



# culturalshift:

symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement

Symposium Report





# background

Violet Roumeliotis  
SSI CEO

The Cultural Shift Symposium brought 250 delegates from migrant, refugee, ethno-specific, mainstream and government agencies together to explore the needs of recently arrived migrant and refugee families, and to showcase and promote effective services, delivery models and approaches for supporting these families through their settlement journey.

Settling in Australia presents recently arrived migrant and refugee families with many new opportunities. However, the process of settlement and the associated adjustments to a new country and its social, cultural, legal, service, and other systems can be challenging.

The program of panel speakers, workshops and presentations addressed key areas such as child protection, prevention and early intervention, parenting support, early childhood services, health and educational initiatives, families and the law, domestic violence, and working with refugees.

The symposium was held on June 5, 2014 at the Novotel Hotel in Parramatta. Hosted by Settlement Services International and funded by NSW Family and Community Services under Keep Them Safe (KTS), the symposium particularly highlighted the importance of investment in early intervention recently arrived families, the role of diverse agencies in responding to needs and building resilience, and the importance of partnerships, collaboration and coordination.

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## SYMPOSIUM FACILITATOR

Julie McCrossin

## WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Uncle Greg, Darug Elder

## WELCOME TO THE SYMPOSIUM

Violet Roumeliotis, CEO,  
Settlement Services International (SSI)

## Summary

- This symposium provides a rare opportunity for different sectors to gather together to focus on the needs and challenges of migrant and refugee parents, children, young people and families. The needs of migrant and refugee families can sometimes get lost in the general discourse about families so it is great to have this opportunity to focus on those families today.
- Settling in Australia presents recently arrived families with many new opportunities. However, the settlement process also requires adjustments to new social, cultural, legal and other key systems, which can present significant challenges. It is our role to assist clients to gain timely access to services and to make adjustments to new service systems so the transition to life in Australia can be as smooth as possible.
- Importantly, today provides us with an opportunity to focus on effective ways we can support our clients, and ways that we can build and strengthen our relationships and partnerships across agencies and across sectors in this endeavour. Working together is vital to ensuring good child wellbeing outcomes. SSI is committed to this intersectoral work, which is so important but not easy and involves many diverse organisations such as health, education; local, state and federal government departments, child and family services, refugee organisations, charities and welfare agencies, and other non-government organisations. The registrations today reflect the diversity of organisations involved.
- I would like to thank all the presenters who will be speaking today for providing us with a rich and varied program. We will hear of many fantastic examples of services working together across sectors to meet the needs of recently arrived families, children and young people. Examples of migrant resource centres working with Community Services to promote child wellbeing and child protection outcomes in families, of health and youth services working with Intensive English Centres to promote health outcomes, and of established CALD communities working to mentor emerging communities, to name a few.
- SSI is the largest settlement provider in NSW, with 11 member MRCs providing a wide range of settlement services, including important early intervention projects, to people coming to Australia as refugees and humanitarian entrants. SSI has expanded to provide other services, including support for asylum seekers and their families living in the community, a Multicultural Foster Care Service for migrant and refugee children in out-of-home care, and most recently, support for people with disability, their families and carers under the Ability Links NSW Program.
- We have also recently implemented a range of KTS funded early intervention projects aimed at promoting child wellbeing outcomes. These include mandatory reporting training of migrant and refugee service providers and delivering information workshops for recently arrived parents on child wellbeing and parental rights and responsibilities in NSW.
- The strength and resilience of refugee and migrant families that have fought so hard and been through so much to settle in Australia provides inspiration for our own work every day. I would like to acknowledge and thank NSW Family and Community Services whose funding under the Keep Them Safe initiative has enabled us to hold this symposium.

## Opening Address

Maree Walk, Chief Executive, Community Services, NSW Department of Family and Community Services

### Summary

- Aboriginal people have taught us about family and resilience and made a major contribution to how we think about culture and belonging. We are at an interesting juncture in relation to how we think about these things and how we increase our understanding and skills in this area, improve service delivery and build better connections and partnerships.
- About three years ago I was involved with a case of a young boy who had been sexually abused and wrote a letter to his teachers asking if he could talk to them. What followed is what happens every day, all of that took its course; placements, interviews, sometimes it went well, sometimes not so well. The boy now has a stable placement, and has been with the same carer for two years, he is doing well at school, and his teachers have learned so much. The offender has been sentenced. I note the extraordinary courage of the young man, and the courage of all the workers involved, and of course the teachers.
- It is a good time to reflect on the courage of workers in child protection, which is extraordinary. It is beyond that required by our firefighters but often goes unrecognised. Every day child protection workers are organising placements, conducting interviews, looking for solutions to help children and families, and rising to complex challenges. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you of your own courage and skills in this area, and to thank you for that.
- The winner of the Mary Dimech Award this year, Rose Kousolis, worked with a large refugee family who had many children removed with major and complex challenges in the case, including no English language and little trust in child protection agencies. Rose worked with the African sessional workers and other agencies, building trust in a culturally appropriate manner and with the belief that cooperation and reflective culturally appropriate casework practice would make a difference – and it did.
- There are many advantages in having a diverse workforce who understand these challenges, and there is a strong business case for providing services that are culturally appropriate. Of course there are challenges in providing multicultural services as we make this transition.
- Enjoy the conference, test out new ideas with each other, we need to do this much more, and listen to each other's contributions. Suspend your assumptions and respect each other's opinions, be innovative, be bold and challenge each other and the old ways of doing things, and look for new opportunities.



# Speakers Panel

## Speakers Panel

### INTERSECTION OF SETTLEMENT AND CHILD AND FAMILY WORK – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Esta Paschalidis-Chilas, CEO, Metro Migrant Resource Centre

#### Summary

- Metro MRC was established in 1986 to work with newly arrived migrants, and our client-focused support services have expanded to include settlement services, family services, poverty alleviation, tenancy and financial services, community hubs, community capacity building, social enterprise and business development, partnerships and innovation, and volunteer support. The service now has over 50 staff members and 30 volunteers and students. Ninety percent of staff and volunteers are bilingual. There are offices in Campsie, Marrickville and Condell Park with hubs in Ashfield and Strathfield and 22 outreach services responding to local and regional needs.
- In 2012-13, 1,237 clients were served across a wide range of issues including document help, education and training, employment, housing and tenancy, citizenship preparation and civic education, social participation and psycho-social group work, income support issues, migration issues, family and relationship wellbeing, health, parenting, school, life skills development, financial counselling, no-interest loans, and legal matters.
- A concrete example of our service provision can be illustrated through the case study of Delma, who migrated from Iraq in 2013 and was referred to Metro Migrant Resource Centre by a health provider. After arriving in Australia, Delma married and became pregnant. The marriage was violent, with Delma needing serious medical attention. After giving birth, Delma left her husband, took out an AVO and moved in with her aunt. Delma did not speak English and lacked awareness of support services, was fearful of leaving the house and suffered depression. Our service was able to provide bilingual casework support, which had an understanding of the impacts of trauma, access to a wide range of expertise at Metro MRC along with connections and referrals into the service system, free immigration advice pathways and parenting support. Importantly, it was a service Delma trusted.
- The needs of multicultural and emerging communities are complex, and services are responding to changing environments and policies. Forging new relationships and building links with other services and agencies is critical to organisational growth and development. It is important to understand that working in this area we have extensive and valuable expertise to offer, and that our connection to CALD communities, and our ability to adapt and listen to communities, is critical.
- We need to think about how we can better integrate our services and support other services to be responsive to CALD client needs as more people come into the service system and the system itself changes. We also need to be open to working with communities that MRCs may not have traditionally worked with.
- There are many new opportunities, including: out-of-home care provision for the NGO sector; sharing CALD expertise in the generalist child protection sector; providing leadership, innovation and expertise in multicultural family support services; building alliances and partnerships with other agencies, including providing cultural expertise in the co-management of complex child and family engagement; and building alliances and partnerships with other agencies.

### CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENT – A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

Lisa Woodland, Refugee Health Program Manager, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

#### Summary

- We know that refugee children are a highly vulnerable group due to their background, and that they experience high rates of infectious diseases, incomplete immunisation, growth and nutrition problems and poor dental health. We also know that routine screening is highly effective in identifying a range of physical health conditions. These physical health conditions in refugee children are well documented. Psychological wellbeing is less well documented but studies demonstrate high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and behavioural problems.
- Longitudinal studies of this type have not previously been conducted with refugee children. This longitudinal study will assess and describe the health and wellbeing of refugee children 0-16 on arrival and post-arrival. The study will add information on the nature and extent of developmental problems, including an exploration of cultural acceptability and usefulness of developmental and psychological screening instruments; provide information about the complex relationships between physical health, development, psychological wellbeing and settlement; identify risk and protective factors that contribute to health outcomes; and make recommendations for policy and practice changes.
- The study setting is a collaborative care model for refugee families and children and includes a network of refugee-friendly GPs, Refugee Health Nurses, the Multicultural Health Service, Sydney Children's Hospital Network and Wollongong Hospital. A total of 61 children were enrolled in the study, including 32 females and 29 males, from a range of cultural backgrounds. Informed consent was sought from parents/caregivers and Ethics approval was provided from the Human Research Ethics Committee Northern Hospitals Network, SESIH (HREC Ref No 09/163).
- A range of factors were measured at one year, including: physical health; personal, language and cognitive development; fine and gross motor skills development; psychological wellbeing; settlement factors such as access to health care; and socio-demographic factors, community supports and life events.
- The results of the study need to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size. The study suggests that higher levels of developmental problems (language development) and psychological issues (emotional problems and peer relations) are present in refugee children and that families are experiencing significant stressors and settlement issues one year post-arrival. The results of the study emphasise the importance of early intervention with refugee families. The next steps include analysis of the two-year follow up data, trends over time and an analysis of what factors are linked with favourable and unfavourable health outcomes.



# Speakers Panel

## FROM INCLUSION TO SOCIAL ENTERPRISE – SCHOOL-BASED INITIATIVES TO ENGAGE AND BUILD CAPACITY AMONG MIGRANT AND REFUGEE PARENTS

Robert Mulas, Principal, Fairfield High School

### Summary

- Over the years, Fairfield High School has become a multicultural school with a diverse and changing multicultural population. Refugee parents see the school as an important base for their children as they adjust to their new community, and the school has responded with curriculum change and support for parent and community involvement. The successful Parents' Café has been important in engaging refugee families with the school community. The Parents' Café started with the Intensive English Centre parents, based on an idea from the Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program. Rather than a typical P&C format, the Middle Eastern style café links directly into the primary school and community life and this helps parents to feel comfortable, making it easier for them to get involved in school activities and the school community.
- The Parents' Café has been involved in a range of activities, including: introducing families to TAFE and universities and what education is like in Australia; special events and functions, skills building workshops and activities such as filling in the census form and learning how to use computers; a fitness program; a community garden; and a project to build a pizza oven. The parents' visits to TAFE colleges and Sydney University enabled them to learn about the realities of tertiary education in Australia and to have first-hand experiences of campus life.
- The Parents' Café builds social inclusion, language development and links to social enterprise through activities such as the community garden kitchen, Parents' Café catering, training in hospitality and lawn mowing. Refugee parents are now engaged. Between

30-50 people attend meetings of the Parents' Café, excursions have been held to the Botanic Gardens, the Blue Mountains, Flemington food markets, Canberra, and Wollongong beaches. These excursions introduce parents to a world beyond their local area, and to aspects of Australian life that they may not experience in their daily life, such as negotiating transport, shopping for healthy eating or understanding how government in Australia works. Special guests also attend the Parents' Café, such as Mike Otterman, the author of *Erasing Iraq*, who encouraged parents to write their own stories.

- The Parents' Café is an important part of an environment where students, teachers, parents and the community are working together to develop informed, confident, caring and responsible individuals and citizens. The involvement and support of staff across the school has been important to the success of the Parents' Café and the engagement of migrant and refugee families. Support teams in our school, such as the National Partnerships Team, the SIPRY and RTP Coordinators, the Work Skills Coordinators and the Community Liaison Officers, have been vital to the success of our work.

## REFORMS WITHIN THE NSW CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM AND THE TRANSITION OF OUT-OF-HOME CARE SERVICES TO THE NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Andrew McCallum, CEO, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies

### Summary

- As we are now at the pointy end of the Wood Commission agenda and we are seeing that reach fruition, it's a good time to reflect. Dorothy Scott said that child protection is a toxic waiting room, and you can pick up some dreadful things there. It is important to remember the consequences of the things we do and the decisions we make working in child protection. And it is also important that we are continually advocating for research and action in the area of child protection.
- Child protection is associated with social/economic factors but is not designed to deal with them. We do not live in a fair and equitable country. So much is determined by where you are born, how much education you get, your access to health care and all this is impacted by changes in government policy. We have all seen the recent budget working against every indicator in relation to good public health and we know that disadvantage takes generations to turn around.

- Culture has to inform what follows when there are safety issues but we can't use culture as a reason not to act. Cross-cultural work and culturally appropriate placements are very important and there has been a lot of success working with targeted communities in relation to foster caring and also work in the settlement services space.



# Morning Workshops

## Morning Workshops

### WORKING WITH ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Lyndal Power, Clinical Coordinator, RAPS Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service, Relationships Australia NSW

#### Summary

This workshop explored how family relationships change through settlement and the unique challenges that migrant and refugee parents face when parenting teenagers in a new culture. The workshop provided: a framework for what adolescents need from their parents to reach adulthood successfully; a focus on how workers can support parents through these changes; and an exploration of the importance of sufficient discipline while also helping parents to keep a relationship with their teenager.

#### Key discussion points

- Settlement needs must be met to support changing family relationships.
- Children and teenagers acculturate more quickly than parents, which often results in an 'inverted hierarchy' where parents feel powerless and may reach for shouting or hitting in an attempt to have control over their children, sometimes leading to teenage homelessness.
- It is important to increase dialogue between parents and teenagers. Teenagers in Australia reach adulthood successfully when parents maintain their relationships with them and set sufficient limits.
- It is important to correct the misperception that Anglo-Australian parents do not set limits.
- Parents can be fearful of using mainstream services, and bicultural workers can be a bridge for families accessing mainstream services.
- Bringing people together reduces isolation and decreases parental fear that can fuel authoritarian parenting.

### CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Dr Shanti Raman, Community Paediatrician for Child Protection, Department of Community Paediatrics, Sydney & South Western Sydney Local Health Districts

#### Summary

This workshop explored the influence of culture in child rearing and child development and behaviour, and addressed the complexities of dealing with the suspicion of child maltreatment in a cross-cultural context. An interagency model for responding to cultural issues in child health and wellbeing that is culturally competent and respectful was presented. The model suggested advocacy and action in four domains: systemic, organisational, professional and individual.

#### Key discussion points

- It is critical to understand differences in parenting practices across cultures in our assessment of normal child development as well as child maltreatment.
- An understanding of culture needs to be incorporated into research.
- Developing culturally competent services that respect cultural variations in parenting and child development is vital.
- Cultural competency needs to be valued, integrated into core business, supported and evaluated. Services need to ensure that the skills and resources to support diverse clients are in place and that there is a commitment to diversity management and training.
- Interventions need to be relevant, appropriate and sustainable.

### SUPPORTING CLIENTS FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS SEEKING FAMILY REUNION

Sarah Dale, Education Coordinator, Solicitor and Migration Agent, Refugee Advice and Casework Service

#### Summary

Reuniting with family members is one of the primary issues of concern for people from refugee backgrounds in Australia. The laws and legal processes involved in family reunion are complex and change frequently. This workshop demystified the legal process of family reunion by outlining the key legal issues faced by people seeking family reunion.

#### Key discussion points

- The importance of effectively supporting clients going through the family reunion process and how to work collaboratively with legal service providers.
- Recently arrived refugees face numerous common legal issues and need to be provided with appropriate legal services, and referral pathways.
- We need to address myths and misinformation about how people can help their family come to Australia.
- Challenges for people seeking to reunite with family in Australia.

### WORKING CROSS-CULTURALLY WITH PEOPLE FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

Belinda Green, Training Officer, Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

#### Summary

Working with people from refugee backgrounds involves understanding a number of key variables, which are critical to effective service delivery. This workshop presented a framework for engagement and outlined some of the key components of the refugee world view including culture, experiences of war and/or persecution, and organised violence, and the ways in which these and other traumas impact on clients. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on their own world view and how this may impact upon their perception of the client and appropriate service provision.

#### Key discussion points

- The role of power and privilege is significant in delivering services to people from refugee backgrounds.
- What are the skills and principles, methods and techniques required to work cross-culturally?
- How does culture impact on refugee settlement in Australia?
- Responding to client needs and the impact of culture.



# Morning Workshops

## Morning Workshops

### WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT REFUGEE YOUTH? SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM A REFUGEE BACKGROUND THROUGH SETTLEMENT

David Keegan, Manager Humanitarian Services; and Anne-Marie Taylor, Settlement Services International

#### Summary

Young people from refugee backgrounds experience unique challenges during early settlement and it can be difficult for case managers and other support workers to understand the complex cultural and language transitions that take place during this period. This workshop explored a casework model developed by SSI in partnership with Multicultural Youth Access Network (MYAN NSW) to assist caseworkers to better meet the needs of young people and their families. The workshop included consideration of case scenarios as well as perspectives from SSI youth clients. Participants received a free copy of Keeping Their Hopes Alive, a resource developed to support caseworkers with tools and information to support youth from a refugee background.

#### Key discussion points

- What is unique about the refugee youth experience?
- Listening to young refugee people is important and helps us to deliver better services.
- It is important to engage effectively with refugee parents but also to balance the distinct needs of the young person with the needs of the family.
- Acknowledging the role of the young person within the family.
- Support and information needs to be provided according to the stage of settlement with appropriate referral to youth services.
- The expectations of young people and their families need to be carefully managed.

### FAMILY VIOLENCE IN CALD COMMUNITIES: BEST PRACTICES IN PREVENTION AND CRISIS INTERVENTION, AN INTERSTATE PERSPECTIVE

Maya Avdibegovic, CEO, inTouch, Multicultural Centre against Family Violence

#### Summary

Despite many positive initiatives from governments and increased media coverage, family violence still occurs. Intimate family violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44 years. While family violence occurs in all socioeconomic and cultural groups, additional risk factors and barriers increase the complexity of family violence issues in CALD communities. The workshop presented a culturally appropriate model of crisis intervention focusing on the prevention of family violence in CALD communities, sharing the learning from a two-year multidisciplinary and holistic prevention project delivered by inTouch in four different ethnic communities.

#### Key discussion points

- What are the additional risk factors and barriers impacting on the complexity of family violence issues in CALD communities?
- Risks for young people from refugee backgrounds.
- Engaging men in prevention is important but difficult. More behaviour change programs for men are needed.
- Leadership is important, particularly engaging faith leaders who can be champions.
- Community engagement and ownership of initiatives in prevention work is vital, along with the provision of culturally sensitive services.
- Important activities include engaging with health sector, locating legal outposts in hospitals, linking with maternal and child health nurses, translation and development of appropriate material.

# Afternoon Presentations

## Afternoon Presentations

### Child Protection and Early Intervention Stream

#### OVERVIEW OF NSW CHILD PROTECTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES

Echo Morgan, Manager Multicultural Services Unit, NSW Community Services

Echo Morgan presented on the work of NSW Community Services to provide responsive services to migrant and refugee children, families and communities. NSW Community Services has primary responsibility for delivering and managing child protection services for children and families in NSW. The Multicultural Services Unit coordinates Community Services multicultural strategic planning and delivery of child protection services for migrant and refugee children and families. The work of the unit aims to maximise the responsiveness of its services to CALD families through services such as: the multicultural caseworker program; Community Language Allowance Scheme accreditation of staff language skills; training in culturally reflective casework practice; casework practice standards and practice resources; interpreter services and practice procedures; African Sessional Workers Program; information sessions for recently arrived migrants on the child protection system and parenting practices in a new country; multicultural advisory forums and the Community Services multicultural awards promoting good multicultural practice by staff.

### ENGAGING WITH MIGRANT COMMUNITIES THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN THE MACARTHUR REGION

Louise Bond, Acting Principal Policy Officer, Communities, Prevention and Early Intervention, NSW Community Services  
Lilieta Teaupa, CALD Family Worker, Macarthur Diversity Services Inc. (MDSI)

Pacific communities have strong family and cultural traditions, which face stressors and challenges with changing family dynamics and roles, and differences in parenting beliefs and practices in Australia. A joint presentation by NSW Community Services and Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative (MDSI) showcased the work of the organisation in providing support to children, young people and families from CALD communities and in particular, Pacific communities. A case study involving a Pacific community provided an example of how service providers and government can work together and in partnership with communities, to identify and assess risk, and help prevent children and young people entering the statutory child protection system. Recognising the expertise and knowledge of Pacific communities is an important step in building strong and effective partnerships that can make a difference.



# Afternoon Presentations

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### BRIGHTER FUTURES PROGRAM IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

Lou Bacchiella, Program Manager, Child and Family Services, Metro Migrant Resource Centre

The Brighter Futures program is designed for families who have children aged 0-8 years and who face specific vulnerabilities including domestic violence, parental drug and alcohol misuse, parental mental health issues, parents with significant learning difficulties and/or intellectual disabilities, lack of parenting skills and inadequate supervision. Culturally and linguistically diverse families face additional and specific challenges in managing the impacts of parenting in a new cultural context, often without family support. The presentation provided an overview of Metro Migrant Resource Centre's Brighter Futures program for culturally and linguistically diverse families living in the Bankstown and Fairfield areas, which is delivered in collaboration with Fairfield MRC.

### AFRICAN COMMUNITIES AND CHILD PROTECTION: A BEST PRACTICE MODEL

Melissa Monteiro, Executive Director, Community Migrant Resource Centre

Child protection practice in Australia can be an unfamiliar concept to many who come from African countries. With the increase in arrivals of refugees from Africa in recent years, service providers have been challenged by limitations in their understanding of the families and communities they are working with. This model assists FACS to make appropriate assessments and interventions by providing cultural and language expertise through bilingual African Support Workers who also provide community education about the role of FACS to African communities. The project builds and strengthens relationships between African families, communities and the child protection sector. It has also established a workforce of highly skilled African bilingual workers with expertise in child and family services.

### Early Childhood Stream

#### STARTTERS EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM FOR TRAUMA RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

Rosemary Signorelli, Early Childhood Counsellor and Music Therapist, STARTTS

STARTTerS is an early childhood program for 0-6 year olds from refugee backgrounds and their parents or caregivers. The program is based on an understanding of the importance of early intervention and the role of multimodal therapy, psycho-education and parent support in delivering a successful intervention. The program approach makes reference to trauma recovery and developmental models, and neuroscientific and attachment studies. The complexity of this work requires collaboration and partnership with other service providers and culturally responsive service delivery to ensure a comprehensive and successful approach.

#### DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE RESOURCE KIT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Clare Darling, Multicultural Health Project Officer, Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District  
Julianne Abood, Project Worker, Family Worker Training & Development Programme Inc.

Diversity in Practice is a resource kit, which aims to improve services for CALD families accessing childcare, community health care and other services for young families. Developed by the Migrant and Refugee Children Support working group, the resource assists early childhood service providers to improve access and the provision of culturally inclusive programming for migrant and refugee children and their families. The resource kit aims to increase capacity in strengths-based practice and the confidence in applying knowledge and working collaboratively in a cross-cultural context.

### LESSONS FROM THE BICULTURAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Stephanie De Lorenzo, CALD Consumer Capacity Building Project Coordinator, Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-operative Ltd

The Bicultural Support Program provides additional resources to eligible children's services to assist with the inclusion of children from CALD backgrounds, refugee and Indigenous children. The program provides approved children's services with time-limited support from on-site Bicultural Support Workers or off-site Bicultural Support Consultants. This presentation highlighted the importance of cultural competency and addressing cultural sensitivities as well as building and supporting interagency partnerships.

### STRENGTHENING PARENTING PRACTICES IN KAREN AND BURMESE FAMILIES THROUGH A SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP

Shama Pande, Family Outreach Worker, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre  
David Aung Burmese/Karen Project Worker, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre

The Karen and Burmese playgroup has provided a strong platform for families to communicate about family and parenting issues and created a strong social group that goes beyond the formal playgroup activities. The playgroup has an important role in reducing parental social isolation and exclusion and supporting community members in leadership roles. The project has also been successful in recruiting volunteers to run the program, which is vital for ongoing sustainability. The program has had significant impacts on the outlook of Karen and Burmese parents towards parenting roles and responsibilities.

### PLAYING AROUND THE WORLD

Natalia Meliendrez, Multicultural Community Development, Northern Settlement Services

The Playing Around the World program operates in the Gosford and Wyong area, engaging a range of cultural groups, community members, organisations, volunteers, staff and students in a program that aims to connect CALD families at the local community level. The program recognises that parents of CALD backgrounds may hold different cultural beliefs and practices regarding parenting and family values and aims to assist parents to adjust to parenting in a new cultural context. The presentation highlighted the importance of breaking down the isolation experienced by many families who may be cut off from their local communities and also looked at strategies for engagement.

### Health Stream

#### NSW REFUGEE HEALTH NURSE PROGRAM

Mary Ruth Sheahan-Endries, Registered Nurse, NSW Refugee Health Service

The NSW Refugee Health Nurse Program works with refugee children, young people and families. The program commenced in October 2012 and provides the first point of contact for health assessment, education, intervention and referral for newly arrived refugees in the Sydney Metropolitan area. A team of Refugee Health Nurses deliver the program through a range of community health centres. Services include screening for health conditions commonly experienced by newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers, appropriate referrals to local General Practitioners and specialised health services, and co-ordination of care for refugees with complex and/or multiple health needs.





# Afternoon Presentations

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### OPTIMISING HEALTH AND LEARNING PROGRAM: A TARGETED HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM FOR NEWLY ARRIVED VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MIGRANT AND REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

Dr Chris Elliott, Paediatrician, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

Optimising Health and Learning is an innovative, school-based nursing program to improve health and learning outcomes for newly arrived vulnerable young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds which has been progressively implemented in four Intensive English Centres. Core components of the program include health screening, parent and student health education, and links with GPs and specialist health services. Outcomes include: identifying a high number of health conditions that need to be addressed; successful linking of newly arrived families to the health system; positive impacts on student learning; an increase in number and strength of service partnerships. Strengths and challenges in implementing multi-agency programs within educational settings were discussed.

### PREGNANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD: MENTAL HEALTH IN REFUGEES AND MIGRANT FAMILIES

Gabriela Salabert, Clinical Psychologist/Cross Cultural Senior Clinical Consultant, NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre

Experiences of violence, trauma and resettlement can have a severe impact on the stress of the mother during the perinatal period (pregnancy and one year after birth). Perinatal depression among mothers from migrant and refugee backgrounds and the importance of identifying women at risk of perinatal mental health disorders were discussed. Isolation, domestic violence, communication barriers, and different understandings of health services can make this population more vulnerable. The presentation also outlined the National Perinatal Depression Initiative (NPD) and the recent Australian developments in public health policy including the Safe Start Program.

### PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN NEWLY ARRIVED STUDENTS

Sara Buchanan, Youth Mental Health Rehabilitation Clinician, St George Community Mental Health  
Ngaio Chandler, Ready Project Officer, St George Youth Services

The presentation provided an overview of a collaborative school health promotion project conducted with three mainstream health service providers and a local Intensive English Centre. The project aims to increase the knowledge of newly arrived migrant and refugee students on the topics of mental health, alcohol and other drugs and sexual health. The project also helps to raise student confidence and skills in seeking knowledge about local health and youth services.

## Legal Matters Stream

### SUPPORTING CHILDREN OF CALD FAMILIES FACING FORCED MARRIAGE

Ruth Pilkinton, Solicitor in Charge, Early Intervention Unit, Legal Aid NSW

Several recent cases where lawyers from Legal Aid NSW have acted for young people to prevent their removal from Australia for the purposes of marriage were discussed. The presentation highlighted the critical role that many agencies play in supporting children of migrant and refugee families facing the prospect of forced marriages, including the roles played by the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Family and Community Services, Australian Federal Police, and family and migrant support agencies. The need for more work to develop protocols about agency roles and referral pathways was discussed.

### KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE: RAISING AWARENESS OF CHILD PROTECTION LAWS

Sanathani Mahesan, Family Harmony/Family Support Program Coordinator, SydWest Multicultural Services

A lack of awareness of child protection laws, processes and support services is often raised as an issue of concern for recently arrived parents and families. SydWest Multicultural Services' Communities for Children's Project raises awareness on child protection legislation, the role of Family and Community Services, identifying child abuse and neglect, acceptable forms of discipline, and the support services available. The project focuses on targeted early intervention approaches that bring about positive family functioning, safety and child development outcomes for children and their families.

### MOSAIC: SOLVING REFUGEE AND MIGRANTS' EVERYDAY LEGAL PROBLEMS

Liz Simpson, Manager and Principal Lawyer, MOSAIC

MOSAIC (Migrant Outreach Services, Advice, Information, Community) Education is a new program of Justice Connect that provides free face-to-face legal advice and ongoing assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and recently arrived migrants. Legal issues for refugees and migrants commonly include fines, tenancy, mobile phone and electricity bills, motor vehicle accidents and employment issues. These legal problems also have other impacts such as limiting opportunities to access housing, employment, and education as well as leading to stress-related illness, physical ill health and relationship breakdown. MOSAIC also undertakes community legal education, identifies systemic legal problems and formulates responses, including advocacy and law reform campaigns.

### NSW POLICE WORKING WITH NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES

Detective Superintendent Peter Lennon, Commander, Fairfield Local Area Command

During their initial settlement, families may not be familiar with the laws of Australia, and the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) gives extra attention to the needs of these communities at this time. The NSWPF is committed to ensuring that newly arrived migrants and refugees feel safe and are supported if they are in need of police assistance. The presentation discussed the community engagement, consultation, communication and customer service strategies that aim to make this happen. Improving community relationships with police is a high priority with a focus on proactive and non-crisis driven interactions to help build rapport, confidence and cooperation.

## Collaboration and Cooperation Stream

### THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY HUBS PROGRAM: CREATING SOCIAL AND EDUCATIVE SPACES FOR MIGRANT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Tony Fry, Vice President, Refuge of Hope  
Dr Dianne Jackson, Director, Scanlon Foundation  
Renate Gebhart-Jones, CEO, Connect Child and Family Services & NSW Manager National Community Hubs Program

The National Community Hubs Program is an initiative funded by the Federal Government in partnership with the Scanlon Foundation, the Migration Council of Australia and Refuge of Hope. It aims to establish 100 community hubs across Australia to enhance social inclusion by promoting community outreach and improving educational outcomes for migrant families and their children. The presentation described the development of the conceptual framework underpinning the hubs, discussed the principles of place-based engagement, and outlined the process of working with families in partnership with schools and in the development of a strong service system.

## Afternoon Presentations

### SOUTH WEST SYDNEY FAMILY REFERRAL SERVICE: ACHIEVING OUTCOMES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOLS

Aimee Trochei, Family Connector, and Anees Talia, Community Development Access Worker, UnitingCare Burnside

The South West Sydney Family Referral Service provides and promotes access to referral services for migrant and refugee young people and their families. The service works with interpreters, translates materials, employs multilingual staff, uses a strengths-based model, and has a focus on collaboration with other programs and services such as schools. The service has been working to create pathways into the service through, for example, promotion to school counsellors, and by reaching out to parents through playgroups, and attending P&C meetings.

### EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND ITS INTERFACE WITH CHILD WELLBEING

Lynn Cohen, Community Program Officer, NSW Family and Community Services; and Michelle Lazaris, Community Hub Team Leader, Metro Migrant Resource Centre

Winner of a 2014 NSW Community Services Mary Dimech Multicultural Award, this initiative worked with Korean and Chinese-speaking client populations to increase understanding of the Australian educational system, raise awareness of how a balanced and healthy home life impacts on educational performance, promote the use of positive parenting practices, and reduce family violence and increase the number of parents using local services and resources. The program was developed through a collaborative approach, working with local services to ensure the community education program was culturally appropriate and delivered in appropriate settings.

### STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH: LESSONS FROM THE NEPALESE COMMUNITY GROUP

Mariam Hii, Settlement Grants Program Manager; Rishi Acharya, Nepalese Support Worker, St George Migrant Resource Centre; and members of the St George Migrant Resource Centre's Nepalese Grandparent's Social Club

St George Migrant Resource Centre provides a settlement program strategy for family and community engagement. The presentation outlined a community capacity building initiative with the Nepalese community, which included establishing a reference group, an association, the Grandparent's Social Club, weekly children and women's cultural dance classes, yoga classes, and soccer sporting activities. The formation of a Grandparent's Social Club has helped newly arrived grandparents to settle in Australia, provided opportunities to form new friendships, learn about Australian systems, and address inter-generational conflict through structured information sessions and outings.

## Summary of Outcomes - Afternoon Plenary Session

### THEMES

Key themes identified by symposium participants during the afternoon plenary session included the need for greater co-ordination in the planning and provision of services to recently arrived families. That coordination needed to cover the role of the non-government sector, local, state and federal governments. The importance of investing in early intervention was also a key theme. Recognising and supporting the involvement of CALD communities and community leaders in efforts to address issues of concern was highlighted. It was noted that partnerships and formation of action coalitions were effective ways of responding to community needs. Another theme to emerge was the importance of highlighting success stories and showcasing what works.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations arose from the plenary session:

1. Greater co-ordination and integration in the planning and provision of services to recently arrived families. This includes co-ordination between federal and state government agencies, local government, and non-government organisations.
2. The need for targeted and culturally appropriate programs and services for migrant and refugee families in the areas of domestic violence prevention and support, child protection, early intervention and prevention of child abuse and neglect, and parenting programs.
3. The provision of supported playgroups in community languages as a means of accessing and supporting vulnerable migrant and refugee families.
4. Partnerships and involvement of migrant and refugee communities and organisations in addressing child protection concerns within communities. The importance of NSW Family and Community Services engaging with migrant and refugee communities and organisations in this area of work.
5. Development of a quantitative and qualitative research program, in partnership with universities, focused on the settlement of migrant and refugee families. This would develop and expand the research base to support work with migrant and refugee families.

6. The importance of mainstream organisations ensuring that their services are accessible and culturally appropriate for migrant and refugee families.
7. Training and resources to enhance the capacity of government and non-government child and family service providers to meet the needs of migrant and refugee families.
8. The symposium be a recurring bi-annual event to enable a continued focus on these issues.
9. Initiatives to give voice to the views and aspirations of migrant and refugee families, and to enable greater participation by families and communities in addressing issues of concern.
10. Community education to raise awareness about the experiences, needs and strengths of refugee families.

### SUMMARY OF CLOSE

Kamalle Dabboussy, Chair, Settlement Services International

It is clear from the closing remarks already made that we need to work from a strengths-based model rather than a deficit model – we are working with resilient families made up of capable, strong, talented and educated people. Today is a baseline exercise, we haven't come together before, we now have opportunities to share and implement these ideas in our networks. Next time we can talk about what we've learnt, how we've implemented these ideas, what we've achieved and what the challenges have been. It is clear that we need to recognise the importance of research, and we need more baseline and more longitudinal research. We also need to acknowledge that collaboration requires effort, work and further research. SSI and the MRCs are well connected in the sector, bringing together so many networks and relationships. I'd like to thank all the presenters today – 40 presenters and over 230 participants. Special thanks to Camilla, Rekha, Thanh for the hard work in making this possible, and of course to the whole team at SSI. It's been a great day, thank you.

## Evaluation

A total of 90 evaluation forms were collected and the feedback indicated an extremely high level of satisfaction across all aspects of the symposium including the overall content, presentations, organisation and time available for networking. The table below provides information on satisfaction rates on various aspects of the event.

Symposium Aspect	Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Registration process	96%
Symposium material provided	98%
Venue	97%
Food & catering	94%
On-the-day running	97%
Morning speakers	93%
Morning workshops	95%
Afternoon presentations	89%
Symposium content	95%
Helpfulness of symposium staff	98%
Duration and timing of sessions	95%
Time for networking	88%

The symposium was described as informative, educational and relevant. Participants appreciated the diversity of organisations participating, the expertise of presenters and the opportunities for networking. Organisation of the symposium was seen as very professional and the work involved in planning and executing the event was highly appreciated. Most comments reflected the high level of satisfaction with the symposium content and organisation, and the opportunities provided for professional information exchange and networking during the symposium.

'Fantastic symposium. Really good to see so many services from the sector coming together. Very professional, fantastic organisation and outstanding promotional and informative material. Would love to see this event continue into the future.'

'Informative, educational, inspirational, great venue, fantastic speakers.'

'A wonderful day for the sharing of ideas, to develop new networks, to expand my view of all the wonderful programs to support our very vulnerable new Australians.'

'Really good day, good to hear about what other services are doing and to share insights and experience. Good to take a step back and reconceptualise what we are doing and how we work.'

Suggestions for future improvements included a two-day symposium, more breaks and opportunities for networking, shorter sessions, more interactivity in workshops, more community involvement, and more practical information on engagement with communities.



# Notes

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