highly creative artists within local African communities, many of which had achieved considerable success, fame and recognition in their country of origin but who were hampered in efforts to advance their careers in Australia.

Please see: www.multiculturalarts.com.au/events2009/emerge.shtml

MAV have gone on to establish a number of highly successful arts programs that engage African artists including ‘Black Harmony Gathering’ and the ‘Emerge Festival’ which celebrate Victoria’s many diverse refugee and emerging cultures with a series of performances and unique cultural experiences around Melbourne. A key feature of this festival is the ongoing discovery of alternative types of artistic expression including visual arts, ancient crafts and ceremonies. This annual festival has grown to attract capacity audiences.

Consultations with key industry stakeholders revealed that, critical to successfully removing barriers to participation was the ability to respect and listen to different ways of doing things.

They also recognised that continued accessibility was reliant on ongoing capacity building within African communities and identifying artistic leaders to work with

younger emerging artists. MAV run an 'Artistic Connections' program which brings together artistic leaders and younger artists in a mentoring capacity.

Cultural collaboration has become the most effective pathway to recognising community artists and creating performance opportunities. The majority of African artists receive no recognition of their pre arrival artistic work outside the multicultural arts sector. There were numerous examples of successful and talented African artists who had arrived in Australia and had exhausted all attempts to continue working in their field of artistic endeavour, succumbing to jobs as unskilled factory workers.

MAV have continued to expand the range of programs promoting African artists and are experiencing increasing success and talent discovery through these. They now produce a CD recording of African artists annually and ensure their inclusion in the 'Mix it Up' concert held on the main stage a Hamer Hall, Arts Centre.

The 'Black Harmony Gathering' is another program of particular note and was established in 2005 in response to the conflict being witnessed between Somali and Aboriginal communities in Melbourne. The event is held annually to celebrate the International Elimination of Racism Day and Cultural Diversity Week. This gathering is a unique event with the message say no to racism! Aboriginal and multicultural artists come together to perform in a spirit of reconciliation.

MAV believe their success in discovering and promoting African artists has been largely due to the fact that they go out into the community and encourage artists to connect and perform at all available opportunities.

"Artists can play a big role in addressing racism, prejudice and stereotypes. What we need to do is increase the exposure to artists that promote these messages and human rights. There are many powerful examples of young African musicians who do exactly this."

In terms of the future, stakeholders emphasised the importance of positioning the visibility of African artists in terms of their contribution to the community. They expressed concern that most people are exposed to 'negative' representations through the media and that the arts can combat these by focusing on powerful and positive messages.

10.2 Immigration experience

(i) Public submissions

Issues relating to African Australian immigration experiences were addressed by over a quarter (27%) of the submissions.

Issues relating to African Australians immigration experiences were raised during consultations with community members, but often in relation to other experiences, particularly employment. Issues raised included:

- distinctions and differences between the skilled migration program and the refugee and humanitarian program

- processes relating to family reunion need to be simplified and more accessible
- African Australian communities often encounter cultural and language barriers when negotiating the immigration system
- accessing migration agents and advice
- professional conduct amongst some registered migration agents still remains an issue of concern.

In a handful of sessions, a small number of respondents highlighted the need for greater recognition of the differences between those migrating to Australia as skilled migrants and those arriving as refugee and humanitarian entrants.

A considerable number of respondents raised the specific issue of family reunions, emphasising the importance of family as a way of enhancing integration and encouraging migrant participation in economic, social, cultural, and political life.

“To be separated from your love ones is the most depressing and difficult experience you can imagine.”

10.3 Negotiating gender relations

Information relating to gender issues was presented in a quarter (25%) of the submissions.

Negotiating gender relations was certainly a theme that was raised on numerous occasions throughout the project. However, much of the feedback provided related to other themes, and so features in different sections.

Nevertheless, there were some specific issues that were highlighted. Broadly, these included:

- impact of culture shock, particularly on men
- the acculturation process involves adjustments as gender roles differ
- division between roles at home and expectations of Australian life.

“We come here and we find we can’t get a job and then I am not helping my family but my wife is getting a job. It is not good to show myself to the community when it is like this.”

The consultations highlighted that for many new arrivals coming from African countries, there can be a division between roles at home and expectations of Australian life. This is reflected in the roles of adult men and women, and young people, who are faced with the tensions between maintaining traditional African cultural practices while adhering to the demands of a new society. This creates challenges for maintaining and enhancing relationships.

There are a number of programs that have been established to address these issues:

Bridges for African Men and Families

The Bridges for African Men and Families Program is based on monthly dialogue meetings with representatives from CALD African communities in Tasmania, and other relevant service providers. The meetings explore how to disseminate useful information and support on healthy relationships, and to enable relevant service providers to be more responsive to the needs of these communities.

Please see: www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/profiles/cfc_bridges_ratat.html

The Men and Family Relationship Program at SMRC

The Men and Family Relationship Program at SMRC supports men from CALD backgrounds and their families to maintain and promote quality family relationships through social connectedness, group activities and community education programs, as well as responding to their daily issues and addressing their concerns through direct counseling and a case management service. Currently the program targets men from recently-arrived communities including the Iraqi, Kurdish and Sudanese community. The program is supported by the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs through the Men and Family Relationship initiative.

African Men's Group – WA – Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

The African Men's Group was established to bring African men together to develop resources and relationships that will maximise their assistance to their own communities. The service focuses on capacity building that will give momentum to African men's orientation, paving the way for a quick exchange of experience with different service providers and the government, and promoting various men's activities within African communities thereby encouraging their participation in the broader Australian community.

10.4 Intergenerational issues

(i) Community

Another issue raised is the differing levels of adaptation to Australian society between parents and their children. Young people can adapt more quickly to a new country, though they often have misconceptions of how it is for other young people in this society, which can lead to social problems with cultural integration.

Several parents expressed being concerned at what they perceived to be the gradual loss of their children's cultural identity.

Many of the newly-arrived communities have no concept of 'youth'. For many of these families the first time they encounter the concept of youth is via Centrelink, which is when young members of their family are switched to Youth Allowance.

“While ‘youth’ is recognised as a key developmental stage of life in Australia, in Southern Sudan the category is relatively unknown, because at around the age of 12, or the onset of puberty, a child is usually initiated into adulthood.”

The **Somali Women’s Group** received a grant from the Australian Council for Arts for the Poetry Jam Arts Project with the aim of improving intergenerational communication between young people and the elders in the community through traditional poetry and the hip hop subculture.

10.5 Faith related issues

Issues relating to faith were addressed by one tenth (9%) of the submissions.

Faith related issues were also raised at many of the community workshops.

- Issues relevant to African Australian Muslim women in relation to their faith, and their experiences of discrimination were repeatedly identified. Muslim women in particular have reported the detrimental impact that harassment and discrimination have had on their freedom of movement and sense of safety, their sense of control and agency over their lives, and their sense of belonging and participation in society.
- Importantly, many said that spirituality and religious beliefs have been a common coping mechanism for many Muslims.
- The impact of laws aimed at counter-terrorism measures limit the ability of Muslim Australians to enjoy their rights to freedom of religion, opinion and association. Australia’s Muslim and Arab populations have reported an increase in anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice since September 2001. The negative public attitudes towards these communities raise concerns about the ability of Muslim Australians to publicly manifest their religion.
- For Muslims, as with all members of faith-based communities, there is limited legal protection at the Commonwealth level from actions of government officials or government policies that restrict freedom of religion or discriminate on the basis of religion.

A number of Sudanese respondents discussed the importance of the role of religion and faith in their settlement process, highlighting the number of Sudanese churches that had been established across the country.

Two focus groups conducted with young people in Victoria highlighted the role of youth multifaith networks in developing awareness and compassion, an understanding of difference, and an acceptance.

There are several programs focusing on young people and their role in multi faith networks and dialogues. One program that was cited is the **Multifaith Multicultural Youth Mentoring (MMYM)** initiative that fosters connections between young people from diverse backgrounds, with a strong interest in multifaith multicultural dialogue, and decision makers in the Victorian community.

10.6 Relationships between African and other minority groups

(i) Community – summary

The issue of relationships between African Australians and other minority Australian groups received varying levels of attention within the community focus groups. Where the subject was directly addressed, dialogue tended to focus mostly on inter cultural issues between Indigenous Australians (young) and young Australians. This prompted requests for a specific session to examine the issues and details identified below.

- negative relationships in some states/areas between young Australians from a Pacific Islander background and African Australians
- tensions between other migrant and refugee groups and African Australians
- discriminatory attitudes towards African Australians who identified as being gay
- a small number of focus groups raised the issue of tension within African Australian groups and organisations stemming from either competition for scarce resources or geographic and political demarcations in their countries of origin.

Where tensions had been identified, community members also provided a number of excellent examples of constructive responses in an effort to resolve issues between the conflicting groups.

Overall, however, most community respondents indicated a desire to increase understanding and acceptance across minority groups, with a strong commitment to the values and principles of multiculturalism and social cohesion.

(a) Relations with Indigenous Australians

Several community members in a number of different states highlighted examples of tensions and conflict between Indigenous young Australians and recently settled African Australian young people. Respondents suggested that tensions between the two groups were often based on a perception of competition for resources and support, particularly in relation to access to housing and education.

In undertaking this project, an ideal opportunity was presented for an open dialogue to occur between Aboriginal and African communities to identify common community issues, particularly around youth, and to explore constructive ways forward.

The following section is based on a community consultation involving Indigenous and African communities in Melbourne. The consultation was co-hosted by the Commission and the City of Yarra in recognition of their large population of Aboriginal and African communities.

The meeting was chaired by Tom Calma, former Race Discrimination Commissioner and included over 20 participants representing:

- Alliance of African – Australian Youth
- Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sport and Recreation Co-op
- African Holistic Social Services Victoria
- Neighbourhood Justice Centre
- Sudanese Support Project – Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services
- New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre
- Community members/residents.

This consultation was believed to be the first formal meeting of this kind run in Australia, bringing together Australia's oldest and youngest communities.

"I am an African woman who has been living in this country for 14 years. This is the first time I have ever come face to face with people from the Aboriginal community. I feel proud to have the opportunity to meet face to face. This has negated all the negative assumptions made by the media."

African community participants commented that there were no community spaces where their youth could meet to practice cultural traditions and socialise with their peers. This resulted in 'hanging around on the street' and was contributing to youth issues in the area.

Representatives from Aboriginal communities commented on the similarities experienced by both community groups who have each struggled around maintaining their identity and dealing with the impact of this struggle on their youth.

"Maintaining culture is what gives us our strength. It has taken a lifetime and we don't want our children to take as long."

The clear message from the Aboriginal community was that African communities needed to develop the capacity to deliver what they needed for their youth independently of government. They invited African youth to visit the local Aboriginal youth recreation facility to explore opportunities for mutual learning and sharing of resources.

Both Aboriginal and African community participants agreed that children in their communities had experienced much suffering and had to grow up too soon. However, they also acknowledged that both are strong cultures that had the ability to retain their cultural identity and to overcome adversity.

"We need to get our young people together and listen to them. It's about time we started to hear each other's stories."

This consultation, as well as a number of others across different states and territories highlighted a number of innovative initiatives and activities to bring together African and Indigenous young people in friendship and respect.

The **MCNT** has organised several barbeque/meetings of African and Indigenous community leaders and Elders based on the theme of 'Let's Talk It Over'. The

meetings have been very well attended. From these meetings the idea for an African/Indigenous Council of Elders has been proposed.

‘My Sister's Kitchen’ – This project is designed to promote interaction and understanding between Indigenous, broader community and African refugee women through exchange of cultural information contained in cooking and storytelling. Participants develop skills in food handling and cultural enterprise, skills exchanges and opportunities to perform and cater at events at local festivals and cultural development community events hosted by Darwin Community Arts.

Please see: www.mysisterskitchen.org.au

Sanctuary Northern Rivers Incorporated – ‘Finding Common Ground’ – the project aims to bring together and support local youth leaders from Indigenous, African and other Australian backgrounds so they can build bridges between their communities and address intercultural tensions between them. The project’s activities commenced with a weekend retreat where participants shared their life experiences and addressed the tensions and conflicts between their groups. After this, the group was supported to hold a youth forum and share their ideas for change.

Songlines Inc: Songlines Community Engagement Program – this organisation currently manages the Songlines Choir, which attracts and maintains productive and trusting relationships with Indigenous, Torres Strait Islander, Eritrean and Sudanese communities through weekly choir rehearsals. The program has recently been funded to allow it to perform at annual gatherings, including National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC week, Eritrean and Sudanese cultural festivals and other social justice and celebratory events. The project also proposes to hold a showcase concert, which will be promoted more broadly throughout Brisbane.

Please see: www.songlines.net.au

Women Creating Harmony

VU (Victoria University) worked with the Gathering Place to set up a multicultural women’s group to work with, and explore youth issues in the western region of Melbourne. The Vietnamese Community, Horn of African Communities, Indian, New Zealanders, Islamic Women Council and Indigenous Australians participated in the project. The Gathering Place received funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

(b) Intercultural relations with Pacific Islander communities

Tensions between African Australian youth and young people from Pacific Islander backgrounds was also raised by some groups, particularly in Victoria and NSW.

Community respondents highlighted a number of projects and community driven initiatives that were aimed at addressing these tensions. Examples included:

Rugby Youth Foundation – The Mt Druitt and Doonside Youth Leaders Program

The Mt Druitt/Doonside Youth Leadership Project is a cross-cultural leadership program that aims to empower youth, aged 15–19, particularly from the Pacific Islander, African and Indigenous communities. The youth are being trained in leadership skills and placed into cross-cultural management teams to lead sporting activities for local primary school students. The youth will become the face of Rugby in the Park activities, provide good role modelling behaviour and create positive influences for future generations. The project will equip the youth with skills to improve social relationships, enhance their further education and employment options.

Claymore Neighbourhood and Youth Centre – 'Imagine You and Me'

In response to incidents in the community involving African Australian and Pacific Islander youth, the 'Imagine You and Me' project was implemented to have young people working on ways to discuss and help break down barriers between different cultural groups by attending workshops twice a week and producing Hip Hop songs based on the workshopped ideas. Music and video technology is used as a medium to produce common ground for young people of all cultures who live in the community. A CD and DVD of the songs and project will be produced by the young people to be used by local community services and schools to promote peaceful and progressive attitudes.

Information and Cultural Exchange: Stories of Change – sharing diverse youth cultures

This project seeks to address issues of cultural and racial intolerance by engaging young people from African refugee, Arabic and Pacific Islander backgrounds through creative and digital media workshops that will include hip-hop, storytelling, video production, documentary and online formats. Workshops will facilitate discussion and enable participants to communicate around issues of cultural identity and racial tension and help find common ground. The young people will showcase the outcomes of the project at a community workshop for their families and wider communities, bringing together African, Islander, Arabic and other diverse communities incorporating performances and screenings, and enabling a rare opportunity for intergenerational and intercultural dialogue.

Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency – Mt Druitt Embraces Diversity

The project aims to create opportunities to foster a sense of understanding and belonging amongst different cultures within the Mt. Druitt community. The overall aim of the project is to break-down some of the strongly held myths and forge a sense of unity and belonging amongst the different cultural groups which exist in the region, by facilitating an open dialogue and encouraging participation in community forums, workshops and festivals. The project aims to create a community which is inclusive of all, promotes a shared sense of belonging and recognises and values cultural diversity.

Please see:

www.meca.asn.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=18

(c) Attitudes towards Gay and Lesbian minorities

A request was made by a group of young gay and lesbians to conduct a focus group with the aim of exploring issues particular to this minority. The focus group highlighted discriminatory attitudes both within African Australian communities as well as the broader mainstream society. Issues raised included:

- isolation from the communities or forced silence
- name calling and stigma because of their sexual orientation
- community leaders shun the issues, arguing that it is unnatural and should not be supported:

“Some community leaders have publicly said that being gay is ‘un African’”

(d) Issues within African Australian groups and organisations

A small number of focus groups raised the issue of tension within African Australian groups and organisations. Community respondents suggested that these were often caused by competition between groups for funding or geographic, ethnic and political difference.

One fifth (21%) of submissions addressed this issue.

Several examples of initiatives designed to address these issues were provided including:

The African Leadership, Learning and Advocacy Group Inc. (ALLAG)

To address tensions within African organisations, ALLAG held an evening festival for African community organisations throughout Victoria. The event featured speeches by prominent leaders, music performances as well as cooking demonstrations. The project has the support of several African organisations in Victoria and seeks to increase understanding and respect between groups ultimately improving relationships.

Please see: www.allag.org.au/index.htm

Sudanese Women Association of Northern Tasmania – Empowering Sudanese Women to Act through Peace Education

The Sudanese community in Launceston come from diverse ethnic groups, and have had vastly different refugee experiences. This creates tensions and misunderstandings amongst the Sudanese community and affects their ability to work together and participate in the broader Launceston environment. It is recognised that the Sudanese community needs to work together to create

mutual understanding of each other's situation. In order to address these differences, the Peace Education Course, pioneered in Kenya by Pamela Baxter, is proposed to be run for Sudanese women. The course helps former refugees share their experiences and establishes a common purpose to work together.

10.7 Community relationships and tensions

Almost all of the focus groups conducted with African Australian communities highlighted the issue of community relationships and tensions, with many reporting:

- experiences of discrimination and racism in all spheres of public life
- lack of intercultural understanding amongst non African Australians
- low levels of acceptance in various spheres of public life
- rejection by local neighbourhoods
- negative stereotypes about cultural differences
- perceptions by mainstream communities of African Australians not integrating
- experiencing high levels of scrutiny by public bodies, such as police and child protection agencies
- heightened experiences of isolation by young African Australians from mainstream Australia
- repeated negative media reports about the use of public space by young African people
- inaccurate representation of African communities as homogenous
- regular media reports distorting incidences of crime committed by African Australians.

Community respondents suggested that there was a much greater need for activities that aimed to promote greater understanding, respect and intercultural learning between African Australians and mainstream community members:

“Activities that will help all of us understanding each other more, but not only what is different but what is shared as well.”

Small not-for-profit organisations promote social capital and promote social inclusion among migrant and refugee communities. Being a newly-arrived migrant or refugee can be an extremely isolating experience and many African Australian and other voluntary organisations play a vital role in developing support networks and enhancing social wellbeing through bringing people together for cultural, social and religious events, literacy classes or sporting activities.

A number of positive initiatives have been undertaken by African Australians in an effort to challenge the mainstream community's negative perceptions. Some examples highlighted included:

Al Zahra Muslim Women's Association Inc – Diversity of Muslim Women Conference

The project aims to address a range of stereotypes and myths about Muslim women, particularly those from African Australian backgrounds by showing that Muslim women have integrated and become part of society in many different ways, such as professional women, teachers, lawyers, artists, business women. In May 2009, the organisation hosted a Conference in Rockdale, NSW. The Conference aimed to provide a catalyst for mainstream communities to reconsider negative stereotypes and create positive perceptions about the true identity of a Muslim woman.

Sierra Leone Migrant Association Inc: Building our Capacity, Building our Community

The project will provide leadership training to community representatives, including youth, and will provide the resources for them to actively identify and participate in community meetings and activities. These representatives will positively advocate for African Australians in Launceston, and promote understanding and acceptance of their cultural heritage, as part of the diversity of the Launceston community. The project also entails three public celebrations, which will invite local community members and organisation representatives, such as Launceston City Council, local schools, Rotary clubs and progress associations and the neighbourhood house. These celebrations will showcase Sierra Leonean culture on Sierra Leone Independence Day, Harmony Day, and as part of Refugee Week.

Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community Inc – Intercultural dialogue between Sudanese community and other communities living in Liverpool

The project identified stereotyping of the Sudanese community and their 'adaptation into society'. The project held a series of workshops which brought diverse communities together to share experiences and knowledge. Through dialogue the Sudanese and other communities from the area explored social identities, difference and inequality with the aim of building greater understanding, skills and values for living, learning and working in a multicultural society.

Rumbek Community in Australia Incorporated – Promotion of Rumbek (Sudanese) Culture in Newcastle

The project proposes a cultural event showcasing the music, dance, traditional dress and food of the Rumbek community that will allow the mainstream community to interact with the growing population, and notes similar events held in Sydney have increased acceptance levels. It will involve nearly all 200 members of the Rumbek community and invite members of government and

NGOs. Following the event, the organisation will connect with local councils and community organisations to continue the positive outcomes.

A number of community organisations are utilising technology, including the internet to raise awareness of diverse African communities and their contributions:

The Sudanese Online Research Association (SORA)

This website is devoted to the issues, journeys, images and stories of the Sudanese diaspora. SORA strives to provide an internationally accessible centre for Sudan-related research and to raise awareness in academic and wider circles of the hopes, struggles and realities of the Sudanese people living outside Sudan.

Local governments play a fundamental role in facilitating social inclusion and participation for their local population. Many have cultural diversity plans which outline commitments to harmonious and culturally diverse communities. A number of Councils also establish and convene settlement planning networks which have a focus on new and emerging communities.

In addition, local Councils provide grants to local community groups and organisations to run projects and activities that will benefit local residents, many of which address community relations.

A number of examples where local councils had initiated local activities designed to promote greater understanding of newly-arrived communities were cited by both community and stakeholder respondents. Below is just a small sample of the range of initiatives identified throughout the consultations:

Local Area Multicultural Partnerships program

The Local Area Multicultural Partnerships program, funded by Multicultural Affairs Queensland, is implemented in partnership with local governments, and is designed to create harmonious and cohesive community relations. Under the program, 14 local councils are funded to employ workers who are responsible for ensuring that every part of councils' core business is accessible and inclusive of all community members, regardless of their background. Program workers in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Logan, Cairns and Townsville, in particular, work closely with African refugee communities.

Please see:

www.multicultural.qld.gov.au/community/community-partnerships/lamp.html

Other examples cited include:

Tasmanians Talking project

The project aims to facilitate friendship and social networks between established communities and new emerging communities via a series of activities. The project is managed by the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and

supported by DIAC. The project involves four key elements that give residents, government agencies and community organisations the opportunity to share their experiences, culture and wisdom while discussing local issues of mutual concern. The core element of the project comprises series of community dialogues that will be run in 12 Tasmanian neighbourhoods across six local council districts. This process is modelled on the Boston Dialogues, a successful program developed and refined over many years by the City of Boston, U.S.A.

Building Bridges Project

The Building Bridges Project raises community understanding and celebrates cultural diversity within African refugee communities and the Gold Coast community. This project provides information sessions on African culture, history and customs and workshops in drumming, hair-beading, coffee-making ceremony and food preparation.

The African Women's Chorus

The African Women's Chorus builds friendships between African Australian women and provides the broader community of Queensland with opportunities to experience traditional African music.

10.8 Countering negative media stereotypes

(i) Community

Issues relating to media portrayals of African Australians were addressed by one third (32%) of the submissions.

Community respondents repeatedly raised concerns in relation to the way in which mainstream media were perpetuating stereotypes and racism.

"I worry every day about what I will see in the newspaper this time about our community. This has been very sad that they do this."

The impact of negative media stereotypes of African Australian young people was highlighted as having a significant impact on their sense of belonging and their self esteem and confidence.

Several community leaders however stressed the need for African Australians to become better informed about how the media in Australia worked and to begin to think about using it more effectively:

"There are lots of stories that show the communities are benefiting this country. We need to be able to encourage the media to show these stories which represent the majority of Africans in Australia."

One example is the **New Media Project**. New Australia Media aims to give a voice to those in our community who are missing – and sometimes

misrepresented – in the mainstream media. A not-for-profit association, New Australia Media aims to make the mainstream media more multicultural and the multicultural media more mainstream. The first project to progress this aim is a website featuring news from the 45% of the population who were either born overseas or have one parent born overseas, plus a Multicultural Media Association to act as an umbrella group for in-language publications.

The website, hosted by the **State Library of Victoria**, features stories from multicultural Australia written mainly by young people from new and emerging communities. Journalist mentors volunteered their time to work one-on-one with these young people. Some of the young people were newly arrived in Australia, and most of the contributors had never written a story before.

Please see: www.newaustraliamedia.org

Ethnic broadcasting plays a significant role in maintaining language, culture and identity, simulating multilingualism and combating racism/stereotypes, through self-representation of minority communities, promoting communication, dialogue and understanding.

Other initiatives highlighted by community respondents aimed at challenging negative media stereotypes included media training for young people.

For example, the **Migrant Information Centre in Melbourne** undertook a project for young people that included training 20 youth aged 17 to 25 years interested in learning about the way negative media impacts on targeted cultural and ethnic groups, as well as the broader society. The project, which was funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship Living in Harmony Program, supported youth and equipped them with the skills to organise forums and present to their peers on how to analyse media reports and constructively respond to negative images of ethnic groups in the media.

Please see: www.miceastmelb.com.au/youth.htm

10.9 Transport

Transport and social exclusion was seen by some community respondents as an issue of growing concern particularly for newly-arrived African Australians.

Transport contributes to social inclusion by providing access to work, education, healthcare, food, shops, social, cultural and sporting activities.

There were a number of barriers identified by stakeholders to accessing public transport. These included:

- costs
- lack of knowledge of the system
- fear of crime and personal safety

- vulnerability to racism
- providing community managed transport services supported by government investment could help remove these barriers.

The availability of public transport was seen to be of particular importance to young people involved in the consultations:

“We need to have a familiarisation program that helps people learn how to get around on public transport. We don’t really get any of this information. We have to try and work it ourselves.”

While the following is a story of discrimination, this young African Australian enjoyed some measure of success in his response:

“I got on the bus, and there was one seat left next to a woman at the back. But as I was walking up I noticed that she put her bag on the empty seat. I thought ‘not again’, but I decided that I would this time do something different, so I looked at the bag and said to the bag “Did you pay?” and then I said “What? You didn’t pay!?” The woman quickly snatched her bag and as I went to sit on the seat, she turned her back to me. So I did the same, and then the people on the bus started clapping and I felt very good to know that not all people in Australia are like that.”

Perceptions of safety and fear of crime associated with public transport was of particular concern for women, including young women.

Transport was also a major issue for the growing number of newly-arrived families who had been settled in regional and rural locations.

Whilst discussions in relation to transport tended to focus on public transport, it is important to note that use of a private car also brings with it some challenges for some newly arrived communities, particularly in relation to ensuring that they are properly licensed.

10.10 Sport and social inclusion

Sport featured significantly in many of the focus groups conducted with community respondents, particularly young African Australians, both male and female.

Discussions in relation to sport could broadly be categorised into three key themes:

- sport as a method for inclusion
- sport as a method for improving negative relations, particularly with police
- sport as an arena for discrimination and racism.

The range of sports varied, but the most frequently preferred were: soccer, football, cricket, basketball.

(a) Sport as a method for inclusion

“Sport really helps to promote inclusion and social cohesion in the newly arrived communities here because the young people really seem to love playing.”

Many of the young African Australians participating in the consultations demonstrated an enthusiasm and interest in participating in sport. Older members of the community were likely to identify the benefits but did not raise the issue of sport as frequently as the youth respondents did.

The benefits identified included:

- increased sense of belonging and inclusion
- development of friendship networks

‘When I first came to Australia I did not have any friends. When I started playing football I met a lot of people and some of them are now my friends.’

- access to wider support, such as homework assistance
- development of skills
- availability of older role models
- several stakeholders who had become involved in their children’s sporting activities expressed the view that their involvement had provided them with greater opportunity for volunteering and increasing their social networks.
- a tool against racism

A number of respondents expressed the view that sport can be a potential tool to fight against discrimination and racism:

“You don’t have to even speak the same language, but you are working together to win.”

The STAARTS focus group with staff also highlighted the benefits of sport, particularly to young refugees from African Australian backgrounds. They provided a number of good practice examples, including the **African Soccer Tournament**, which was sponsored by the Australian Centre for Languages (ACL). The program was created to break the social isolation of newly-arrived refugee youths, particularly from African backgrounds settling in Western Sydney. It also provided the opportunity for African refugee youths and others to come together in a single event so the competition became a point of common interest for all. The teams were from Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Ethiopia and the NSW Police Soccer Team.

Western Sydney Burundian Soccer Team

Burundian refugees are fairly new to Australia, almost all of whom have arrived in the last three years. Despite being here for such a short time, young men from the community have organised a regular team that plays every Saturday in

Fairfield. They have also invited a small number of Congolese and Sudanese to join them.

The AFL Multicultural Football Program

The AFL Multicultural Program is designed to introduce Australian Football to migrants and refugees. The program has seven Multicultural Development Officers (MDOs) based in Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. The MDOs are based at and working closely with AFL clubs to deliver programs encouraging participation in Australian Football within multicultural communities and schools across greater Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and some rural areas.

A major thrust of the Multicultural Football Programs is to put newly arrived cultural groups in touch with Australian Football as quickly as possible in order to help them feel more connected with their surrounds. One way of doing this is to get them to a game of AFL footy.

One such day was organised at the Melbourne Cricket Ground for a number of families from Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Young people and their families attended a game of Australian Football for the first time as part of the AFL's Family Weekend Round of matches. Families from the Western English Language School, Blackburn English Language School, Jesuit Social Services, Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program and Spring Valley Primary School came along to experience Australian Football.

Please see: www.afl.com.au/about/tabid/10288/default.aspx

The Human Rights are Aussie Rules Project

This is a schools-based education program teaching children about human rights through principles of fair play and good sportsmanship. The project has been developed by the Eastern Community Legal Centre and uses an innovative theatre production, FRED's Fair Play, to help children easily understand basic human rights principles. Performances of FRED's Fair Play, which can be tailored to meet school needs, are accompanied by an interactive and fun workshop, educating children about the play's key themes – Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity.

Please see: www.humanrightsareaussierules.org.au

'Out of Africa and into Soccer'

This is an initiative funded by VicHealth aimed at providing opportunities for newly-arrived young men from African backgrounds to participate in the community through sport. It aims to enhance the settlement of the emerging African refugee community by facilitating and supporting their participation in sporting activities. The project also aims to develop the leadership skills of community members through a process of mentoring by existing local sporting clubs.

ZimVic Social Sports Club

This social sports club was established in 2007 in Melbourne by Zimbabwean immigrants to integrate into Australian life through sport. From humble beginnings in Carrum Downs, the club has rapidly grown and has helped players and supporters to build solid community relationships, social skills and embrace cultural diversity, and now fields a competitive team that has enjoyed success against several local multicultural teams.

Please see: <http://zimvicfootballclub.ning.com>

More recently, specific efforts appear to have been made to engage young women, particularly young Muslim women. This was seen to be a direct result of opening the sport up to players "from all religions, races and cultures". Some service providers however expressed the view that girls' experiences in and perceptions of physical education in many team sport-based programs are less than satisfactory.

Nevertheless, stakeholders referred to a number of particularly successful programs including:

Young Women's Soccer Program

SERMRC runs a soccer program for girls aged 12–21 from refugee backgrounds. With funding from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Settlement Grants Program the aim is to increase the girls self-confidence, develop their fitness levels and enhance their social networks.

Please see: www.sermrc.org.au/index.php?page=youth-services

Flemington Estate Women's Participation in Sport and Recreation Project

Led by Dousta Galla Community Health Service and funded by Department of Planning and Community Development Sport and Recreation, the project is partnered by community organisations, local government, Victoria Police and CMY to increase the participation of local women in sport and recreation opportunities. The project recently facilitated a young women's camp, surfing lessons, dance program.

(b) Sport as a method for improving negative relations, particularly with police

Improving police and ethnic youth relations is a vital task for the maintenance of a harmonious community.

Sport has become an extremely effectively tool for enhancing police and African youth relations and provides a forum where the police and young people interact in a friendly atmosphere. There were many examples provided including:

Rosehill Local Area Command

This project, involving sporting, social and workshop events, has evolved into regular monthly meetings between young people and police in the Rosehill Local Area Command (LAC). The aim was to develop and enhance relationships between police and young people of African backgrounds, who may have been involved in at-risk or anti-social behaviour. The project also aims to engage young people in crime prevention strategies, as well as early intervention work to address potential anti-social behaviour of some people within these communities. The project involves a monthly social and sporting event between police, youth workers and young Africans, which includes crime prevention workshops covering topics such as young people's rights, driving without a licence, personal safety, reporting crime, bullying, youth violence and sexual harassment.

(c) Sport as an arena for discrimination and racism

While young people were particularly enthusiastic about involvement in sport, they were also able to identify a number of barriers to participation. These included:

- discrimination and racism
- limited knowledge about how to access organised sporting opportunities and playing venues (for training and competitions)
- costs associated with obtaining sporting equipment and joining organised sporting associations.

Discrimination and racism was highlighted as the key barrier to participation by most community respondents. Experiences of racism or discrimination had deterred a number of young people from continuing their participation in the sport.

Stakeholders identified a number of government and non government initiatives aimed at addressing some of these barriers, including:

Queensland Roars Against Racism strategy

Under its Queensland Roars Against Racism strategy, Multicultural Affairs Queensland has made a special effort to include African refugee communities by providing low-cost entry to sports events and by showcasing African performers at major events.

Please see: www.multicultural.qld.gov.au/community/roar

Sudanese use basketball to counter racism

A national Sudanese Basketball Tournament was organised by Sudanese Youth as a way of Sudanese youths. The competition involving young members of Australia's Sudanese community in Melbourne, which was watched by over 1000 spectators and attracted 12 male and two female teams from around Australia. It is now planned as an annual event.

“It helps to bring young Sudanese together, to play basketball and work in a team. It also helps young Sudanese to access sport facilities that are quite expensive, particularly for newly arrived communities like ours who may have big families.”

Bouncing racism out of sport

A ‘Bouncing Racism out of Sport’ booklet and DVD were developed by Cricket Victoria, Football Victoria and Netball Victoria in partnership with the Department of Victorian Communities. They have combined resources and expertise to develop a comprehensive racial and religious tolerance education program which is available and distributed to clubs.

Star Basketball Recreation Club

A number of young people from Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ghana have formed the Star Basketball Recreation Club.

“With the support of SydWest Multicultural Services who help fund us to play at Blacktown PCYC we have been able to get these kids off the streets and give them an opportunity to play basketball.”

11 Regional consultations

The Commonwealth Government continues to encourage migrants and refugees to settle in regional, rural and remote areas, and many regional areas now have fairly stable, and in many instances, growing African Australian populations.

In the past five years, refugees from 43 countries, speaking 41 languages, have settled in country Australia. The majority are located in Toowoomba, Shepparton and Coffs Harbour, but are as widespread as Townsville and Warrnambool. Refugees from Sudan are by far the largest refugee community in rural areas and are represented in all but one rural Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

Humanitarian entrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and the African continent have moved into rural areas, providing much needed labour as agricultural workers and in regional abattoirs, and helping to increase declining rural populations. Skilled workers are also in high demand, particularly in engineering, medicine and nursing. In Victoria alone, Sudanese communities are resettling from Melbourne to Warrnambool and also Colac. The current Sudanese population in Warrnambool is estimated at about 100 people.

As part of this project, the following regional consultations were conducted in NSW, Victoria and South Australia, to identify issues particular to rural and regional locations:

- Lismore, NSW
- Coffs Harbour, NSW
- Newcastle, NSW
- Mildura, Victoria
- Shepparton, Victoria
- Castlemaine, Victoria
- Warrnambool, Victoria
- Ballarat, Victoria
- Bordertown, South Australia.

These consultations highlighted the importance of collaboration and the role that the broader government and non-government sector plays in the effective long-term settlement of emerging communities.

11.1 Employment and training

In summary, critical areas for employment and training identified by participants in rural and regional areas included:

- access to childcare hours to be increased in number and total duration to allow parents the ability to attend training
- easily accessible and consistent driver education programs – this was seen as the single most important impediment across a range of topics in rural areas
- ACE /TAFE living skills programs as distinct from standard English language training
- increased quality of vocational assessments
- focus on self-employment opportunities
- lower initial expectations of humanitarian entrant communities
- identification of pathway opportunities from a job to a career.

Critical areas around employment opportunities included:

- formally lobbying of employers to set up reference groups in towns with employment bases
- identification of areas for work experience
- use of service clubs as a bridge to employers by having them 'adopt' individuals or families.

Lack of employment was consistently raised as the primary issue during the consultations. Lack of available employment appears also to have led to the widespread occurrence of 'secondary settlement', as new arrivals move between regional centres in search of work, with further consequences in terms of service provision.

The fact that qualifications have not been recognised in Australia has been the source of great frustration to some of the entrants, in particular those with trade skills.

Pressures around accessing employment are exacerbated by the imperative to earn as much as possible so that communities can fulfil their obligations to support family and friends who remain in refugee camps.

Further, strong cultural values in many of these communities dictate that the male is the head of the household and that he must provide for the family. Lack of employment prevents individuals from meeting these cultural expectations and the repercussions of this are being witnessed in a range of settlement issues.

Consultations highlighted that specialised employment support for humanitarian entrants is required to prepare them for the Australian workplace, to assist them to find employment and to educate employers about their needs. There was a clear need identified for greater integration between language instruction and employment, and more structured pathways to employment. One such example is:

The Goulburn Murray Skilled Migration Strategy

The Goulburn Murray Skilled Migration Program, funded through GSPV, works to assist employers facing difficulties in attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified staff in the region. As one option to address skill shortages in the Goulburn Murray region, the local coordinator can link employers with job vacancies to skilled migrants looking for work, assist with migrant settlement and promote the region as a place to live, work and invest.

Feedback suggested, that on the whole, job search agencies do not fully understand the challenges that newly-arrived African Australians face in trying to find work and women in particular faced additional barriers because of the difficulties involved in attending language classes.

Flexibility in the delivery of English language classes was highlighted as an important approach for improving access. For example, in Warrnambool (Vic), ESL classes were held for Sudanese women at the local swimming pool, where they could breastfeed their babies, childcare was available and a café where the women and children could socialise after class.

The need for clear pathways to skilled jobs was identified during both the community and stakeholder consultations. Good practice examples identified in the research included:

- **The Catholic Education Office in Shepparton** which organised traineeships for Congolese teacher assistants.
- **The African BEAT (Building Employment Acceptance Together) program** in Ballarat, which works with Sudanese refugees to help them understand the Australian workplace, and employers to help them understand the background and support needs of the refugees.

In rural areas in particular, it was reported that without a driving licence it is almost impossible to obtain employment. These problems are compounded by the fact that requirements for obtaining a licence are becoming increasingly tough and expensive to meet.

Good practice examples included:

The **Lismore Migrant Driver Mentor programme** developed by NRMS in partnership with the local Rotary Clubs and Northern Rivers Community Transport has helped many refugees gain better access to much needed cost free driving practice. An African radio project with 2NCR community radio has given a voice to the local refugee community in Lismore and is highlighting areas where communities can be supported.

Please see: www.nrsdc.org.au/sector-development/transport/162-pubtradevcategory/422-lismore-driver-mentor-program.html

While the consultations highlighted that significant numbers of humanitarian entrant communities are struggling around opportunities for employment and often

experience severe disadvantage in the job market due to settlement, language and cultural barriers, there were also many good practice examples that highlighted positive outcomes for employers as well as African community members. For example:

Eritreans are working at the **Tatiara Meat Company** (Bordertown), which processes and exports halal meat. They have been employed for up to 18 months and consider the company a good employer who recognises their skills in halal slaughtering.

Diversitat Training's Apprenticeship Traineeship Training Program (ATTP) provides both new entrants and existing workers with the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment while receiving formal training towards a nationally recognised qualification.

Case study:

Castlemaine – small town, diverse community

Castlemaine, is a regional town north-west of Melbourne, which recently welcomed a large group of Sudanese and Burundian refugees who have settled in the community after gaining employment with KR Castlemaine, manufacturer of hams, bacon and other meat goods. Employment of about 30 of the refugees, aged from 18 to 40 plus, was the result of a local partnership between community organisation New Hope Foundation (NHF) and KR Castlemaine, one of the district's largest employers. The project assists employers and communities to address labour and skill shortages, and targets refugees and special humanitarian entrants because of the disadvantages they confront in employment.

Important to the success of this partnership was NHF's engagement of a bilingual worker to assist in the induction, training and appraisal process of the new employees. NHF also assisted the refugees with orientation of the town, housing, furniture and transport costs.

Meetings were organised by NHF and Castlemaine Community Health Centre to welcome the families to Castlemaine and give them an opportunity to meet representatives of key organisations in the town. Centrelink, along with local agencies, staff of KR Castlemaine, local police, hospital, real estate agents and parish priests were represented.

Centrelink provided information about the effect of casual earnings on Newstart and Family payments, and distributed factsheets translated into Dinka. The community was also encouraged to use Centrelink Multilingual Call (CMC) to do their business over the phone, such as reporting their earnings.

11.2 Education

Educational opportunities identified in the consultations included:

- improved awareness of parent/child norms, such as providing an introduction to local discipline and homework expectations
- addressing age/school level mismatch; it is vital to have refugee kids in classes of their own age group, even if this requires one-on-one assistance for them to keep up academically.

Educator awareness needs identified in consultations included:

- general STARTTS training for educators dealing with refugees
- a specific and more detailed course for school counsellors dealing with humanitarian background students affected by torture and trauma
- ensuring educators are aware that signs or recognitions of signs may be delayed for some years after arrival.

It was identified that many rural and remote schools are in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) staff. An alternative to providing ESL teachers in rural and remote areas would be to improve flexible methods of ESL education, such as distance or online education, to cater for the growing numbers of isolated migrants.

The paucity of support for primary and high school students from refugee backgrounds was also highlighted as an issue. In regional areas where there is no IEC, it was suggested that access to the AMEP could be opened up to students from Year 10 onwards, or at least that AMEP services could be provided in a school setting.

11.3 Health

The most critical area impacting humanitarian background communities in regional and rural areas is that of mental health. Consultations with both communities and stakeholders highlighted that there is strong stigma attached to mental health and that key measures needed to be put in place as a starting point in improving understanding and encouraging treatment. These included:

- providing early and comprehensive information on torture/trauma services
- being open about stigma with service providers
- addressing symptoms so that any linkage between mental health and personal weakness or superstition is avoided.

There was particular concern around health and the regional settlement of humanitarian entrants, as regional areas do not have ready access to intensive services such as torture and trauma counselling and specialised health and education services. Health issues are therefore often compounded given that specialist health care is less accessible and more expensive than in major cities.

Although current refugee settlement rates in regional areas may not be sufficient to support the establishment of specialised refugee clinics, government policy requires

that issues of access, availability and service appropriateness be explored in creative and sustainable ways to respond to the specific needs of this group.

It was highlighted that regional disability services are also in need of an enhanced capacity to respond appropriately and effectively to specific refugee issues such as war injuries and children with developmental delays. Organisations in regional areas require more support and improved cross-cultural competence to respond to the increasing complexity of their communities.

Given the extensive waiting lists to gain access to community health and other health support services in regional and rural Australia, participants identified that there is a need for priority access pathways for seriously ill humanitarian background communities

(a) Women's health

All focus groups expressed concerns that there is a greater need for education and information around women's health, in particular the need for prevention and early intervention to reduce occurrence of health issues was highlighted.

Key concerns included:

- young women getting pregnant at a very early age
- domestic violence
- use of cortisone to whiten skin by young African girls/women
- vitamin D deficiency
- anaemia in some of the children.

Community participants often spoke about the difficulties they were facing with their teenage children and issues of discipline, parenting, children's rights and parents rights. They strongly supported the need to increase the cultural competency of various service providers in delivering culturally appropriate services.

They also said services working with refugee background communities need to be aware of cultural differences in health care practices, including the use of traditional medicines, and to specifically ask their patients/clients about this.

Although a number of health workers involved in consultations expressed a keen interest in improving their understanding of traditional health practices, they had difficulty accessing any such information.

“One of the challenges of working with refugees is managing their expectations about the extent to which Australian health providers will be able to solve chronic health problems.”

A good practice example around effective approaches to addressing health issues is the '**Sudanese Healthy Pathways Project**' in Warrnambool. The project aims to promote health and wellbeing and develop social connections

for the Sudanese community in Warrnambool. It sought to improve awareness of and access to recreation and sporting activities within the town.

The Refugee Health Clinic for recently arrived refugees into the Hunter Valley is another example where the specific and unique needs of particular community groups are recognised.

The Families in Cultural Transition project in Lismore is trying to address some of the concerns related to family and family breakdown, including intergenerational conflict.

Other good practice examples:

African Communities in Regional Victoria Project

In 2007, the **Multicultural Health and Support Service (MHSS)** was funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services to design and conduct the African Communities in Regional Victoria Project. This comprehensive strategy aims to deal with the BBV/STI education and support needs of recently arrived communities in regional areas of Victoria. In 2007–2008, the project was implemented in Geelong, Colac and Ballarat.

Please see: www.ceh.org.au/mhss.aspx

Hunter African Communities Council

Hunter African Communities Council (HACC) aims are to unite and build strong communities of all Africans and African-Australians who live in the Hunter region of NSW. Through a series of ongoing weekly radio programs which are produced, coordinated and initiated through the council in partnership with the Northern Settlement Services, they have been able to broadcast to migrant audiences vital information in four different African languages (Swahili, Creole, Dinka and Arabic). The information disseminated is from various service providers, government agencies and relevant stakeholders, broadcast through Newcastle's 2NUR FM radio station.

Please see: www.africancouncil.org.au

11.4 Housing

While disadvantaged communities across the board experience difficulties accessing rental accommodation, humanitarian entrant communities are further impacted at a number of levels. In particular, they are affected by discrimination from agents and the lack of availability of suitably sized housing. Further, they are finding a lack of suitable long-term housing located near public transport.

11.5 Justice

The following key recommendations emerged around justice issues in regional consultations:

- provide comprehensive crime data and prevention information early on especially to heads of households
- use police liaison officers to workshop how young offenders are dealt with in the local system so that all new arrivals are aware of the system
- set up pathways to help refugee kids feel able to access justice when their rights are denied
- focus on empowerment of women and the schism between male/female cultural understanding
- prioritise experiential workshops, cultural awareness and human rights training for police.

Good practice examples cited included:

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) in partnership with Uniting Care, Greater Shepparton, Ethnic Council of Shepparton and St Pauls Lutheran Church delivered a series of free monthly legal sessions for the newly-arrived communities of Shepparton. These sessions grew out of need by these communities to have information that will assist them with legal problems associated with debt, door-to-door sales, driving, social security, housing and immigration.

The **Police African Youth Forum** was organised by Warrnambool Police in partnership with the Sudanese in Warrnambool community, leading to the formation of a local African youth and police consultative forum. A partnership with Victoria Police also led to police officers engaging younger and older Sudanese community members and young people from the Indigenous community in a cross-cultural leadership program, *Sail in their Shoes*.

“We have a volunteer in policing program, where eight or nine people from the community come and volunteer. We are exploring opportunities with the African communities to come and work inside the police station and working with police officers and perhaps become more comfortable with police, and Vis a versa.”
(Police Focus Group, Lismore)

Accessing (publicly or privately funded) legal services is becoming increasingly difficult in rural and regional areas in Australia.

A **Legal Theatre performance** in cooperation with Illawarra Multicultural Services addressed the legal issues of credit and debt, Centrelink and tenancy for the newly-arrived African community members of the Illawarra. It is a successful way of promoting learning with groups from a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

11.6 Sport

The role of sport in promoting social inclusion has also been recognised in regional and rural settings. There are numerous examples of programs that have been established to encourage greater participation of African Australians into mainstream local organised sporting competitions.

Benefits identified included:

- a sense of stability, cultural pride and being valued
- helped trust building
- capacity building opportunities
- improved health and wellbeing
- greater community understanding
- encourage greater participation of local Sudanese youth into mainstream local organised sporting competitions.

12 Appendices

12.1 Appendix A: Steering Committee and Community Reference Group members

(a) Steering Committee members

Name	Organisation
Abeselom Nega	Immediate Past Chair Federation of African Communities Council (FACC)
Samia Baho	Executive Director Centre for African Australian Women's Issues
Cath Scarth	General Manager, Community and Policy Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES)
Kym McConnell	Director, Volunteering Policy and Planning Section, Community Investment Branch Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
Dr Steve Francis	National Manager, Movement Relations and Advocacy Australian Red Cross
Georgia Zogalis	National Program Manager Multicultural Mental Health Australia on behalf of Diversity Health Institute
Priya SaratChandran	Senior Policy Officer, Sex and Age Discrimination Unit Australian Human Rights Commission <i>Representative from September 2009</i>
Somali Cerise	Senior Policy Officer, Sex and Age Discrimination Unit Australian Human Rights Commission <i>Representative until September 2009</i>
Eugenia Tsoulis OAM	Chief Executive Officer Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia Executive Committee Member Settlement Council of Australia
Amy Lamoin	Assistant Director, Race and Cultural Diversity Unit Australian Human Rights Commission
Conrad Gershevitch	Director, Race and Cultural Diversity Unit Australian Human Rights Commission
Claire Nield	National Projects Manager, Race and Cultural Diversity Unit Australian Human Rights Commission

(b) Community Reference Group members

(i) Australian Capital Territory

Dr Kidane Belay
Mr (David) Mukii Gachugu
Mr Eskender Abebe
Mr Gus Mpofu
Dr Melissa Parsons
Dr Joyce Adu
Mr Charles M Njora
Dr Berhanu Woldekidan
Dr Ashenafi Tessema
Mr Kabu Okai-davies
Ms Alice Omaji
Mr Ahmed Nur
Ms Azeza Taher
Mr Taklow

(ii) New South Wales

Mr John Osifo
Mr Makka Krubally
Ms Grace Land
Ms Juliana Nkrumah
Mr Ajang Biar
Mr Yirgu Beyene-Chassa
Mr Clement Meru
Ms Imme Tom
Mr Girma Andarge
Ms Abeba Belay
Mr Mesfin Tessema
Mr Geoffrey Mangwi Mugi
Mr Adje Da Silveira
Mr Varmah Dulleh
Mr Ahmed Mohammed
Ms Mereline Murimwa-Rarami

(iii) Queensland

Mr Johnson Oyelodi
Ms Gloria Sowah
Mr Tewdros Fekadu
Mr Bobby Whitfield
Mr Daniel Zingifuaboro
Mr Tamba Thomas
Mr Berhani Mehari
Ms Esther Kabamba
Ms Odette Tewfik
Ms Ifrah Mohamed
Ms Leila Abukar
Ms Abebe Meles

(iv) South Australia and Northern Territory

Mr Ibrahim Jabateh
Mr Mohammed Teia
Mr Wilson Ndung'u
Mr Leonidas Nitereka
Mr Abdi Osman Abdalle
Ms Odette Mbuzukongira
Ms Frederica Gaskell
Mr McRoberts Agaa
Dr Joseph Masika
Mr Juma Abuyi
Mr Sidique Bah
Mr Reagan Bleddee
Ms Brigitta Buntor
Mr Emmanuel Chubaka
Mr Mutanda Dan
Mr Issac Alung Daniel
Ms Zeleka Habtegoris
Ms Lidia Inarukundo
Mr Mabok Beng Mabok
Ms Khadija Mansour
Ms Assina Ntawumenya
Ms Lena Tear
Ms Sarah Tiong
Ms Carla Tongun

(v) Tasmania

Mr Mangok Mangok
Ms Aminata Saccoh
Ms Besta Peters
Mr John Kamara
Mr Melvin Metzger
Ms Amira Reindorf
Ms Merhawit Tumzghi
Mr Christopher Kamara
Ms Louise Waquoi
Mr Gemechu Chiro Datu
Ms Faina Iligoga
Mr Donatien Ntikahavuye
Mr Alain Mpoyi
Mr Fawaz Ateem
Ms Fatmata Fofanah
Ms Hirut Seboka
Mr Kiros Hiruy
Ms Deborah van Velzen

(vi) Victoria

Ms Shukri Abdi
Ms Theresa Sengaaga Ssali

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consultations and interviews and public submissions – June 2010*

Mr Kassahun Seboqa Negewo
Ms Fatma Moussa
Mr Binyam Woldmichael
Ms Melika Yassin Sheik-Eldin
Mr Luel Fesseha
Mr Solomon Alemu
Mr William Abur
Ms Mmaskepe Sejoe
Mr Solomon Kebede
Ms Negiat Taher
Ms Zeinab Mohamud
Ms Mmapelo Malatji
Mr Berhan Ahmed
Ms Idil Jama
Ms Maryam Osman
Mr Ahmed Yusuf
Mr Abdulkadir Muse
Ms Meseret Abebe
Mr Clement Anguei Deng
Mr Yousif Mohamed
Ms Nyaddl Nyoun
Mr Ahmed Ahmed
Ms Ajak Nyariel

(vii) Western Australia

Mr Abdulla Adam
Mr Eli Manyol
Ms Ruqiya Ali
Ms Maria Osman
Mr Gemechu Dembali
Dr Casta Tungaraza
Ms Olivia Mensah-Kamara
Ms Ruth Sims

12.2 Appendix B: Community Focus Groups

(a) Australian Capital Territory

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
29/5/09	Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre	Community Reference Group	8
30/5/09	ANU	South Sudanese young men	5
30/5/09	Private residence	South Sudanese (Dinka & Nuer)	9 = 5 men 4 women
30/5/09	Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre	Sudanese mixed	45
31/5/09	Private Residence	Eritrean Muslim Women	5
13/6/09	Labour Club of ACT	Community Leaders: Ethiopian, Eritrean, Kenyan, Zimbabwean	8

(b) New South Wales

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
27/3/09	Australian Vocational Training Centre Board Room – Bankstown	Ethiopian; Eritrean	6 – men
28/3/09	Afghani Hall – Blacktown	<i>African Muslim women:</i> Sudanese (North); Eritrean; Somali	38 – women
28/3/09	Afghani Hall – Blacktown	Sudanese; Eritrean	8 – men
29/3/09	Australian Catholic University – Strathfield	<i>Youth</i> Ghanaian; Nigerian; Sierra Leonean; Liberian.	
24/4/09	Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta MRC	African workers	57

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
26/4/09	Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta MRC	Kenyan; Ghanaian; Sudanese (North & South); Zimbabwean; Liberian, Sierra Leonean, Burundi, DR Congolese, Tanzanian; Rwandan; Nigerian	67
19/6/09	NSW Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Branch (DIAC) Sydney	DIAC Staff, including Grant Manager, Community Liaison Officers, and one staff member from Canberra	10
19/6/09	Auburn Diversity Services, NSW	Representatives from: African Workers Network.	42
20/6/09		<i>African Women's Advocacy Training Program participants:</i> Sudanese, Congolese, Burundi,	16
21/6/09	Granville Town Hall	Sudanese; Liberian; Burundi; Somali; Congolese; Eritrean; Ethiopian; Rwandan	47
25/6/09	Bulldogs Club Bellmore	Ethiopian (Oromo, Amhara Tigrayan)	4 women 6 men
14/6/09	Northern Settlement Services Penola House Newcastle	Liberian, Burundi, Sierra Leonean	13 men
21/7/09	STARTTS office – Auburn	NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors Staff	10
1/8/09	Lismore Neighbourhood Centre Lismore	Representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Community Association • Sudanese Community Association • Congolese Community • Sierra Leone Community 	18 (11 men / 7 women)

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
3/8/09	City of Lismore – Council Chambers Lismore	Stakeholders and service providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lismore City Council • Sanctuary Northern Rivers • Northern Rivers Migrant Service • Lismore Refugee Network • Legal Aid • Anglican Church Diocese 	10
3/8/09	Lismore Police Station	Conducted in consultation with NSW Police Cultural Diversity Unit.	18 Police Officers
5/8/09	Regents Park Community Centre	Consultation conducted with the Community Relations Commission and the Anti Discrimination Board Representatives from CRC, African Communities Council NSW, NSW Legal Assistance Forum	7
8/8/09	Private Residence	Consultation conducted in partnership with African Australian Association of NSW: Senegalese; Ghanian; Somali; Ethiopian; Tanzanian; Nigerian; Sudanese	22
9/8/09		Consultation conducted in partnership with Federation of African Communities Council Inc. Sudanese; Eritrean; Nigerian; Burundi; Congolese.	12



(c) Northern Territory

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
12/6/09	Casuarina Library – Darwin	Service providers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship Australia• Centrelink• Legal Aid• MCNT• Office of Multicultural Affairs• Anglicare	15
12/6/09	Casuarina Library – Darwin	<i>African youth</i> four women, eight men	12
13/6/09	Casuarina Library – Darwin	<i>African communities:</i> Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan	32
13/6/09	Hotel – Darwin airport Inn	<i>Muslim women</i> Four Somali Two Eritrea	6

(d) Queensland

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
2/5/09	Multicultural Development Association	CRG Meeting	8
16/5/09	Coopers Plains Library	<i>Muslim women</i> Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Sudanese	18
16/5/09	Multicultural Development Agency – South Brisbane	African Workers and Service Providers/Advocates working for African communities	12

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
16/5/09	Annerley & District Community Centre Inc – Annerley	Congolese Association in Queensland	7
17/5/09	Logan Festival Woodridge	African communities – mixed gender	30
17/5/09	MuÓoz Restaurant 21/197 Beaudesert Road, Moorooka QLD 4105	African Communities – mixed gender	42
17/5/09		Eritrean Community Association in Qld – members	6
17/5/09	Annerley Community Centre Centre	African Youth	22
	Cafe	African men	16

(e) South Australia

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
24/3/09	MRCSA – King St, Adelaide	<i>Women’s focus group</i> Sudanese, Burundi, Liberian, Congolese	19
24/3/09	MRCSA Adelaide	<i>Youth focus group</i> Sudanese, Liberian Burundi, Congolese, Somali, Uganda, Ethiopian	25 M = 16 F = 9
24/3/09	MRCSA Adelaide	Community Leaders / Reps Representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudanese Community Association of Australia • Acholi Community Association • Somali Community Development organisation of SA • Sierra Leone Community in SA • Nurundian community • Eritrean Community • ACCSA/Liberian Community of SA • Tanzanian Community 	23

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
		Chairperson ACCSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congolese Community • Burundi community • Sudanese community (GP) • General Secretary of the Sudanese community • African Communities Council • Congolese community • Sudanese community 	
25/3/09	MRC SA Adelaide	<i>African workers, leaders, and their management committees</i> Burundi, Sierra Leone, Congo, Sudanese, Liberian, Togolese, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali	18
25/3/09	Private home	<i>African Muslim women</i> Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali	23
25/3/09	District Council of Tatiara Border Town	Organised by MRCSA and Murraylands MRC Eritrean, Somali, Nigerian	10
27/7/09	STTARS Offices	Organised by STTARS (Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service) <i>African Women's Discussion Group</i> Ethiopia, Somalia, Togo, Sudan	6
8/8/09	MRC SA	<i>Women's Orgs focus group</i> Representatives from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Liberian Women's Association • Sudanese Women's National Network of Australia and New Zealand • United Congolese Women 	12
8/8/09	MRC SA	<i>Men's Orgs focus group</i> Representation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congolese community • Liberian Youth • Sudanese Association of 	15

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
		Australia (SA Branch) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudanese Tertiary Student Association South Sudanese Equatorial Youth Association (SSEYASA) 	
8/8/09	Bordertown	Organised by MRC SA and Murrumbidgee MRC Eritrean, Somali	12

(f) Tasmania

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
4/7/09	MRC (Southern Tasmania) 49 Molle Street Hobart	Service providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobart City Council Community support for refugees Migrant Resource Centre Uni of Tas (UTas) Department of Health and Human Service Relationships Australia Centacare Hobart City Council Good Neighbourhood Council of Tas 	10
4/7/09	MRC (Southern Tasmania) 49 Molle Street Hobart	Community members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudanese Ethiopian (Muslim and Christian) DRC Sierra Leone <p>(note: two academics attended for one hour of the session Peg Levine – clinical psychologist University of Launceston Rural Health & Rob Peterson</p>	18
4/7/09	Private Residence	<i>Muslim women:</i> Somali Eritrean Sudanese	7

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
5/7/09	MRC North Haig St centre 21 Haig st Mowbray Launceston	<i>Community and community workers</i> Sudanese Liberian Sierra Leone Madagascar	12
5/7/09	Private residence	<i>Muslim women</i> Eritrean Northern Sudanese	8

(g) Victoria

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
6/5/09	Kensington Recreation Centre	<i>Horn of Africa Senior Women's group –</i> Somali – 10 Eritrean – 18 Ethiopian – 16 Mixed Muslim and Christian	44
8/5/09	Centre for African Women's Issues (CAAWI) Footscray	<i>Young Muslim men</i> All born overseas but arrived in Australia as young children (b/w 18 months and 11 years old) 18 Somali 2 Eritrean	20
10/5/09	Eritrean Restaurant Springvale	<i>Young African women:</i> 18–27 years old Sudanese – Dinka and Nuer	24
20/5/09	Gilmore Secondary College Footscray	<i>Young African women:</i> b/w 14–17 yrs old Sudanese Somali Eritrean	12
22/5/09	Holland Court Flemington/Kensington Estates Flemington	<i>Senior men's group:</i> 50+ Somali – 4 Ethiopian – 6 Eritrean – 5	15
23/5/09	Dandenong	<i>Senior men's group:</i> 45+ Somali – 5	16

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
		Sudanese –11	
5/6/09	African Think Tank Footscray	African Think Tank Board and Members	4
14/6/09	CAAWI	<i>Youth – University Students</i> Mixed gender Somali Eritrean	8
18/6/09	Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council	<i>Togolese and Sudanese</i> Mixed gender Togolese – 24 Sudanese – 28	52
25/6/09	Multicultural Arts Victoria Fitzroy	<i>African artists</i> Participants: Sudanese (Dinka) Tanzania Burundi (Tutsi) Sudanese (Dinka)	4
27/6/09	Private Residential Home Richmond	Ethno specific – Ethiopian Mixed gender – 7 men/5 women Christian	12
27/6/09	Holland Court Flemington	Eritrean Red Sea/Eritrean Community in Australia	5
28/6/09	Private Residential Home Western Region	Ethno specific Group Mixed Gender 5 men/5 women Ethiopian Oromo	10
28/6.09	Holland Court Fleming	<i>Homework support group</i> Mixed gender – 4 girls/2 boys b/w 14 –17 Somali – 2 Eritrean – 1 Ethiopian – 3	6
28/6.09	CAAWI Footscray	<i>Women</i> Eritrean (Christian and Muslim)	14
28/6/09	Aramb restaurant	Professionals (accountant, lawyers, community worker, administrator, manager) (men only) Ethiopian Somali	12

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
		Oromo Eritrean	
29/6/09	CAAWI Offices	<i>Centre for African Australian Women's Issues</i> – Board and Advisory Group Representatives	6
1/7/09	Municipal Association of Victoria	<i>Local Government Diversity Planners:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Yarra • City of Monash • LaTrobe City Council • Melbourne University • Moonee Valley Council • City of Greater Geelong • Maribyrnong City Council • City of Whitehorse • City of Casey • DIAC • Mount Alexander Shire Council • Moreland City Council 	26
3/7/09	DIAC Offices	Department of Immigration and Citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement Planning Committee • Settlement Workers • Community Liaison Officer for African Communities 	5
5/7/09	Private residence	United Somali Women's Association	5
7/7/09	Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Carlton	VMC / VEOHRC / AHRC Good Practice Forum – African Australian Communities Reps from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East African relief Association • Oromo community • GV African Communities Association • Gippsland Ethnic Communities Council 	29

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newlands Community Coburg • Liberian Community Association • LaTrobe Refugee Resource Centre • Oromo Australia Community Association • Sierra Leone Community Association • MRC North West • Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services • EMC – Brotherhood of St Lawrence • Department of Justice – Justice for Refugees Program • Chollo Community 	
8/7/09	Victorian Foundation House	Victorian Foundation House staff (including African Australian staff) – session one providing direct services to individuals and families – they also have community relationships	21
13/7/09	Victorian Foundation House	Victorian Foundation House – Schools Focus staff involved with (a) schools – program of supporting schools and other educational agencies with students of refugee backgrounds and (b) a project to assist mainstream family services agencies to be better able to provide services to people of refugee backgrounds	7
14/7/09	Carlton Flats	<i>Muslim women</i> • Eritrean	16
17/7/09	Private Residence Sunshine	Ethno Specific – Oromo • Mixed Gender	
21/7/09	New Hope Foundation	Representatives:	7

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
	Prahran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Community Settlement workers, • community development workers • Eastern and Central African communities 	
23/7/09	Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre	Staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement Workers • Family services workers • Immigration and settlement consultants • Complex case workers 	19
	Castlemaine African Community Project Mount Alexander Shire Council	Castlemaine African Community Project	
25/7/09	Nigerian Society of Victoria Inc.	Yusuf Abubakar President	5
27/7/09	Whittlesea Council Conference Room	<i>African community members</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed genders • living in the municipality • Tanzania • Kenya • Sudan • Congo • Liberia • Somalia Included: Representatives from Whittlesea and Darebin Councils and Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne	35
27/7/09	Centre for Multicultural Youth Carlton	<i>African youth</i> Mixed gender b/w 17–25 yrs old	9
28/7/09	Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB) Springvale	<i>African Community Settlement Workers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudan • Kenya • Burundi 	8

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
31/7/09	Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room City of Yarra	<i>Indigenous and African Community members</i> Service providers and peak bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sport and Recreation (MAYSAR) • Alliance of African Australian Youth • EACACOV • Local government – City of Yarra • Neighbourhood Justice Centre • Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services Sudanese Support Project • New Hope MRC • Metropolitan Fire Brigade • Department of Justice – Justice for Refugees Project • Australian Human Rights Commission 	24
13/8	AFL House Docklands	AFL Multicultural Project Multicultural Project Coordinator Multicultural Development Officers Included interview with Majak Daw –Young footballer Sudanese background	5
27/8/09	Wellington Community Centre, Mulgrave	<i>Women</i> South Sudanese (Nuer)	7
27/8/09	Springvale	Lost Boys of Sudan	
27/8/09	ADEC Offices Preston	<i>Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities</i> Staff	5
	CAAWI Offices	Somali/Ethiopian Taxi Drivers	10
	Private residence Lalor	<i>African Creative Women</i> Eritrean; Sierra Leonean; Nigerian	9

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
	Roxburgh Park	African community	22
	Flemington	African Family Day Care Providers	13
	Association of the Liberian Community of Australia (Victoria)	Association of the Liberian Community of Australia (Victoria)	
		Eritrean Islamic Society	
	CAAWI (Halima)	Somali Women in Business	
	DoJ	Justice for Refugees Workshop – Community Educators	
	Northern suburbs private residence	Hawo Tako Somali Women's Association	
17/8	Holland Court Flemington	African/Somali Communities/Leaders (organised in partnership with the African Think Tank, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Somali Community of Vic)	
17/8/09	Thornbury	Somali Community Leaders	
?/9/09	Warrnambool	Members of Sudanese Community in Warrnambool	22
?/9/09	Mildura	Members of Mallee Sudanese Community Inc	27
?/9/09	Shepparton	Sudanese, Congolese, Ethiopian	32
?/9/09	Geelong	Sudanese, Liberian,	14

(h) Western Australia

Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
26/6/09	Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC)	CRG Meeting	

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Date	Location	Profile/Representation	Number
27/6/09	Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka	<i>Youth Leadership Group</i> Sudanese, Kenyan, Ethiopian	8 4 boys 4 girls
27/6/09	Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC)	Community Ethnicities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudanese • Rwanda • Nigerian • Congolese 	28 people five women 23 men
28/6/09	African Communities of WA		
29/6/09	OMI Offices Dumas House – Perth	Organised in partnership with Office of Multicultural Interests: Representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Health • EOC • WA Police • DET • Commerce • Department for Communities • Dept Housing and Works • Dept Child Protection 	18
14/7/09	ACWA office	African leaders	
15/07	Private residence	Muslim women	
15/07	Private residence	Mixed African communities	
16/07		African Professional Network	

12.3 Appendix C: Stakeholders consulted

(a) National

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
James Gatluak Puk	Sudanese Australia National Youth Council

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Peter van Vliet	Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
Andrew Cummings	Settlement Council of Australia
	Refugee Council of Australia
Joumanah El Matrah	Australian Multicultural Advisory Council
	Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council of Australia
Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis	Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia
Justice Nahum Mushin	Family Court of Australia
Rolf Fenner	Australian Local Government Association
	Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma

(b) ACT

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Dr Joyce Adu	African Australia Association of the ACT
Mr Ebenezer Banful	Ghana-Australia Association

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Name	Organisation
	Sudanese-Australian Community Association
Kabu Okai-Davies	Manager, Multicultural Centre and festival producer

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Nic Manikis	Director, Office of Multicultural, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Angeles Gomez	Branch Manager, Community Engagement & Multicultural Affairs ACT & Regions Office – Department of Immigration and Citizenship
Dewani Bakkum	Director, Migrant and Refugee Resettlement Services
Dr David Lucas	The Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute (ADSRI).
Sam Wong AM	Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc.
	Multicultural Women's Advocacy Inc ACT
	Canberra Refugee Support Inc

(c) New South Wales

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Dr Mansura Dopico	Lecturer, School of Social Work Australian Catholic University
Beatrice Sesay	Chairperson of the African Workers Network
Rosemary Kariuki	Ethnic Community Liaison Officer Holroyd Local Area Command NSW Police
John Moi	Sudanese Community Leader, Wagga Wagga
Adam Musa	President of the Darfur Community Association of Australia – Sydney

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Name	Organisation
Fatma Mohamed	Project Officer, Multicultural Services – DoCS
Juliana Nkrumah	African Women's Advocacy Centre
Zewditu Tadesse	Ethiopian Women's Organisation
Assefa Tarekegne	Ethiopian Community Worker
Tadessa Ayele	Ethiopian Community Leader
Eric Tweneboa	Ghana Association President
Bernadette Agyepong	Community projects Officer (BMRC)
Fatu Dulleh	Liberian United Women's Organisation
Varmah Dulleh	The Association of Liberian Community of NSW
Florence Olugbemiro	Nigerian Health Worker
Ola Sunmola	Nigerian Association of NSW
Grace Iheanacho	Nigerian Women's Organisation
Bintu Kamara	Sierra Leone Community Worker
Mayom Tulba Malual	Sudanese Community Worker
Victoria Achit Mayom	Sudanese Women's Welfare Association

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Adam Whyte	Commander, Policy and Programs Command NSW Police
Caron Billings	A/g Director – NSW Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Branch (DIAC)
Mary Dimech	Manager, Multicultural Unit, DoCS
Ricci Bartels	Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre
	Ethnic Communities Council of NSW
Prof Andrew Jakubowicz	Head of Academic Group – Social and Political Change University of Technology Sydney

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Name	Organisation
Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward	Community Services Coordinator STARTTS
Melissa Monteiro	Manager The Hills Holroyd Parramatta MRC
Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis	Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc, (NIRWA)
Annie McWilliam	Lismore City Council
Paul Cruickshank	Lismore Neighbourhood Centre for Northern Rivers Refugee Interagency
Professor Helen Ware	University of New England, Armidale
Elena Berrocal Capdevila	Executive Officer Auburn Diversity Services Inc
Violet Roumeliotis	Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre
Paul Cruickshank	NRMS Northern Rivers Refugee Interagency
Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian	Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer NSW Community Relations Commission
Richard Acheson	NSW Community Relations Commission
John Cornwall	President & Executive Director Horn of Africa Relief & Development Agency (HARDA)
Susai Benjamin	Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, AMAC
Violetta Walsh	Northern Settlement Services

(d) Northern Territory

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Mr Fezile Mpehle	Africa Australia Friendship Association NT Inc
Mr Kristopher Morris	Sudanese Australian Association of the Northern Territory

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Name	Organisation
Edouard Ndjamba Ndjoku	Alliance of Congolese in the NT
Mr Lucien Mofalesi	Congolese Society of the NT
Ms Fatuma Ahmed Ali	Somali Community in the NT INC

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
	Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT)
	The Liberian Youth Organisation in the Northern Territory
	Multicultural Youth Council of the Northern Territory
Lava Kohaupt	Melaleuca Refugee Centre and Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the NT
	The Northern Territory Working Women's Centre
	Refugee and Migrant Settlement Services

(e) Queensland

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Eunia Simbagoye	Burundi Community
Sebit Lako	Sudanese Community
Johnson Oyelodi	Australia-Africa Association of Queensland
John Okello-Okanya	African Seniors and Elders Club – Australia Inc
Daniel Zingifuaboro	Queensland African Communities Council of Queensland (QACC)
Ali Ibrahim	African Advocacy Worker MDA
Professor Andre M Kabamba	Australian Conference Rally on Kongo

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Bobby Whitfeld	Queensland African Communities Council
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(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
	Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ)
Gail Ker	Access Services Inc
Karen Lee	Multicultural Development Association Inc
Maria Krajwski	Queensland program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QpASST)
Kelly Yip	Multicultural Queensland

(f) South Australia

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Sidique Bah	South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Youth Advisory Committee
Paul Atem	Sudanese Tertiary Students Association
Catherine Cole	United Liberian Women's Association
Victoria Achut	Sudanese Women's National Network (SWNN)
Odette Mbzukongira	United Congolese Women's Association
Mabok Mabok	Sudanese Association of Australia SA
Rukukuye Mastkay	Congolese community
George Fomba	Liberian Youth Leader/Elder
Possible Diessa	Congolese Youth
Simon Mpenda	Congolese community
Juma Abuyi	Acholi Community Association Australia
Abdi Osman	Somali Community Development organisation of SA

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Name	Organisation
Assina Ntawumenya	Vice president of the association of Nurundian community
Khadija Mansour	Eritrean Community
Reagon Bledee	ACCSA/Liberian Community of SA
Joseph Marse	Tanzanian Community Chairperson ACCSA
Emmanuel Chubaka	Congolese Community SA Chairperson
Alexis Nsabimana	Burundi community
Gabriel Manguat	
Akoi Guong	General Secretary of the Sudanese community and work of the African communities council
Martin Maya	Sudanese community
Bosco Opi	Sudanese
Abdi Osman	Somali
Shuriye Abdullah	
Omar Ali	Somali
Gak Korn	Sudanese
Kayeandj Manase	Burundi
Ayen Kuol	African Women's Information Centre
Tibo Rogers	Sierra Leone Community
Sieh Mchawala	Director
Zuberi McHawala	Tanzanian Community
Amran Ainab Mohmed	Somali Women's Group
Shamuuva	Somali Women's Group
Esther Kamara	Liberian Community
Alain Takwende	Congolese Community
Jasmin	Judah, African Communities Council of South Australia

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Name	Organisation
Ayer Kusl	STTARS/Sudanese Community
Nyiel Jok	Sudanese Community of SA
Sahara M Esse	Somali Community
Sarah Yax Malet	STTARS/Sudanese Community
Aime Ruigira	Congolese Community
Rose Ajwa (Madi)	Sudanese community
Rukukuye Mastaky	Congolese Community
Gido Mapunda	Tanzanian community
James Inawin	Sierra Leonean Community
Alfred Matthew	Sudanese Community

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Bernadette McGrath	Director, STTARS
Eugenia Tsoulis OAM	Chief Executive Officer Migrant Resource Centre of SA/SAMCSS
Rene Weal	SA FGM Co-ordinator
Maylin Superio	MYSA

(g) Tasmania

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Ansumana Usman Koroma	
Dr Jonathan Thabano	African Communities Council
John Kamara	Sierra Leone
Dr Crispen Marunda	Zimbabwe

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Name	Organisation
Mahmoud Kamara	Congo
Alphose-Toussant Tshitenga Mulumba	
Awak Mario-Ring	Sudan
Isaiah Lahai	Tasmanian Sierra Leonean-Liberian Union
Zakarias Robe	Ethiopia
Danait Belay	Ethiopia
Junisa Bangura	Sierra Leone
Irène Nyiransabimana	Rwanda
John Otto	Sudan
Kiros Zegeye	
	Tasmanian African Youth Association
	African Migrant Community Reference Group

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Yabbo Thompson	Relationships Australia Tasmania
Cedric Manen	General Manager, Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) Inc.
Danielle Campbell	Policy Officer Volunteering Tasmania Inc
Rohan Wirasinha	Multicultural Council of Tasmania
Margaret Eldridge	HBC CSR
Meredith Izon	MRC/UTAS
Deborah Van Velzen	Policy Officer – Multicultural Health & Well-being, Tasmanian Dept. of Health & Human Services.(DHMS)
Virginia Bashford	Centacare

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Name	Organisation
Maria Pinferi	Hobart City Council
Sajini Sumar	Good Neighbour Council of Tas
	Multicultural Council of Tasmania
Herman Morris	Relationships Australia

(h) Victoria

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Dr. Berhan Ahmed	Chairperson, African Think Tank Inc.
Father Pedros	Orthodox Coptic Communities (Ethiopian/Eritrean)
Abdir Aziz	3CR's Somali Language Show
Prof Felix Mavondo	Zimbabwean community
Dr Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe	Lecturer in Business Management Faculty of Law & Management School of Management, La Trobe University
Bekelech Habteselassie	Ethiopian Community
Lanre Bolarinwa	Nigerian community
Maimun Mohamed	Innovation Recruitment
Sheikh Isse Musse	African Islamic leader and Imam (Board of Imams)
Abraham Mamo	
Dr Melika Yassin Sheikh-Eldin	
Khalid Osman	Editor, The Ambassador Newspaper
Dr Christopher Numa Lemoh	
A/Ilahi Hagi Ali	Somali Community
Saeed Saeed	
Mohamed Farah	East African Elders Association Inc

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Name	Organisation
Fartun Farah	Carlton Elderly Somali Women's Group
Sakena Kambal	Nubian Mihaira Inc
Adem Osman Malekin	African Community Elderly Association of Victoria
Berhan Jaber	Jesuit Social Services
Chantal Kabamba	President, Congolese Community of Victoria
John Sandy	President of the Association of the Liberian Community of Australia
Nadia Mohamed	
Alphas Lisimba	Vice-President of the Darfur Australia Network.
Ahmed Tohow	
Mahamood Humida	African Communities Elderly Association
Abdisebur Omar	African Community Development Centre (ACDC)
Wilbert Mapombere	Ballarat African Association
Ary Lyimo	Eastern and Central African Communities of Victoria Inc
Ismail Ahmed	Eritrean Elderly Association in Melbourne Inc
Negiat Taher	Eritrean Women's Association of Victoria
Wossenseged Mekonnen	Ethiopian Community Association in Victoria Inc
Tenenet Taye	Ethiopian Women Group
Hussein Nur Haraco	Somali Australian Council of Victoria Inc
Ali Mohamed Guled	Somali Support and Development
Mohamud Hassan	United Somali Organisation in Australia Inc
Zeinab Mohamud	Chair of United Somali Women
Adamu Tefera	
Abraha Mamo Gebremariam	
Dakhylina Madkhul	Noble Park English Language School

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Name	Organisation
Reem Omarit	FaRReP Community Worker
Halima Mohamed	Somali community leader
Sheikh Abdiwahab Ibrahim	
Abdinur Weli	
Yusuf Omar	Australian Somali Youth Association
Jamila Mohamud	
Abdiqadir Osman Muhamed	
Clovis Alidor	Congolese
Pierre Blaise Kazadi Mwamba	
Malyun Ahmed	
Salaad Ali Ibrahim	Somali Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria president
Elleni Bereded Samuel	Coordinator, Community Engagement Office of Industry and Community Engagement, Victoria University
Clyde Salumu	
Hussein Haraco	Victoria's Somali community
Jeremiah Temple	Sierra Leone community
Egi Chanyalew	Family & Reproductive Rights Education Program & Ethiopian Community
Idil Jama	United Somali Women's Organisations
Shrough Mohamed	Sudanese Community Association of Australia
Margret Choul	South Sudanese Women Group
Wemi Oyekanmi	Nigerian Community in Victoria
Olivie Dixon	Sierra Leone Women's Group
Ndungu wa Mungai	
Abdiwahid Hassan	School of Accounting and Finance, Victoria University

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Name	Organisation
Najib Mohamed	Hararian Community Association Australia Inc
Abdirahman M Faroole	Somali community
Abdulkadir Muse	

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Nick Hatzoglou	AFL Multicultural Project Coordinator
Hass Dalal	Executive Director, Australian Multicultural Foundation
Litsa Chung	IHSS Team Leader, Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
Sam Afra	Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
	Ethnic Council of Shepparton & Districts
Hala Abdelnour	Project Officer – Ethnic Youth Council
Jenny Semple	South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre
Con Pagonis	Multicultural Policy Adviser, Municipal Association of Victoria
Anna Hall	
Katie Fraser	North Melbourne Community Health Centre
Andrew Waugh Young	
Rivkah Nissim	Policy and Projects Officer Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission
Trent McArthy	
Agnes Cusack	Australia New Media
Paul Lees	Department of Justice
Magistrate Anne Goldsbrough	Melbourne Magistrates Court
Paris Aristotle	Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (Foundation House)

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Name	Organisation
Licia Kokicinski	CEO Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities
Carmel Guerra	Director, Centre for Multicultural Youth
Ross Barnett	Executive Officer, Ethnic Community Council of Victoria
Tim Watson	Project Coordinator Castlemaine African Community Project Mount Alexander Shire Council
Maria Callipari	Multicultural Resource Officer City of Whittlesea
Licia Kokocinski	Executive Director ADEC
Biljana Komnenovic	SCAAB
Leah Nichles	Director, Settlement and Multicultural Affairs DIAC
Serap Ozdemir	Windermere Child and Family Services
Kate Bean	Executive Director, Ecumenical Migration Centre
Michal Morris	Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health
Joumanah Al Matrah	Executive Director, Islamic Women's Welfare Council
Katie Fraser	Footscray C Legal Centre

(i) Western Australia

(i) African Community Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Moses Maker Mading Mabeny	President of the Southern Sudan Community in Western Australia
Eli Magok Manyol:	President – African Community in Western Australia
Abukalam Saeed	
Dr Casta Tungaraza	Equal Opportunity and Social Justice Manager of Murdoch University Director of the Australian Academy of Race

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	Relations
Dr Pendo Mwaiteleke	Lecturer in Social Work & Social Policy Curtain University
Deng M Kock	Former Chairman of the Bhar El Ghazal and Upper Nile Youth Association (BUYA) of WA
Stephen Kuria	President of the Kenyan Community in Western Australia
Ms Akinangisa Noyoo	Chairperson – The Organisation for Zambians Living in Western Australia (OZALIWA)
Ruqiya Ali	Somali Women’s Association WA Inc
Gebreslassie Asekeh	Chairman Unity of Ethiopia in WA, Inc
Mulugeta Reda	Ethiopian Community
Oswald Ntagengerwa	President African Community in WA
Patrick Johnson	President Liberian Community in WA
Bosco p’Ogwaro	Youth representative, African Community in WA Inc
Ms. Nalishebo N. Meebelo	The Organisation for Zambians Living in Western Australia
Herman Chikonga	President, Congolese Community WA
Chaplain Kara Yokoju	South Sudanese Community Association of WA
Gemechu Denbali	Multicultural Services Officer (MSO), Centrelink
Segun Olowoyo	Nigerian Community Networker
Ruth Sims	Chairperson West African Women’s Group WA, Liberian Community
John Lucky Little	Chairperson, Sierra Leone Organisation WA
Alfred Odongkara	Ethnic Communities Council of WA
Herman Chikonga	President, Congolese Community WA
Kumsa Bellew	Catholic Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC)
Chaplain Kara Yokoju	South Sudanese Community Association of WA
Segun Olowoyo	Nigerian Community Networker
Ibrahim Kokay	Community Liaison Officer, Metropolitan Migrant

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	Resource Centre (MMRC)
Pierre Luboya	Congolese Community of WA Inc
Bahati Moseti	Kenyan Community In Western Australia (KCWA)
Frances Kosseh	Liberia
Kir Majiok	South Sudanese Community
Peter Mbago Wakholi	
Tommy Adebayo	African Professionals of Australia 'Inc'
Samuel Riek	

(ii) Generalist Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Michael O'Hara	Director –Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
Susanna Iuliano	Senior Policy Officer Office of Multicultural Interests Department of Local Government and Regional Development
Ramdas Sankaran	Ethnic Communities Council of WA Inc and Multicultural Services Centre of WA
Marika Krsevka	Community Settlement Worker, Edmund Rice Centre
Maria Osman	Executive Director OMI
Norma Josephs	Association for Services for Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS)
Shanti Graham	Consumer Protection: Department of Commerce
John Piya	Skills Refresh Organisation of Australia

12.4 Appendix D: List of public submissions received

- 1 Negewo Kassahun
- 2 Confidential
- 3 Badasse Nagassa
- 4 Riak Agok
- 5 Anglicare Tasmania
- 6 Confidential
- 7 Binyam Bethelhem
- 8 Western Sydney Tenants' Service Paramatta
- 9 Name withheld
- 10 Redmond Mark
- 11 Lismore Neighbourhood Centre for Northern Rivers Refugee Interagency
- 12 Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement
- 13 Wyndham Humanitarian Network
- 14 Crawford Georgina
- 15 Kuel David
- 16 Hamilton James Street Doctors
- 17 Consumer Affairs Victoria
- 18 Hanger David
- 19 Federation of Ethnic Community Councils
- 20 Appadier Ranijäng
- 21 Young African Speakout event
- 22 Kongor Students Association of Australia
- 23 Atem Atem
- 24 Fozdar Farida
- 25 Weldemariam Toshome

- 26 Migrant Resource Centre North West Region
- 27 Name withheld
- 28 Lucas David
- 29 Confidential
- 30 Clarke Anne
- 31 Pascoe John
- 32 Name withheld
- 33 African Seniors Club Australia & Community and Business Audit Society
- 34 Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission
- 35 Granville Multicultural Community Centre
- 36 Otti Emmanuel
- 37 Confidential
- 38 Twefik Odette
- 39 Australian Catholic University
- 40 Humed Abdurahim
- 41 Juma Andrew
- 42 Confidential
- 43 Confidential
- 44 Anonymous
- 45 Richard Moggaoriwani
- 46 Marufu Bellington
- 47 Confidential
- 48 Name withheld
- 49 Name withheld
- 50 Confidential
- 51 Migrant Education at Tasmanian Polytechnic

52	Mercy Family Services
53	Aguil
54	Footscray Community Legal Centre
55	Office of Multicultural Interests
56	Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
57	The House of Welcome
58	Anglicare Sydney
59	Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors
60	Office of the Child Safety Commissioner
61	Adu Ammish
62	Mwaiteleke Pendo
63	Eritrean Community in Australia
64	Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning Program
65	Nyuon Nyadol
66	NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee
67	Jesuit Social Services
68	Lees Paul
69	Multicultural Development Association
70	Name withheld
71	Name withheld
72	Izon Meredith
73	Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture & Trauma
74	All African Forum
75	Adam Abdulla
76	Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service
77	St Vincent de Paul Society Assisting Refugee Kids & Catholic Education Office

- 78 Goulburn Valley African Communities Association
- 79 Legal Aid New South Wales
- 80 Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia
- 81 Melbourne Catholic Migrant & Refugee Office
- 82 Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- 83 La Trobe Refugee Research Centre
- 84 Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture
- 85 Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW
- 86 South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre
- 87 Zaiter Monica
- 88 Public Interests Advocacy Centre & Service for the Treatment and
Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
- 89 Name withheld
- 90 Mohamed
- 91 Abebe Meseret
- 92 Chege Kenneth
- 93 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- 94 Sangbong Divine
- 95 Eastern and Central Africa Communities of Victoria
- 96 Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency
- 97 Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies
- 98 Federation of African Communities Council
- 99 – 106 Confidential

12.5 Appendix E: Abbreviations and acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AMAC	Australian Multicultural Advisory Council
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Adult Migrant Education Services
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
AUSCO	Australian Cultural Organisation
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCS	Complex Case Support
CPHR	Community Partnerships for Human Rights (Program)
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DFEEST	Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (SA)
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DoCS	Department of Community Services (NSW)
DPCD	Department of Planning and Community Development (Vic)
ELS	English Language School
ESP	Employment Service Providers
ESL	English as a Second Language
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
FRSHE	Family Relationships Services for Humanitarian Entrants
GP	General Practitioner
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme

IEC	Intensive English Centre
IHSS	Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LCPs	Local Community Partnerships
LGA	Local Government Area
LLNP	Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program
MCIMA	Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
MEAs	Multicultural Education Aides
MLO	Multicultural Liaison Officer
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NAP	National Action Plan
NAYSS	Newly Arrived Youth Support Service
NBESP	Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NYARS	National Youth Affairs Research Scheme
PBS	Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
QLD	Queensland
RDA	<i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i>
SA	South Australia
SGP	Settlement Grant Program

SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
SPP	Special Preparatory Program
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
SWL	Structured Workplace Learning
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
Tas.	Tasmania
TIS	Telephone Interpreter Service
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VET	Vocational Education and Training
Vic.	Victoria
VU	Victoria University
WA	Western Australia

12.6 Appendix F: Acknowledgements from MyriaD Consultants

A task of this magnitude and complexity can only be successfully accomplished by the invaluable contributions of people with a wide array of expertise and skills.

Firstly, we would like to thank the members of the national Community Reference Group and the Steering Committee who provided considerable input into the design of an appropriate and respectful project methodology, particularly in relation to appropriate community action research strategies.

Our research team comprised of a number of talented multilingual research and consultation experts, including:

- Ahmed Ahmed
- Amina Maleken
- Frederica Gaskell
- Khadija Mansour
- Nyadol Nyuon
- Odette Tewfik

Each of these researchers provided the depth and insight that is so often missing from the way in which community consultations are understood and documented in research projects such as these.

We would like to recognise the insight, passion and the dedication of the numerous community representatives and community leaders who attended the community consultations conducted across the nation, and extend our deepest gratitude to the individuals and families who opened their homes and hearts to the project in an effort to ensure that others benefited from their courage to share their stories of both resilience and struggle.

We were greatly encouraged by the positive responses of both public stakeholder consultation attendees and those who provided written submissions, all of whom welcomed the opportunity to participate and have input into this important project.

MyriaD Consultants would also like to thank the following peak African Australian organisations for assisting with the consultations and providing important feedback throughout the research process:

- African Australian Association of Qld
- Africa-Australian Friendship Association (NT)
- African Communities Council (NSW)
- African Communities Council of South Australia
- African Community Association (WA)

- African Think Tank (Vic)
- African Women’s Advocacy Training Program (NSW)
- Australian Centre for African Australian Women’s Issues (Vic)
- East and Central African Communities of Victoria (Vic)
- Federation of African Communities Council Inc
- Horn of Africa Communities Network Inc

Many individuals within these organisations worked closely with the research team as community partners and ensured that the appropriate rigour, respect and protocol was followed when engaging with diverse African Australian communities.

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The research team is also particularly appreciative of the support, guidance and professionalism of the Race and Cultural Diversity Unit at the Australian Human Rights Commission, particularly the Project Manager, Claire Nield. Thank you for your vision and courage in pursuing the project and ensuring its outcomes.

Finally thanks should also go to the number of experts and academics commissioned to write background papers, all of which provided invaluable insights and critical contextual information.

Yours in deep appreciation,

MyriaD Consultants