



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Home Affairs**

# **Submission to the inquiry into issues facing diaspora communities in Australia**

**Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References  
Committee**

3 September 2020

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## 1. Introduction

The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) welcomes the opportunity to provide the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee with this submission as part of the Committee's Inquiry into Issues facing the diaspora communities in Australia.

On 14 May 2020 the Senate referred the following matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 26 November 2020: Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia.

### 1.1. The Terms of Reference

Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia, with particular reference to:

- a. support offered to diaspora community associations and similar organisations, including government grants and other funding;
- b. safety concerns among diaspora communities, and means for strengthening the protection and resilience of vulnerable groups;
- c. barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers;
- d. opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities in Australia; and
- e. any related matters.

### 1.2. Overview of Home Affairs submission

Home Affairs is responsible for centrally coordinating strategy and policy in relation to social cohesion, the protection of our sovereignty and integrity of our border, the resilience of our national infrastructure, domestic and national security arrangements, law enforcement, countering foreign interference and counter-terrorism. Home Affairs also delivers services including strengthening the cohesiveness of Australian society through our migration and citizenship programs. We manage and assist temporary and permanent migrants and those people participating in humanitarian and refugee programs, and confer citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Home Affairs' partnerships with portfolio agencies, Commonwealth departments, state and territory governments, the community, industry, and international partners enables Home Affairs to foster greater collaboration, build capabilities, and ensure Australia continues to be a prosperous, secure and united nation.

This submission outlines the role of Home Affairs in fostering and securing Australia's diverse and socially cohesive society. This is a key component of the Australian Government's priorities to keep the Australian economy strong, Australians together and Australia safe.

Noting the Terms of Reference, we have selected to highlight Home Affairs' role in building an Australia that is united, secure and prosperous through programs and initiatives that:

- sustain our socially cohesive democracy, united by shared liberal democratic values;
- focus on community safety; and
- encourage social, economic and civic participation and strengthen opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities to engage with Australia's democratic and social institutions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Home Affairs, (2018), *Blueprint for Home Affairs*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Home Affairs uses the terms culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities to refer to Australians who identify themselves as belonging to different ancestries. While the subject of this Inquiry refers to 'diaspora' communities, this submission refers instead to CALD communities. CALD communities for the purpose of this submission encompass Australian citizens, permanent residents and recently arrived migrants and refugee and humanitarian entrants. When referring to specific CALD groups, Home Affairs uses ethnicity as an adjective and Australian as a noun. For example, when Lebanese Australian is used, it means that being Australian is what these groups have in common. It is inclusive usage; the adjective describes their background.

Additionally, Home Affairs notes its submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee's inquiry into nationhood, national identity and democracy, which also outlines Home Affairs' role in fostering and securing our social cohesion.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Sustaining a socially cohesive liberal democracy

### 2.1. Social cohesion

A cohesive and inclusive domestic environment is core to maintaining a successful liberal democracy. Without social cohesion, economic growth will be constrained and national security will be at risk.<sup>4</sup> All Australians, citizens and residents, are encouraged to become a part of and contribute to Australia's economic, social and civic life. By building a socially cohesive society underpinned by shared values of rule of law, freedom of speech, parliamentary democracy and a 'fair go', Australia is better placed to:

- enhance a sense of belonging and trust across communities;
- reduce the possibility of tensions within and between communities; and
- remove barriers to full participation by CALD communities.

Australia is one of the most successful, diverse and cohesive societies. Our nation is made up of migrants born in every country around the world, with more than 300 languages spoken, over 100 religions and more than 300 different ancestries highlighting the rich tapestry of our cultural diversity.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence suggests that social cohesion in Australia is strong. According to the *Scanlon 2019 Mapping Social Cohesion Report*:

- 85 per cent of Australians agreed that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia;'
- 90 per cent of Australians had a "great" or "moderate" sense of belonging in Australia;
- 84 per cent were "very happy" or "happy" over the last year, while 62 per cent were "optimistic" or "very optimistic" about Australia's future.<sup>6</sup>

The World Economic Forum in their Global Social Mobility Index finds that Australians' social mobility is high.<sup>7</sup> Pre-COVID, Australia's employment levels were also high and, importantly, there was little difference in the unemployment rate between new arrivals to our shores and those born here – whereas across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), there is an average 2.9 per cent gap between the migrant and non-migrant unemployment rate; and in the European Union it is a 4.1 per cent gap.<sup>8</sup> Migrants create more small businesses in Australia proportionate to non-migrants, despite 83 per cent of migrant business owners not owning a business before coming here.<sup>9</sup>

Australia has forged a unique and inclusive national identity. We have been successful because people coming to our shores have integrated into the wider Australian community. We share common values, a national language and a commitment to freedom, security and prosperity. This foundation brings resilience – we unify in times of crisis and look after each other, protected by our democratic institutions and the rule of law.

The Government is bringing Australians together through programs that embrace Australia's diversity and help communities become part of Australia's economic and social development. As part of this, Home Affairs continues to work with portfolio colleagues to help to build an Australia that is united, secure and prosperous.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Home Affairs, *Submission to the inquiry into nationhood, national identity and democracy*.

<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Morrison, Sir Robert Menzies lecture, 12/03/2019

<sup>5</sup> ABS Census of Population and Housing cultural diversity in Australia, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Article~60>

<sup>6</sup> Scanlon Foundation, *Mapping Social Cohesion Survey Report*, 2019

<sup>7</sup> World Economic Forum. *The Global Social Mobility Report 2020*. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/Global\\_Social\\_Mobility\\_Report.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/Global_Social_Mobility_Report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> OECD. *International Migration Outlook*. 2019. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook\\_1999124x](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook_1999124x)

<sup>9</sup> CGU Insurance. *Migrant small business report*. 2018. <https://apo.org.au/node/128756>

## Social Cohesion initiatives

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Government funded a \$71 million package of social cohesion initiatives to create a stronger, more cohesive Australia that:

- encourages and supports new arrivals to actively become part of and contribute to Australia's economic and social development;
- builds interfaith and intercultural understanding through sport, in classrooms, cultural institutions and through community-driven programs and outreach;
- encourages a diversity of perspectives in the public debate and promotes resilience against harmful and divisive messages, particularly those that promote violence.

The package included initiatives that benefit the whole of society and those that support particular sections of the community in need of assistance. Information on the Home Affairs programs within this package is described in subsequent sections of this submission.

### **Strengthening social cohesion information campaign during COVID-19 pandemic**

At the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were reports of abuse and discrimination against Asian Australians. In response, the Government launched an information campaign to support and inform multicultural communities affected by COVID-19-related racism. This campaign was developed in consultation with the Race Discrimination Commissioner.

- The campaign aims to support the multicultural communities most affected by COVID-19 related racism, and to encourage people to speak up if they experience or witness racism (see [www.australia.gov.au/helpstopracism](http://www.australia.gov.au/helpstopracism));
- Relevant materials have also been translated into key languages and can be accessed by multicultural communities. (<https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/racism-not-acceptable>).
- The campaign was launched via multiple channels including print, radio, digital and out of home advertising.

Home Affairs also works closely with digital industry to remove racist online content and referring content to the Australian Federal Police for consideration.

## 2.2. Australian citizenship

Our citizenship model has been central to Australia's success in building an open, prosperous and united nation. It represents full and formal membership of the Australian community and participation in democratic processes. It builds mutual obligations between government, the community and the individual, and strengthens our resilience and sense of belonging.

Australia has one of the highest rates of citizenship acquisition (more than 80 per cent) in the OECD.<sup>10</sup> In 2018–19, 127,674 people from at least 200 different countries became Australian citizens by conferral.<sup>11</sup> The 2017 final report of the Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism found that new migrants and refugees consider Australian citizenship represents a sense of security and identity, and is an important milestone in establishing their lives in Australia.<sup>12</sup>

Australian citizenship requires a continuing commitment to Australia and Australian values, and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship.

*With every pledge of allegiance on the part of new citizens, and affirmation of allegiance on the part of existing citizens, our mutual bonds of national association are invoked, as are the undertakings that we have made to one another, to our forebears and to our descendants through the 'social contract' that is otherwise known as 'Australia'. That is why our citizenship pledge and affirmation invoke allegiance to Australia and its people; to our shared democratic beliefs, rights and liberties; and bind us to the observance of our laws.<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> OECD, (2018), *Settling in 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Home Affairs, *Australian citizenship statistics*, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/citizenship-statistics>.

<sup>12</sup> Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism, (August 2017), *Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion*, Final Report, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Pezzullo, (30 October 2018), *Prosper the Commonwealth: The Public Service and Nationhood*, Institute of Public Administration Canberra, Australia, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/news-media/speeches/ipaa-30-october-2018>.



The Australian community expects that aspiring citizens demonstrate their allegiance to Australia, their commitment to live in accordance with Australian values, and their willingness and ability to integrate into and become contributing members of the Australian community.

Our nation is stronger when we have informed citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities. At all levels, from primary schools to universities, students learn about Australia's history, democracy and their obligations as citizens of our society. Australia's strong universal education system helps ensure that all students are informed and engaged citizens. Education, particularly on civics and citizenship, plays a vital role in safeguarding our democracy and supporting social cohesion.

#### **Online citizenship ceremonies during COVID-19 pandemic**

Within weeks Home Affairs was able to stand-up a surge team to offer online citizenship ceremonies throughout Australia—including through supporting the Minister and other members of parliament to host online ceremonies. By the end of August 2020, more than 81,000 applicants participated in online ceremonies across Australia.

### **2.3. Shared values**

Australia's robust democratic system, inclusive model of citizenship and shared values have helped maintain Australia's social cohesion in the face of the rapid changes of the twenty first century.

As a diverse and plural society, Australia's democratic processes and institutions are not based on culture or religion, but on shared values that form the normative framework for civic engagement in Australia. Our shared values, based on respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women, mutual respect, tolerance, and 'a fair go',<sup>14</sup> are central to the success of the Australian nation.

Our values facilitate a robust democracy, which welcomes contest and contestability, and unites Australians through mutual understanding, respect and tolerance.<sup>15</sup> They underpin Australia's international engagement and provide the framework through which new migrants integrate into Australia's social and public life.

#### **Australian Values**

The Australian Government has articulated Australian values and democratic ideals across a number of key documents. This includes:

- The Foreign Policy White Paper (2017) states that all Australian Government policies, including our foreign policy, must give expression to, and be formed on the basis of, the values of our community.\*
- The Multicultural Statement: *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* (2017) affirms that values unite Australians and create social bonds. They provide the foundation for our society and a shared future in which everyone belongs.^
- The Life in Australia book provides visitors to Australia and new residents information about the Australian Values Statement and our history, culture and society.\*\*
- Visa applicants and aspiring citizens are required to confirm that they will respect Australian values and obey Australian laws by signing or accepting the Australian Values Statement and Australian Values Declaration.^
- As part of Australian Citizenship Ceremonies, new citizens pledge and affirm 'loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey'.\*\*\*

Sources:

\*Australian Government, (2017), *Foreign Policy White Paper*, p. 11.

^Australian Government, (2017), Australia's multicultural statement, *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful*, p. 9.

\*\*Department of Immigration and Border Protection, (2016), *Life in Australia: Australian Values and Principles*, [https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/support-subsite/files/life-in-australia/lia\\_english\\_full.pdf](https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/support-subsite/files/life-in-australia/lia_english_full.pdf).

^^Department of Home Affairs, *Australian values*, <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/australian-values>.

\*\*\*Department of Home Affairs, *Australian citizenship pledge*, <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/citizenship/ceremony/what-is-the-pledge>

<sup>14</sup> Australian Government, *Australian Values Statement*, <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/australian-values>.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Government, (2017), *Foreign Policy White Paper*, pp. 2-3.

## 2.4. Supporting communities through engagement

Home Affairs builds trust with a broad range of stakeholders through a focus on communication and partnerships. Home Affairs engages with CALD communities by supporting ministerial advisory councils, partnering with multicultural peak bodies, and engaging with community organisations, individual community and faith leaders, as well as direct engagement with communities through media platforms.

The below section highlights current partnerships and engagement with a diverse cross section of individuals, organisations and peak bodies to support CALD communities and overcome barriers to participation to strengthen social cohesion.

### Ministerial advisory bodies

#### *Australian Multicultural Council*

The Australian Multicultural Council is a ministerially appointed body representing a broad cross-section of Australian interests, providing advice to Government on multicultural affairs and social integration policy and programs, with a particular focus on:

- Strengthening public understanding of a shared 'Australian identity' as a unifying characteristic of Australia.
- Harnessing the economic and social benefits of our diverse population.
- Advancing programs and policies aimed at building harmonious and socially cohesive communities.
- Promoting the importance of mutual respect and responsibility, which foster our shared Australian values, identity, and citizenship.
- Building more cohesive communities and addressing barriers to participation, including racism and discrimination.
- Promoting greater intercultural and interfaith understanding and dialogue.

Home Affairs provides secretariat support for the Australian Multicultural Council.

#### *Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council*

The Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council (RaMSAC) is a ministerially appointed body providing advice to the Government on improving settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants and other migrants. RaMSAC members represent a cross-section of Australian interest, sectors and experience and provide independent and unbiased advice on policies, programs and services that support positive settlement outcomes.

The role of RaMSAC is to:

- provide advice on policies, programs and services that support positive settlement outcomes;
- identify priorities relevant to migrants and refugees in order to advise the Minister;
- liaise and consult with the community, service providers and stakeholders on key areas of focus determined by the Minister; and
- seek advice from migrants and refugees on their views of proposed program and policy changes.

RaMSAC works closely with the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services to ensure its focus aligns with the Government's priorities for settlement. Home Affairs provides secretariat support for RaMSAC.

### Portfolio community liaison networks

#### *The Home Affairs Community Liaison Officers (CLO) Network*

The CLO network (the Network) engages with communities around Australia to:

- build trusted relationships with community leaders and listen to feedback;

- promote social cohesion; and
- provide informed feedback to Home Affairs and Government on community sentiment.

The Network manages the flow of information between Home Affairs and the community, delivers Home Affairs and whole-of-government policy and program information, and feeds back community sentiment to Home Affairs to inform policy and program delivery. The CLOs are based in all states and territories around Australia.

#### **Community engagement by the Network during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The CLO Network has engaged with more than 2,000 stakeholders, including multicultural organisations, community leaders and government agencies, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 6,700 engagements between March and 16 August 2020 represent a 500 per cent increase on Home Affairs' outreach activities nationally compared with the same period in 2019. The Network actively listens to community concerns and tailors its outreach efforts to suit community needs. Feedback received during these engagements has informed and enhanced the Government's response to the pandemic. Of particular note:

- Since the roll-out of substantial language resources and the ramping-up of CLO outreach, community leaders are advising Home Affairs (and the Minister) that messaging is being well-received and social distancing measures adhered to.
- There has been widespread understanding and acceptance of social distancing measures reported by communities since early April, as evidenced by the postponement or cancellation of cultural events, and religious services being conducted remotely.

Through extensive engagements, multicultural communities are equipped and empowered to generate culturally appropriate and effective ways to support their respective communities. These community-initiated responses have been, and continue to be, critical in supporting community capacity building to increase resilience to the impact of the pandemic.

#### ***Australian Federal Police Community Liaison Teams***

AFP Community Liaison Teams (CLTs) around Australia help to build positive, trusting and cohesive relationships with a diverse range of communities. The teams engage with communities to:

- address misunderstandings and misconceptions;
- facilitate conversations about issues of concern;
- discuss emerging situations;
- promote the positive brand of the AFP in the community; and
- act as a conduit between the community and law enforcement.

These core activities aim to build trust, foster cooperation and enhance social cohesion and resilience in all communities. CLTs work closely with partners in both government and non-government agencies with the aim of assisting communities with issues of concern. By listening and using networks, CLTs are able to assist these communities to achieve positive outcomes.

In addition, the AFP also maintains an education awareness approach to matters relevant to specific community groups (including CALD groups) through the use of AFP Media. AFP Media promotes their messaging via media releases and social media posts.

#### **Engagement with peak bodies that represent CALD communities' interest**

##### ***Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia***

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA) is the peak national body representing Australians from CALD backgrounds. FECCA has received Commonwealth funding since 1981 to represent the views of multicultural communities to government, build community capacity and conduct research and community consultations. FECCA is a strategic partner with Home Affairs on matters relating to Australian values, integration, civics and social cohesion.

In 2018 Home Affairs and FECCA entered into a four-year grant agreement administered by Home Affairs to undertake a number of activities to represent CALD Australians and facilitate communication between Home Affairs and CALD Australians.



### ***Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network***

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) works in partnership with young people, government and the non-government sectors to promote the interests of migrant and refugee youth and to support a targeted approach to addressing policy and service delivery. MYAN has representatives from each State and Territory and developed the National Youth Settlement Framework to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

MYAN advocates for targeted and responsive approaches in policy and service delivery to address the impact of COVID-19 on young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This includes establishing mechanisms to consult and engage with young people in the development of educational, economic, social, and health interventions.

### ***Migration Council Australia***

The Migration Council Australia (MCA) was established in 2012 as an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit body to enrich the productive benefits of Australia's migration and humanitarian programs. MCA brings together corporate Australia and the community sector to offer a national voice to advocate for effective settlement and migration programs. Key activities of MCA include encouraging a greater understanding of migration and settlement through supporting best practice and building partnerships between corporate Australia, the community sector and government.

MCA has developed and promotes the Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity National Framework and National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals. Through the auspices of the Migrant and Refugee Health Partnership (MRHP), MCA facilitates best practice in providing culturally responsive health access and experience for refugees and vulnerable migrants.

### ***The Settlement Council of Australia***

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) is funded by the Government and is the national peak body representing agencies across Australia that assist migrants and humanitarian entrants to settle into life in Australia. SCoA provides a formal network to bring settlement service providers together at a national level to create cohesion among members and to improve collaborative and strategic planning processes for the settlement sector. SCoA's membership includes the majority of agencies across Australia that deliver settlement services to recently arrived migrants and refugees.

Key activities undertaken by SCoA include policy advice, supporting dialogue within the sector, workforce development and sharing of best practice and research, member consultations and contributions at relevant sector forums.

## **Connecting across governments**

### ***Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group***

The Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG) is an inter-governmental forum to consult and exchange information on settlement-related issues. SOSOG provides an opportunity for senior officials of the national, state and territory governments, as well as representatives from local government, to meet and seek to address settlement issues. SOSOG played a key role in the development and implementation of the National Settlement Framework.

## **3. Keeping communities safe**

Australia is well-placed, geographically, culturally and economically, to make the most of the opportunities of being an open society. However, the global interconnectedness that is fundamental to our wellbeing is also a source of new, complex and pervasive challenges and risks that must be managed if Australia is to continue to benefit. The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies this complexity, with uncertainty prevailing in the unfolding post-COVID-19 environment. Risks to social cohesion will be posed by those seeking to fuel division and efforts to counter violent extremism and foreign interference will increase in the post-COVID-19 environment.

Included below is information on programs and initiatives that address community safety concerns, including concerns of CALD communities. At the community level, Home Affairs supports work to protect the

Australian community from the risk of harm. There are Family Violence Provisions in the *Migration Regulations 1994* that protect individuals suffering from family violence. There is also funding allocated to protect community organisations from crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **3.1. The Safer Communities Fund**

The Safer Communities Fund (SCF) program implements the Government's plan to deliver safer communities, by boosting the efforts of identified local councils and community organisations to address crime and anti-social behaviour by funding crime prevention initiatives (such as fixed and mobile CCTV, lighting and youth early intervention projects), and protecting community organisations that may be facing security risks associated with racial or religious intolerance. The program is administered on behalf of Home Affairs by the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources Business Grants Hub.

The focus of round four, and the infrastructure stream of round five of the SCF, was on assisting communities who may be at risk of attack, harassment or violence stemming from racial or religious intolerance:

- Round four of the SCF made up to \$50.3 million available to schools and pre-schools, community organisations and local councils for security infrastructure and engagement activities to protect children in the community who are at risk of attack, harassment or violence stemming from racial or religious intolerance. Round four is fully committed with 155 projects being delivered.
- The general infrastructure stream of round five of the SCF made up to \$31 million available to places of worship, schools, pre-schools, community organisations and local councils facing security risks associated with racial or religious intolerance for security infrastructure projects to help address these risks. Funding agreements for 89 successful applicants are currently being negotiated through the Business Grants Hub.

The SCF has also provided funding to targeted organisations for early intervention crime prevention programs. As part of the SCF's objective to reduce street violence and improve perceptions of community safety, funding under rounds three and five has been awarded to Police-Citizen Youth Clubs, Blue Light Organisations and the Youth of the Streets Organisation to engage at risk youth in diversionary and developmental activities. The initiatives implemented by the targeted organisations under rounds three and five include projects for youth from CALD communities and recently migrated young persons.

### **3.2. Domestic Family Violence provisions within the migration program**

The Government remains committed to ensuring Australia's migration program effectively supports and protects those affected by such violence.

#### **Information on resources to assist Family violence victims**

The Home Affairs' *'Family Violence and your visa'* webpage provides information on the family violence provisions in the Partner visa programs. This webpage contains contact details for the Police and the National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service (1800 RESPECT) in the 'Support for family violence victims' section. These support services provide in language website content in 29 different languages and provides access to Translating and Interpreting Service accredited interpreters for non-English speaking clients.

Home Affairs is working on expanding its website content on family violence issues aimed at all temporary and permanent visa holders and applicants. The Home Affairs website and all visa grant letters include information and a link to the Department of Social Services' Family Safety Pack. The Family Safety Pack has been developed for men and women coming to Australia and includes information on Australia's laws regarding domestic and family violence, sexual assault and forced marriage, and a woman's right to be safe.

Newly arrived refugees, humanitarian and other migrants may be vulnerable to domestic and family violence (DFV) as a result of restricted abilities to access support, little or no English language skills or digital literacy skills on arrival, and limited understanding of and capacity to navigate the Australian service system. To help overcome these barriers, refugees and humanitarian migrants are provided with information and education

regarding DFV at different stages during their settlement into Australia. Vulnerable migrants are assisted through referrals to appropriate services.

### **Family Violence Provisions in the *Migration Regulations 1994***

Individuals from CALD communities can seek protection from family violence via the Family Violence Provisions in the *Migration Regulations 1994* (the Regulations). The provisions allow Partner visa applicants in Australia to be granted permanent residence if their relationship has broken down and they have suffered DFV perpetrated by the sponsor. The provisions exist to avoid a situation where a visa applicant feels compelled to remain in a violent relationship for fear of losing their eligibility for permanent residence.

The Family Violence Provisions are available to holders of temporary Partner visas granted outside Australia (subclass 309), applicants and holders of Partner visas in Australia (subclass 820), Prospective Marriage visa holders (subclass 300) who have married their sponsor and dependent applicants for a Distinguished Talent visa (subclass 858).

Where the Family Violence Provisions do not apply, the Government's policy is that the visa held by the victim should not be cancelled. This provides the visa holder with the flexibility to potentially distance themselves from the perpetrator, allow them to make arrangements to depart Australia or apply for another visa (if appropriate).

Home Affairs ensures that visa holders have access to information about support services through its 'Family violence and your visa' webpage, which provides general information as well as links to the Department of Social Services (DSS) Family Safety Pack and 1800Respect's counselling and support service. All visa grant letters provide information and a link to the DSS Family Safety Pack.

### **Community engagement on DFV issues during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Through the CLO Network, Home Affairs engages with communities and government partners to raise awareness of policies and programs for visa holders, including in relation to DFV. Domestic violence sessions have been held by the CLO Network during the COVID-19 pandemic in partnership with other relevant agencies, and includes disseminating information about options for visa holders experiencing DFV and improving access to support services. For example, on 23 July 2020, the Home Affairs' South Australian Community Engagement Team facilitated a program of online DFV workshops with an aim to build the capacity of community leaders to connect to appropriate DFV services and find support for their own community initiatives. This meeting was chaired by the SA Regional Director and attended by Our Watch and the Australian nominees to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

### **Ministerial Direction no. 79**

The Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs issued Ministerial Direction no. 79 in February 2019 to reiterate the Government's and the Australian community's zero tolerance for DFV. It is intended to prevent non-citizens who are convicted of violent crimes against women or children from entry or stay in Australia and guides visa decision makers to consider crimes of a violent nature against women or children as particularly abhorrent, regardless of the length of sentence imposed.

## **3.3. Countering violent extremism**

Social cohesion builds and underpins community resilience that is necessary to prevent, respond to, and recover from a range of security threats, including terrorism and violent extremism. The Government is committed to preventing violent extremism—that is, the use or support of violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals.

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is a shared effort between all Australian governments. Its primary objective is to combat the threat posed by home-grown terrorism and to discourage Australians from travelling overseas to participate in conflicts.

Australian governments and communities work together to build resistance to all forms of violent extremism, whether politically, religiously or racially motivated. Home Affairs coordinates this comprehensive national approach through the implementation of a number of measures.

Since 2013-14, the Government has provided more than \$53 million in funding for CVE initiatives. This includes:

- combating terrorist propaganda and messaging against violent extremism;
- funding and coordinating a national CVE intervention program (*Living Safe Together*) to support and disengage people at risk of becoming violent extremists;
- assisting health professionals to facilitate early intervention and support to at-risk individuals through provision of resources, training, and awareness raising/professional development activities; and
- collaborating with digital industry, law enforcement, and security agencies to counter terrorist and violent extremist use of online platforms to radicalise and recruit vulnerable people.

#### **Enhanced Community Engagement program**

The Government funded two initiatives under the Enhanced Community Engagement program:

- DIGI Engage 2020, conducted over 25 and 26 June 2020, and delivered in partnership with the Digital Industry Group Incorporated, raised awareness of the dangers of online hate and extremism and empowered young people to use their voices positively and constructively. 2020's theme, *Bridging Divides in Isolation and Beyond*, explored the impact of COVID-19 and the broader importance of the online environment in keeping us all informed and connected.
- Over May and June 2020, Home Affairs also ran the 'CommUNITY' training package. CommUNITY was a network building and social media training program that enhanced the capacity of a range of ethnic and religious communities across Australia to address hate and online extremism, and further promote social cohesion. In 2020, CommUNITY was delivered entirely online and was complemented by a closed Facebook group to encourage continued engagement and communication amongst participants.

### **3.4. Countering foreign interference**

Foreign interference activity against Australian interests is occurring at an unprecedented scale. Left unchecked, it can adversely affect social cohesion and amplify fracture lines in our community. For example, hateful, inauthentic and divisive disinformation may be promulgated or amplified by foreign actors seeking to sow discord and confusion in the community. Foreign actors may also seek to silence, monitor, harass, co-opt or coerce community members to advance their own economic or political interests. Such activity could undermine social cohesion and Australia's free and open society if it is targeted towards CALD groups.

Australians, including members of our diverse ethnic and religious communities, have reported being victims of foreign interference. Threats of foreign interference are not constrained to one section of the Australian community nor perpetrated by a single nation-state.<sup>16</sup> Building a strong and trustful relationship between government and CALD communities, complemented by a shared community awareness of the threat of foreign interference, will strengthen the resilience of our society and deter false narratives and disinformation used by foreign actors to exploit or exaggerate divisions within the Australian community.

#### **Office of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator**

The Government takes the threat of foreign interference seriously and has taken significant steps to strengthen Australia's capacity to protect us from foreign interference. In April 2018, the Government established the Office of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator (NCFIC). The Office of the NCFIC coordinates Australia's whole-of-government efforts to respond to acts of foreign interference. Additionally, in 2019, the Government established the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce to disrupt and deter any foreign actor attempting to undermine Australia's national interests.

#### **National Security Hotline**

Home Affairs has worked to adapt the National Security Hotline (NSH) to provide an avenue for the public to report potential acts of foreign interference. The NSH is a valuable response tool for members of the community to communicate experiences of foreign interference to the appropriate law enforcement and intelligence authorities.

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<sup>16</sup> ASIO, (2020), [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Senate\\_estimates/legcon/2019-20\\_Supplementary\\_Budget\\_Estimates/Home\\_Affairs](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/legcon/2019-20_Supplementary_Budget_Estimates/Home_Affairs)

## Government investment to counter foreign interference

The Government has invested \$126.6 million since 2018-19 to bolster our response to foreign interference, including the introduction of legislative measures to make it more difficult for foreign actors to interfere. These legislative measures are aimed at keeping all Australians safe from foreign actors who seek to target and divide us. This includes:

- The introduction of new foreign interference offences under the Criminal Code through the *National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018*.
- The *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018* to increase visibility of foreign influence in Australia's government and political processes.
- The *Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018* to strengthen visibility of the ownership and control of critical infrastructure, establish an information-gathering power, and provide a Ministerial directions power.
- The *Electoral Funding Act 2018* which restricted foreign political donations.
- The *Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2017*, which established security and notification obligations on regulation entities to protect networks and facilities from unauthorised interference.

## 4. Encouraging full participation in social, economic and civic life

Core to our success is Australia's non-discriminatory migration system, which continues to be at the forefront in attracting the best and brightest skilled migrants from around the globe who embrace our values and can contribute to the Australian economy. We also have world class settlement services which seek to invest in strengths and harness aspirations of migrants and humanitarian entrants. Over the decades, migrants in Australia have contributed significantly to our social, economic and civic life. New arrivals have become part of our social fabric, been shaped by it and are now helping to shape our shared future.

Included below is information on policies, programs and grant opportunities that specifically seek to address barriers to participation. Programs that encourage social, economic and civic participation are a focus of the Government's support for CALD communities and multicultural organisations.

### 4.1. Multicultural Statement

On 20 March 2017, the Government launched the statement, *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* (the Statement), circulated in 32 languages. The Statement identified the Government's priorities and strategic directions that will guide programs and policies. The Statement reaffirms Australia's commitment to a multicultural society. It references key initiatives and serves as the foundation to encourage the economic and social participation of new arrivals, harness the advantages of our diversity and shared national interest.

#### **Harmony Week**

Harmony Day resulted from a 1996 federal election commitment to implement an anti-racism campaign, the *Living in Harmony program*<sup>1</sup>. The first national day of celebration associated with the program, 'Harmony Day', took place on 21 March 1999, coinciding with the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The event encourages everyone to experience, explore and appreciate Australia's cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity. The event was renamed Harmony Week in 2019 to recognise diversity and inclusion activities that take place during the entire week. Since 1999, more than 80,000 Harmony Day/Week events have been held in childcare centres, schools, community groups, sporting organisations, churches, businesses and federal, state and local government agencies across Australia.

### **Multicultural Access and Equity**

The Government's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy (the Policy) is about ensuring that Australian Government programs and services meet the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This is especially important for new arrivals to Australia who might need access to Australian services and information. The Policy contains six commitments essential to the effective delivery



of Australian Government programs and services in a multicultural society. It includes: leadership; engagement; performance; capability; responsiveness; and openness.

## **4.2. English as our national language**

English is and will remain our national language. It is an important unifying element of Australian society, central to the economic participation of migrants, and to participation in civic and public life. Cultural and linguistic diversity is a valuable asset for Australia's economy and society. Functional understanding of English plays an important role in a migrant's settlement journey. Proficiency in English, as Australia's common language, is critical to building a community in which every person is able to positively contribute and fully participate. English language proficiency helps migrants to learn about Australia's society and values through communication and engagement with people from a range of backgrounds in the community. It also facilitates labour market participation and civic engagement.

### **Adult Migrant English Program**

Learning a new language is complex and takes time with variables affecting an individual's ability to become proficient in speaking and understanding English. The impact of these factors will vary depending on individual experience and circumstance. According to research, however, key factors for adults is the extent of formal schooling in a first/other language and linguistic distance from English.

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants with a legislated entitlement of 510 hours of free English language tuition. It also includes sub-programs, which offer extra hours to assist students with additional needs. Many AMEP clients have very low levels of English language skills, and humanitarian entrants may face additional challenges in learning English due to difficult pre-migration experiences.

On 28 August 2020 the Government announced a package of reform, key changes will be to remove the 510 cap and raise the AMEP eligibility threshold and exit point from functional English to vocational English. Time limit on enrolling, commencing and completing AMEP tuition (for those already in Australia as at 1 October 2020) will also be removed. These changes are pending legislative amendments when the legislative schedule permits.

This package of reform is the most significant reforms to the program for many years. These changes mean that more migrants will be able to access free English tuition, for longer, and until they reach a higher level of proficiency.

These reforms were led by the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services as part of her work to drive better settlement outcomes for refugees and migrants with a focus on employment, English language acquisition and community integration.

### **Free Interpreting Service and Free Translating Service**

The Government provides free language services to assist with settlement. The Free Interpreting Service (FIS) assists approved groups, such as medical practitioners, and non-government organisations, to communicate with eligible non-English speakers. Access to the FIS is not time-limited and is available on an ongoing basis.

The Government also provides the Free Translating Service (FTS) to people settling permanently in Australia. The program supports participation in employment, education and community engagement. Through the service within the first two years of their eligible visa grant date, clients can access free English translations of up to ten personal documents, including identity records and education and employment certificates.

### **Translating and Interpreting Service**

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) is an interpreting service provided by Home Affairs to Australian, state and territory government agencies, and private organisations. TIS National delivers immediate telephone, pre-booked telephone and on-site services. The service is accessible from anywhere in Australia, with telephone interpreting services available 24 hours a day, every day of the year and on-site interpreting services available by appointment.

TIS National has a panel of more than 2,300 interpreters who jointly provide services in 134 languages. In the 2019-20 financial year TIS National delivered 1,070,187 telephone and 135,380 onsite services.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, TIS National is delivering dedicated interpreting services for the National Coronavirus Health Information Hotline and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services Coronavirus Hotline. TIS National has also launched a new language service *Telehealth Video Interpreting* in August 2020. This service channel is currently available to General Practitioners, Medical Specialists, Nurse Practitioners and Allied Health Professionals and is being progressively rolled out nationally.

#### **Stay home, stay safe, stay informed information campaign during COVID-19 pandemic**

Home Affairs has launched a dedicated website providing multicultural communities with a trusted source of accurate, official Government information. Since going live on 29 April 2020, the website has had more than 1.1 million unique page views. As of 31 July 2020, 68 key documents have been translated in up to 63 languages other than English (around 4,000 translated documents in total). These documents have been made available, both online and through electronic distribution, to multicultural communities most in need of in-language resources.

### **Community Languages Multicultural Grants Program**

The Community Languages Multicultural Grants Program provides funding to eligible community languages schools to help students learn and use another language and connect young Australians to languages and cultures of their community. Community languages schools play an important role in building strong communities and strengthening social cohesion through language tuition and cultural understanding.

## **4.3. Support for grassroots and community efforts on migrant integration**

### **Fostering Integration Grants Scheme**

The Australian Government acknowledges the important role that grassroots and community organisations play in building social cohesion in Australia.

The Fostering Integration Grants Scheme helps local community organisations to deliver programs and activities that give migrants the best chance of succeeding – assisting them to integrate into Australian economic, social and civil life, while promoting Australian values. Integration is critical to our success as a culturally diverse nation, building cohesive and more resilient communities.

An integrated and cohesive multicultural Australia includes migrants who:

- have the capacity to communicate in English, the national language of Australia;
- actively participate in Australian society through work, school, sport or other community activities;
- embrace Australian values and abide by Australian laws;
- are gainfully employed;
- are resilient in times of crisis;
- have social networks that cross ethnic and religious groups; and
- are welcomed and supported by the broader Australian community.

The primary groups targeted by the scheme include newly-arrived migrants and emerging ethnic communities, with a focus on women and young people. However, the activities can include all Australian citizens and residents who contribute to maintaining social cohesion and defining our national identity.

## **4.4. Support for refugees, humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants**

Each year the Government spends around \$500 million on providing settlement support to refugees, humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants in Australia, including: the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program and the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.

The Government plans for and delivers support to newly arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants within the first five years of arrival. This is done in partnership with State, Territory and local governments and in line with the National Settlement Framework and its nine priority areas: language services, employment, education and training, housing, health and well-being, transport, civic participation, family and social support, and justice.

Settlement services aim to improve the wellbeing of migrants and refugees settling in Australia by responding to their specific needs, and encouraging their independence and participation in the Australian community. In particular, they assist humanitarian entrants who have escaped conflict, and other vulnerable migrants, including women, children and families.

### **Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services**

The Coordinator-General for Migrant Services was appointed in December 2019 to provide national leadership and drive better settlement outcomes for refugees and migrants with a focus on employment, English language acquisition and community integration. The Coordinator-General and her Office are building relationships and working closely, state and territory governments, industry, the community sector and refugees and migrants, and are working collaboratively with other Commonwealth agencies, to develop a more rigorous approach to defining and measuring settlement outcomes for refugees, humanitarian entrants and other migrants with specific settlement assistance needs.

### **National Settlement Framework**

New arrivals require access to services across all levels of government and in the non-government sector, business and social institutions in our society. Coordination and collaboration between governments, service providers, the non-government sector and civil society is key to the delivery of high-quality services that support new arrivals to participate in Australian society as quickly as possible.

The National Settlement Framework has been endorsed by the Government and all State and Territory governments. It is a high-level structural blueprint for the three tiers of government; Commonwealth, State and Territory and local governments. It provides a framework for governments to work in partnership to effectively plan, regularly engage and deliver services that support the settlement of migrants and new arrivals in Australia.

### **Australian Cultural Orientation**

The Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program is offered to Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program entrants over the age of five years prior to their departure for Australia. AUSCO gives practical advice about the journey to Australia, including quarantine laws, and information about what to expect post-arrival. AUSCO provides a realistic picture of life in Australia, encourages participants to learn English on arrival and equips them with the necessary tools to deal with initial settlement concerns and the different stages of cultural, social and economic adaptation. This includes information about Australian laws and norms. Courses are delivered over a period of up to five days to adult, youth, children, and pre-literate entrants. AUSCO links closely with onshore settlement support and orientation delivered under the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP).

### **Humanitarian Settlement Program**

The HSP provides support to humanitarian entrants to build the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of the Australian community. HSP Service Providers work with clients following their arrival in Australia to develop an individualised case management plan and deliver a package of services tailored to their identified needs. Services include early practical support and assistance to connect with the local community through groups and activities. The program has a strong focus on helping clients to learn English, finding employment and improving settlement outcomes by linking clients to the Adult Migrant English Program and employment services, providing assistance to enrol in education and training opportunities and recognising pre-arrival skills and qualifications. The HSP also includes an orientation program to assist clients aged 15 years and over to understand Australian society, laws, values, and rights and responsibilities.

## **Specialised and Intensive Services**

Specialised and Intensive Services (SIS) is a component of the HSP available to humanitarian entrants and other eligible visa holders who have complex needs. SIS offers clients short-term needs-based support to help them access appropriate mainstream services and develop the necessary skills to manage their needs independently. HSP Service Providers, on behalf of Home Affairs, deliver SIS.

Holders of eligible visas may be eligible for SIS up to five years after their arrival in Australia, or up to five years after the grant of their eligible onshore visa. In exceptional circumstances, timeframes may be varied and holders of other visa subclasses may be allowed access to the program. Australian citizens are not eligible for SIS.

## **The Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma**

The Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) is administered by the Department of Health and provides specialised support services to permanently settled humanitarian entrants and those on temporary substantive visas living in the community who are experiencing psychological or psychosocial difficulties associated with surviving torture and trauma before coming to Australia.

## **Settlement grants**

The Government provides a range of less intensive support to refugees and other eligible migrants. The Home Affairs Portfolio's settlement grant programs focus on social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal well-being and community connectedness. Current grant programs include the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, National Community Hubs Program (NCHP), Youth Transition Support (YTS) services and a Youth Hubs trial.

### ***Settlement Engagement and Transition Support***

SETS provides support in the post-arrival period for eligible clients who do not have family and other community supports to rely on. The program is complementary to the HSP and other Commonwealth support to humanitarian entrants and for other vulnerable migrants. SETS aims to equip and empower humanitarian entrants, other eligible permanent migrants and their communities to address their settlement needs in order to improve social and economic participation, and community connectedness. SETS includes two components:

- **SETS – Client Services:** Provides clients with settlement-related information, advice, advocacy, and assistance to access mainstream and other relevant services. Services are delivered in accordance with a needs-based approach. In the 2019 calendar year, SETS – Client Services assisted around 43,000 individual clients and around 64,000 group clients.
- **SETS – Community Capacity Building:** Helps new community groups and organisations support their communities towards collectively increasing their economic and social participation to ensure that positive settlement outcomes are sustained in the long-term. It targets new and emerging ethno-specific communities, community leaders and emerging community representatives and organisations with limited corporate capacity. In the period July to December 2019, SETS – Community Capacity Building assisted around over 1,600 individual clients and almost 10,000 group clients.

## **National Community Hubs**

Community Hubs are based in primary schools and community centres, and create familiar, local spaces primarily for migrant and refugee women with young children. Community Hubs focus on priority areas of engaging and connecting families, preparing children for school, building English language skills and building pathways to volunteering and employment. Community Hubs are funded through an established public/private and philanthropic community partnership model.

- Around \$20.4 million has been allocated by the Government to Community Hubs over four years (2019-20 to 2022-23). This enables an expansion of the program from the 68 existing Hubs to 100 Hubs.
- In the 2019 calendar year, 9,750 families engaged with Hubs.

### ***Youth Transition Support services***

YTS services help to build capability and resilience amongst young humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants aged 15 to 25 years, within their first five years in Australia, so they stay engaged in education and make successful transitions to employment. The YTS model is unique, both nationally and internationally, and has benefited the sector through improved coordination, collaboration and capacity development.

- Around \$45 million has been allocated to the YTS over the period 2016 to September 2020.
- Over the period January 2016 to December 2019, 12,314 individual clients received services.

### ***Youth Hubs Trial***

Youth Hubs support and assist young migrants (12-21 years), in safe and familiar places, helping them to prepare for employment and training and to support their social integration. Youth Hubs enable young people to better access services provided by the Commonwealth, State and Territory and local governments, in a safe environment. Youth Hubs focus on engaging and connecting with young migrants in the target group, opening pathways to education, employment and language services and improving social connections, networks and social capital opportunities. Hub sites include community centres, TAFE, and secondary colleges. All migrant youth are able to attend a Youth Hub (there are no eligibility criteria).

## **5. Closing remarks**

Successive Australian governments have developed policies providing national direction for programs harnessing the social and economic benefits of diversity, fostering two-way integration between migrants and Australian-born citizens and creating a stronger foundation for a modern, socially cohesive nation. All Australians share the benefits and responsibilities arising from the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of our society. Australia's approach to supporting CALD communities – within the framework of an inclusive national identity – is a model based on integration and supports strengthened social cohesion.