



Response to the DIMA Discussion Paper *Measures to Improve Settlement Outcomes for Humanitarian Entrants*

Australian Catholic Migrant & Refugee Office (November 2006)

In this brief submission from the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee, we shall address the three key areas given in the discussion paper.

1. Complex Case Support Network (CCSN)

The development of a CCSN acknowledges the need of special services in specialised cases to complement the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme (IHSS).

Catholic Church agencies who are providers for the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme (eg Centacare, Canberra) will provide submissions and are better placed to comment on the necessity and value of the proposed CCSN. However, it is imperative that there be a complementary relationship between new and existing programs, especially between IHSS and CCSN. Additionally, CCSN should be flexible and be tailored for each region.

The role and importance of volunteers should not be overlooked by CCSN (or IHSS) providers. Many of the volunteers under the former CRSS have felt unwanted and unneeded since the introduction of IHSS. Hopefully this was not DIMA's intention, and these volunteers should be revitalised, especially to complement the new structure.

The following are a few examples of the assistance given to humanitarian entrants by the voluntary (non-Government) sector:

- Catholic schools have diverted resources into helping Sudanese refugees settle into formal education
- The St Vincent de Paul Society (complementing the work of Police) has spent time and money in educating new arrivals about driving issues - the need to learn how to drive, to be aware of the road rules (especially about being licensed and drink/driving) and to maintain a roadworthy and registered car.
- Community health centres have developed health programs to respond to some of the unique health problems of humanitarian arrivals.

The scheme seems only concerned about delivery of services in the first 6-12 months but some psychological problems, such as post-traumatic stress syndrome, may not manifest themselves until much later.

The incorporation of Youth Support Co-ordinators into the CCSN is also a very welcome addition for the following reasons:

- Some refugee children have found it difficult to settle into formal education;
- Unaccompanied minors are of particular concern to their communities as they drop out of school and, in some cases, join gangs of youths. Traineeships and apprenticeships are essential to guide them into meaningful, productive employment.



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2) Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has been contracted to present this program and are currently reviewing the content and presentation.

It would be useful to learn from the experience of former humanitarian entrants what skills and knowledge are needed at the beginning of the resettlement process; and the best way to impart these skills and knowledge to their particular ethnic groups. As the discussion paper states, humanitarian entrants do not have resources or established networks to fall back on if anything goes wrong. Therefore, they cannot afford to make costly mistakes like incurring large telephone accounts or falling victim to unscrupulous business people..

Proposers (and their support organizations) should be aware of the operation of AUSCO and its content so that they can complement it when their nominees arrive in Australia.

3) Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) Proposers

There should be a central agency to monitor/support/train and build the capacity of proposer groups. Any assessment of group proposers would then need to ensure that they are linked into the proper support structures.

The Government and DIMA appear to be presuming that voluntary and community/church organizations will be able and willing to help settle humanitarian entrants and to support proposers. These organisations would be greatly assisted in their planning if there were more certainty about which nominees would be likely to be approved if they had a proposal. At present, organisations receive many requests from refugees and/or their proposers without having any idea whether the nominees will be approved. Large numbers of apparently deserving cases can be proposed, only to result in all of them being refused, usually for the reason that they do not have a "priority" claim to be included in Australia's Special Humanitarian Program. This is particularly true at present with Christians and Sabean Madaeans from Iraq. While I realise that Australia's Humanitarian Program is limited, I believe that, for planning purposes, a way must be found to overcome this uncertainty.