



AIRWA's Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

*Considering Multiculturalism through a
gendered culturally and linguistically
diverse lens*

22 April 2011



Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance (AIRWA)

Who is AIRWA?

The Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance (AIRWA) is a peak advocacy body for immigrant and refugee women's in Australia

AIRWA is a partnership between the Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc. (NIRWA) with membership of women's organisations in the eight States and Territories, and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA), through FECCA's Women's Committee in the eight States and Territories. NIRWA as the lead agency and FECCA with its expertise in the development of policy, have equal representation on AIRWA's Leadership Group which oversee AIRWA's operation.

AIRWA is one of the six National Women's Alliances that is funded by the Federal Office for Women to raise the concerns, views and circumstances of immigrant and refugee women to inform Federal Government Policies that impacts their lives.

What is AIRWA's mission?

AIRWA's mission is to represent voice and interest of Immigrant and Refugee Women residing within Australia, in order to provide single unified voice by which to advocate such women's issues, and concerns at the national level. In doing so AIRWA aims to ensure these issues and concerns are considered in all government policy documents.

AIRWA's policies are informed through its extensive work with its network of peak and grassroots community women's organisations and individuals across all States and Territories.

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Executive summary:

The Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance (AIRWA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia. This submission was informed by participants of AIRWA's Multicultural roundtable¹ and continuous engagement with AIRWA's members.

AIRWA commends the government's decision to develop a new Multicultural policy for Australia. We anticipate that the policy will act to continue to ensure that in advancing a more equitable and inclusive society, Australia will become a more productive and harmonious society for all.

AIRWA's submission will address all the terms of reference set out by the government.

As a peak national advocacy body for immigrant and refugee women in Australia, AIRWA seeks to provide the Committee with a gendered based perspective with a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background. In the 2006 according to ABS census there were 10,056, 039 females living in Australia, 2,397, 296 of whom self identified as immigrant and refugees, equating to 23.8% of the total Australian female population. If we account for the women born in Australia with one or more parents born overseas, the percentage of CALD women living in Australia accounts for 40% of total population.

However, despite the high percentage of CALD women living in Australia, immigrant and refugee women continue to face multiple barriers to equal participation in the workforce and in the wider community. Many of these barriers are systemic in nature, indicative of intersecting discriminations arising due to cultural, religious and linguistic background as well as gender. Recognising that CALD women experience discrimination in a unique and systematic manner as a result of their double disadvantage necessities the development of targeted policy frameworks aimed specifically to address these needs. Consequently, AIRWA seeks to propose a definition of multiculturalism which is not only premised on principles of cultural equality, but which also entails the establishment of a society that recognises the dignity of all its members, and which seeks to break down all social, environmental and political barriers, especially those created by gender.

AIRWA would also like to stress the necessity of systemic change across the whole of government if the government's new multicultural policy hopes to find true success. It is only once the principles of multiculturalism are evident in all aspects of social, economic, and political life that Australia will truly achieve its potential.

Finally, in order for the Multicultural policy for Australia to be successful, it is imperative for the government to take leadership on advancing the agenda and take initiatives to facilitate structural, cultural and attitudinal changes to ensure its implementation in all facets of the Australian nation.

¹ Please find lists of participants, speakers and speakers presentations attached.

Introduction:

The diversity of immigrant and refugee women:

In writing this submission AIRWA recognises the multiple identities of all women and of the diversity of different groups living within our multicultural society. Culture, ethnicity and gender intersect in a complex and perpetually shifting manner. As acknowledged by Cortis, Sawrikar and Muir's (2007) 'CALD women are a heterogeneous group living in different social, economic and cultural environments, and different facilitators and constraints will impact on their experiences in different ways in different contexts.' (28)

AIRWA based their recommendations on our evaluations of the problems faced by numerous CALD women with whom, through our networks and through the recommendations and discussions put forth at AIRWA's roundtable into multiculturalism we understand this submission to speak broadly to the multiple and intersecting barriers faced by women of immigrant and refugee backgrounds.

A gendered culturally and linguistically diverse position:

The principles that underpinned the position of our submission is that advocated for in the *CEDAW Australian Action Plan* (2011) which clearly states that CALD women living within Australia experience multifaceted and intersectional discriminations which are not adequately accounted for by Australia's anti-discrimination legislation. As stated in the report:

'while the commitment to eradicating racial discrimination and sex discrimination is strong it is only recently that an understanding of the 'intersectional' nature of discrimination has been recognised. Intersectional discrimination recognises that a women may be subjected to discrimination based on several aspects of their identity at the same time. The human rights system struggles with the idea of intersectional discrimination because of the distinct nature and subject matter of each treaty' (YWCA, 2011, 33)

While gender and culture are often separately perceived as acting as barriers to equitable social inclusion, AIRWA recognises that both attributes are equally important, within the context of Australian society to understanding the process of discrimination and inequities. We strongly argue therefore that one process cannot be held up as more important as the other, but rather must be identified and dealt with simultaneously if we are to truly advocate for the development of a more inclusive and harmonious multicultural society.

AIRWA engagement with CALD women at a grassroots, as well as on a state and national level seeks to break the perpetual barriers that continue to disempower immigrant and refugee women.

Multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism is a multifaceted and complex term. It acts both as a descriptive statement of Australia's lived reality as a nation, and as a prescriptive ideal of the type of society which we hope to create.

Clearly, Australia is multicultural in the former sense. In her presentation to the AIRWA Multiculturalism Roundtable Senator Kate Lundy articulated the extent of this reality stating that 'one in four of Australia's 22 million people were born overseas or have a parent born overseas. As a nation we speak more than 260 languages and identify with more than 270 ancestries.' However,

the history of immigration and processes which have contributed the creation Australia as a society are already well known to the government, and as such we do not wish to re-iterate the facts which have led to Australia's multiculturalism. Consequently rather than focus on the past, AIRWA will look to the future, focusing on multiculturalism in the latter sense.

AIRWA seeks to define multiculturalism as an operative framework so that all Australian's share, access and participate in the social, educative; economic and physical realities.

Multiculturalism demands that all Australians are provided the equal capacity to engage in an open dialogue across all levels of government, the private sector and with each other 'to arrive at the principles of access, equity and social justice.' (FECCA, 2010a, 3) In order to truly achieve these aims multiculturalism cannot only be premised on principles of cultural equality, but must also entail the establishment of a society that recognises the dignity of all its members, and which seeks to break down all social, environmental and political barriers, especially those created by gender, culture and language.

Terms of Reference:

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda

a. Strengthening Access and Equity

AIRWA applauds the government's commitment to strengthen access and equity framework in order to allow for government programs to be more responsive to Australian's from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. AIRWA recognises that there is an urgent need for change government's approach the manner in which policy is created and implemented to ensure for more equitable service delivery. There continues to be a real gap between the lived reality of CALD women, and the policies created by the government to help improve their lives. Government policies must be transformed to inclusive, respectful and responsive to CALD women's unique needs.

To be effective policy changes must amount to more than simply lip service. Changes must be systemic being evident at all levels of government (local, state and federal) as well as across all government sectors.

AIRWA stresses that multiculturalism is not *solely* about social inclusion, access and equity, although such measures are certainly important. Rather, in support of the definition of multiculturalism posed above which entails the establishment of a society that recognises the dignity of all its members by breaking down all social, environmental and political barriers, including those created by gender, AIRWA seeks to promote a systemic transformation to government policy and service delivery. In supporting FECCA's (2010a) recommendations AIRWA urges the government not limit its return to multiculturalism merely to the areas of access and equity, but rather to perceive such changes as a compliment to the establishment of a whole of government multicultural initiative. As noted by Ms Kelada, on behalf of the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre in the Public hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration of the Commonwealth Parliament (2011) 'the term 'social inclusion' looks to address the factors that lead to exclusion while...multiculturalism is valuing the diversity that it brings.' (M14) AIRWA strongly supports this statement and contends that is only

once the principles of multiculturalism are evident in all aspects of social, economic, and political life that Australia will truly achieve its potential.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government adopt a whole of government approach to multiculturalism and systematically incorporate it across all sectors and level of government to allow for long term sustainable social change
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government aim to extend ideals of social inclusion beyond something that is simply economically based, to include the ideals of social inclusion in all facets of government policy
- **Recommendation 3:** That the government work to increase cross government communication between different levels and sectors of government to minimise wasted resources whilst increasing outcomes achieved.

b. The Establishment of the Australian Multicultural Council:

AIRWA supports the government's decision to establish a new independent body, the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC). In particular we are pleased to note that the Government will appoint members to the AMC using a merit-based system and independent selection process aimed at developing a more independent and non-partisan body.

In the interest of widespread support, and to ensure for the inclusion of a diversity of voices, expertise and experience within the development council we recommend that the council include selected representatives of civil society –NGOs, human rights experts and stakeholders – as well as state and territory government, the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

In particular, given the deeply interwoven nature of human rights abuses and discrimination we believe that it is absolutely essential that persons/ organisations capable of most accurately representing the views of those most vulnerable members of society (such as women, children, immigrants, refugees, indigenous, regionally isolated and disabled persons) be included within the council. Such groups remain some of the most disadvantaged and isolated within the Australia being highly disadvantaged by language, cultural, and institutional barriers, and facing discrimination, both direct and indirect, as a result of their age, disability, gender, race, culture and/or religious affiliation. Failing to accurately represent and meet their needs and issues risks underestimating and perpetuating the problems faced by these groups. Such actions will entirely ignore the aims of the new multicultural policy.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4: That the proposed AMC include a CALD gender specialist who can adequately represent the position of CALD women living within Australia and who can ensure that the gender agenda is systemically included within government policies

Recommendation 5: That recommendation 1 is replicated with regards to all vulnerable groups to ensure that the issues affecting Australia's most vulnerable culturally and

linguistic persons are adequately represented and systemically included within government policies.

c. Inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government Services to clients of disadvantaged by culturally and linguistic backgrounds:

AIRWA commends the government on its decision to conduct an inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government Services to clients of disadvantaged by culturally and linguistic backgrounds. In auditing these services AIRWA urges the government to include in its enquiry beyond those areas more traditionally recognised as affecting immigrants and refugees such as employment and education to include such areas as:

- Aged care services
- Domestic and sexual violence services
- Health services and in particular sexual and mental health services
- Housing, including emergency housing
- Child care services
- Disability services

which tend to disproportionately affect women (as opposed to men) and from which as a result immigrant and refugee women find themselves disproportionately and systematically isolated and excluded from as a result of discrimination, language, cultural, and institutional barriers.

AIRWA also urges the government to review its complaints process, which remains overtly onerous, complex and time consuming, and which as a results tends to unfairly discriminate against persons:

- With low English language skills;
- Who are unfamiliar with the structure of the Australian legal system
- Who have lower education levels
- Who are from a lower socio-economic background and thus:
 - cannot afford legal advice
 - have little time as they must act simultaneously as the breadwinner (sometimes holding multiple jobs) and the primary carer etc

These are characteristics that are typical to many immigrant and refugee women, particularly those from emerging communities.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 6:** That the government include in its inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government Services to CALD women disadvantaged by culturally and linguistic backgrounds those ‘traditionally female’ dominated services to ensure greater access and equity for immigrant and refugee women living in Australia.
- **Recommendation 7:** In support of Security Council UN Resolution 1325 which actively aims to increase the participation of women at decision making levels, that immigrant and refugee women are adequately consulted with prior to making any changes to government policies. This will increase the likelihood that any changes advanced by the government will adequately address the issues faced by refugee and immigrant women, allowing the government to better achieve its desired goal of increased social inclusion.

- **Recommendation 8:** That in making any changes to government policy service providers (ie women’s refuges or women’s health clinics) and gender specific CALD advocacy networks are actively consulted with in order to ensure that the government is able to best support such organisations in delivering services to immigrant and refugee women
- **Recommendation 9:** Any consultation done with regards to the government’s inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian government services to CALD women disadvantaged by cultural or linguistic barriers must take into consideration issues of social and physical isolation experienced by those most disadvantaged, and remote members of society to ensure that such persons views are adequately represented.
- **Recommendation 10:** That as part of its inquiry the government should review its complaints policy in order to make it more accessible to migrant women. In particular administrative requirements should be made less stringent, and information about complaints processes should be made more widely available in plain language as well as in translated languages.

d. National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy:

AIRWA strongly supports the government’s decision to establish a national anti-racism partnership and strategy. In particular we applaud the government’s decision to take a strong leadership role in the fight against racism and discrimination in Australia by expressing a zero tolerance position towards such behaviours. AIRWA awaits the outcomes produced by the National Anti Racism partnership, and looks forwards to following recommendations in our own work. If backed by real political will AIRWA sincerely believes the outcomes achieved by the Partnership has the potential to move Australia closer towards a society in which women are no longer discriminated against as a result of their skin colour, culture, race, accent, or religion, but instead are celebrated and admired for their unique contributions to Australia’s multicultural landscape.

e. Multicultural Arts and Festival Grants

AIRWA recognises the government’s initiatives to provide small grants for multicultural arts and festivals in fostering and promoting social inclusiveness and mutual understanding in the wider Australian community. However, AIRWA advocates the multicultural arts and festival grants be developed into a long term cohesive strategic National Arts and Festival funded program. AIRWA urges the government under the new multicultural policy to prioritise the participation of isolated members of society who are often excluded such as CALD women, women with disabilities, ageing women. This will facilitate the inclusion of isolated groups who experience double disadvantages to genuinely engage and participate in multicultural arts and festival programs. AIRWA acknowledges that arts and festival programs have proven successful in terms of achieving social inclusion, access and equality. AIRWA believes that a cohesive long term government driven strategic frameworks for the arts and festival grants’ program will go a long way in advancing better understanding of diverse abilities and communities beyond the prescriptive, and create a more tolerant Australian society for all.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 11:** AIRWA recommends that the government’s new AMC advisory body be assigned the responsibility of working on developing a government

long term strategic multicultural arts and festival policy framework that includes the participation of the different population groups including CALD women, women with disability etc.

- **Recommendation 12:** AIRWA recommends that the multicultural arts and festival policy framework be included in the COAG agenda to ensure its implementations are appropriately evaluated and audited.

f. Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program

AIRWA supports the Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program which recognises the capacity for sports to bring together young people from all backgrounds. The findings of AIRWA's leading agency the Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia inc.'s inquiry into the Role of Sport for Young Immigrant and Refugee women (2009) has informed AIRWA's response to this section.

Sport has been widely recognised as a tool for the individual and the community empowerment leading to the development social and leadership skills, and enhancing community engagement, social cohesion and community capacity building. For women in particular sport has the added benefit of being a vessel for increased gender equality.²

Young immigrant and refugee women stand to gain benefits from participation in sport and physical activity which will advance their development and participation in the wider Australian society.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 13:** The unique needs and challenges of engaging with young CALD women must be recognised and acknowledged by the government in the creation of its Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program to ensure that the program is developed in a manner which actively works to increase the participation of young immigrant and refugee women in sports, including supporting women-only sessions, programs and clubs, and providing/increasing childcare facilities at sporting institutions.
- **Recommendation 14:** Within Australia sports research, data and policies remain focused on women and girls as a single sub-population (although there have been increased efforts to advance Indigenous women's issues). Few incentives are directly targeted at immigrant and refugee women. Further research is therefore needed into the sports participation patterns and experiences among young CALD women in order to better inform the government and the community on how better to encourage increase participation of young immigrant and refugee women in the Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program.
- **Recommendation 15:** Affirmative action to provide more opportunities for CALD women to participate in grassroots activities is required by all levels of government through state and territory sports and recreation authorities to address the low participation rates in sport and physical activity by young immigrant and refugee

² See Hannon, Caroyln (2009), 53rd Session on the Commission on the Status of Women, Monday 2 March 2009, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

women and to ensure equal participation of young women and men in the Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership program.

- **Recommendation 16:** Increase young CALD women's access to information about initiatives and opportunities created by the Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program by developing and widely disseminating translated resources and tip sheets, and by targeting areas such as schools, child care facilities and ethnic community centres etc which young women may be reached.

2. The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

Australian multiculturalism rests very heavily on organised diasporas of recent immigrant origin. Among the more influential are the Greeks, who have been organised around the Orthodox Church and the Communities since the 1890s. They have their own newspapers and radio programmes, political parties, sports clubs, churches and schools. The Jews, who have been in Australia since 1788, are also highly organised.

Indicative to international immigration is that wherever an intake of migrants comes diaspora organisations will be formed. A priority upon arrival in Australia for many incoming migrants is to get together with their compatriots to form a religious group or a sports club etc. This can result in the creation of culturally splintered groups which lack the funds or capacity to prosper and grow. The next move is to bring these together into some sort of federation and then to affiliate later. Thus, Diaspora groups are recognisable as the foundations of organised multiculturalism in Australia. Where such groups prosper multiculturalism will be strong. However, where such groups continue to splinter or where their supporters begin to lose interest in being a part of the group multiculturalism will be much weaker.

A key development within Australian society over the last 30 years has been the steady shift from European to Asian organisations within the multicultural movement, as one generation of migrants ages and another come up behind to take over. This change has been dealt with very well in most States but it is not always easy. Past generations of migrants are not always as accepting of new migrants, and prejudices against new comers often results in incoming migrant populations being excluded from existing Diaspora organisations. There therefore exists a risk that in allocating funding to existing Diaspora organisations that the newest and most needy migrants will miss out.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 17:** AIRWA is deeply concerned with the omission of Latin American and Africa from their terms of reference as it is a region with emerging diaspora communities. Of the country-of-birth groups that had a population of more than 1000 at the 2006 ABS Census, the fastest growing were people from Liberia (up 1240 per cent from the 2001 Census), Sierra Leone (up 437 per cent) and the Sudan (up 288 per cent).

- **Recommendation 18:** AIRWA recommends that a more equitable distribution of funding for Diaspora communities is implemented being based primarily on need rather than size of the population alone.

Settlement and participation

3. Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society.

AIRWA strongly supports the government's willingness move beyond its traditional migration and settlement programs to engage with new and innovative ideas as proposed by service providers, different community interest groups and individuals. It is important to consult specialised services such as gender CALD focus bodies that advocate and make contributions to the settlement program based on their areas of expertise. Working closely with specialised service providers enable vulnerable groups like CALD women to become the main informers in identifying where service gaps exist.

It is also essential that service users are consulted with to understand their personal struggles and successes as far as settlement is concerned, so that services can be modified to respond appropriately to their needs.

Supporting innovative programs for CALD women:

For migrant and refugee services to be successful it must have strong and co-ordinated government support. It is integral that the new multicultural policy proposed by the government amounts to more than mere words. There must be long term commitment by government to any settlement program developed – including the provision of adequate, long term funding to service providers.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 19:** That the government undertake to perform comprehensive mapping and evaluations of communities and services in order to determine what gaps in services exist (as according to the community's needs) and respond accordingly.
- **Recommendation 20:** That the government better reward those services with proven positive outcomes with long term funding, to ensure long term lasting results and increase CALD women's confidence in the services available.

Responding to the needs of immigrant and refugee women through innovative settlement services:

AIRWA has identified a number of gaps in settlement services for CALD women, these findings, and the initiatives proposed find support in the Results of the ACT CALD Launch forum, 11 May 2009, the Australian CEDAW Action Plan, Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc.'s (NIRWA) Housing and Homelessness for Immigrant and Refugee Women: Follow-up Report and the outcomes of AIRWA's Multiculturalism Roundtable

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 21:** Increase information provision to identified priority areas of need such as increase in participation of CALD women in employment, access to affordable housing, access to appropriate health care services.
- **Recommendation 22:** Need for a 'one stop shop' first point of contact with specialised knowledge and skills of working with CALD communities. CALD women would benefit from an identified service that could act as a single point of contact for information about CALD services. A mapping project where CALD women's first point of contact is would greatly assist in deciding what organisation would be best place to undertake this role or whether it would be necessary to recreate a centralised body to provide this essential service.
- **Recommendation 23:** Increase access to isolated CALD women to make services more accessible. Implement innovative models of service delivery to increase access to isolated CALD women. For example a mobile health units with specialised trained staffs who can provide CALD sensitive services such as breast screening, immunisation, and for the provision of basic health information.
- **Recommendation 24:** Increase funding for appropriately gender and culturally sensitive leadership models, mentoring and leadership programs. AIRWA young leadership and mentoring program is one example where young and newly arrived immigrants and refugee women receive leadership training and one to one mentoring with a CALD women role model. This is also a gender, culturally and appropriate safe environment to disseminate information about health – such as sexual health and mental health.
- **Recommendation 25:** Extend current Emergency Services Access and Equity programs into a National Framework for ESA. The program will promote and create awareness amongst CALD communities in what to do in emergency type situation. The program is critical with the current and frequent natural disasters taking place in Queensland and Victoria. The program will enable CALD women to have the confidents to response quickly and take appropriate actions during a natural disaster and emergency situations.
- **Recommendation 26:** Provide funds to women specific legal centres or CALD specific gender advocacy groups to conduct monthly training sessions on the Australian laws, rights and responsibilities
 - Newly arrived immigrant and refugee women are often unaware of how Australian legal systems work as they are different from those in their home countries
 - One day workshop on legal issues surrounding:
 - Immigration requirements and reporting
 - Domestic violence, and sexual violence – including their rights under the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth)

- Employment rights and responsibilities
 - How to negotiate contracts – including housing contracts etc
- **Recommendation 27:** Increasing mobility and decreasing isolation. AIRWA recommend the Government subsidised driving lessons should be offered to newly arrived immigrant and refugee women to help decrease social isolation, allow them to better access services, employment and to help familiarise them with Australian traffic laws.
 - **Recommendation 28:** Provide Cultural sensitivity training for service providers and all public service employees. Basic cultural sensitivity training should be mandatory for all people who will be working with CALD women – particularly where that person will be in a direct position of power over the CALD women (ie doctors, nurses, educators, police etc). Training should be required to be updated at specified time periods to ensure that knowledge of CALD women’s issues remain up to date

4. Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

The incentives to promote long term settlement pattern must respond to CALD women’s identified needs. There must therefore be a greater focus on cultural and linguistic barriers, lack of relevant information on important services, lack of participation at decision making levels, and lack of awareness opportunities to enable them to access the benefits of the many programs funded by states/federal government.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 29:** AIRWA recommends the government under the multicultural policy to provide the incentive program to enable CALD women to contribute and increase their participation in the wider Australian society.
- **Recommendation 30:** AIRWA recommends alternative approaches to training women from CALD backgrounds with overseas qualifications to upgrade them to the Australian level enabling them to fill identified skills gaps.
- **Recommendation 31:** AIRWA recommends the government provide funding for courses for women to upgrade their overseas qualifications or make it more affordable for them to get their overseas qualifications recognised by professional bodies to enter their specialised field of work, start businesses and private practises.
- **Recommendation 32:** AIRWA urges the government to increase resources to developing and extending successful ethno-specific services in the health field with shortage of bilingual psychologists, psychiatrists with the specialised cultural and linguistic competency and have knowledge and understanding of complex cultural, social and community factors. This will provide effective intervention programs outside the western models to assist CALD women to achieve individual wellbeing and empower them to break the cycle of reliance on unsuccessful health program and welfare dependency.

- **Recommendation 33:** AIRWA urges the government to provide resources to support successful programs that up-skills CALD women to move from menial work to more skilled work. One example of a successful program is the Bicultural Support Program operated by the Ethnic Child Care Family and Community Services Cooperative in Sydney. The program enables the women to develop confidence, self esteem and are able to advance beyond the “factory floor”, and upgrade their skills to apply and fill positions in the child care workforce where there is a desperate shortage of qualified staff.

National productive capacity

5. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia long term productive capacity.

The migration to Australia since 1788 has had a profound impact on the nation’s social, cultural and economic life. Migrant and Refugee communities have been highly successful in integrating into Australian society and making significant contribution to the Australian economic, social, civic and cultural landscapes.

Migrants and refugees have made substantial contributions to wider Australian society including introducing new cultural practices and linguistic skills, creating employment opportunities and filling empty employment niches. Contrary to media and populist views “refugees should not be defined as a welfare problem requiring “relief” and “care and maintenance but rather as people who have problems but who also have determination to survive and put their energies into productive work that can benefit their hosts”. (RCOA 2010)

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 34:** AIRWA urges the government to move beyond community debates of Australia being a country of migration to supporting programs that promotes and acknowledges the economic contribution of CALD communities to Australia.
- **Recommendation 35:** AIRWA urges the government to resource positive campaigns through media and social networks which acknowledge migrants contribution to the economic productivity of Australia and breakdown preconceived barriers and stereotype views of women from CALD backgrounds (ie women wearing burqa).
- **Recommendation 36:** AIRWA urges the government to utilise the skills of immigrant and refugee women in driving positive outcomes. The productive capacity needs to be perceived in light of breaking down ignorance and moves beyond debates about such women’s capacity to contribute.

6. The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants.

The contribution of skilled migration to Australia has been significant in meeting the labour shortage in the workplace since the arrival of the Chinese in the 1860s to work the coal mines. AIRWA supports the findings of the Refugee Council of Australia's research report on the contribution of humanitarian entrants and refugees to the economic, civic and social landscapes of Australia which states:

'That contrary to popular belief, migrants and refugees are not concentrated in poor jobs because they are all unskilled, cannot communicate well in English, and/or do not have work experience readily transferable to the Australian context' (RCOA Report 2010).

AIRWA urges government to consider factors determining the Australian skilled migration program and consult experts to advice and inform them on best practice modelling considering the following demographic indicators and trends identified by participants at roundtable and studies by Professor Graeme Hugo:

- ***Ageing:*** Ageing will continue to be the most significant demographic challenge facing high income countries like Australia. The cohorts born in the high fertility post war years make up 27.5 percent of the Australian population and 41.8 percent of the workforce. In 2011 they will pass the 65 years of age threshold and are already beginning to leave the workforce in increasing numbers. (Hugo (2011) and McDonald & Templeton (2011))
- ***International migration:*** Migration is the major determinant of differences in the anticipated rate of growth of the working age population in Australia over the next 15 years. For many European and a few Asian countries all net increase in the workforce age group is due to net migration and net migration will be an increasingly important contributor to the growth of Australian workforce ages between 2011 and 2026' (Hugo (2011))
- ***Changing role of women:*** One of the most consistent trends in the Australian workforce over recent years has been the increasing proportion that women make up of the total workforce. There is still significant scope to increase this participation. Policies toward fertility may impinge on female participation in the workforce. (Hugo (2011))
- ***Changing patterns of household and family formation:*** The increasing diversity of the way Australians group themselves into residential units may have implications for their workforce involvement. The increasing workload of many in their 40s and 50s, especially women, in not only working outside the home and undertaking household work but also caring for children and/or aged parents has implications for their involvement in the workforce. (Hugo (2011))
- ***Social Inclusion:*** Inequality remains significant in Australian society and is often a multiple kind being exacerbated by gender, culture, ethnicity and location. Exclusion from labour markets is an important element of inequality and is the basis for wider exclusion. The current buoyant labour market, the positive outlook and near full employment situation offers the best opportunity in a generation to include subgroups in the mainstream workforce that in the past have been excluded. If ever these groups are to be engaged in the workforce now is the time. To seize the opportunity will require innovative and different mechanisms of recruitment, training, work practice, etc. and significant cultural change among employers, unions, fellow workers, etc. (Hugo (2011))

- *Family Friendly Initiatives:* There is increasing appreciation that initiatives which facilitate Australians, especially young women to have children as well as being significant participants in the paid workforce has strong effects on participation rates in the 20s, 30s and 40s age group. The extent to which family friendly initiatives are undertaken not only by government but also individual employers will be significant. (Hugo (2011))

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 37:** AIRWA under the 2011 CEDAW Action Plan for women in Australia strongly recommend that the government includes a subsection in the multicultural policy regarding their commitments *‘to eradicate all form of discrimination in employment which will reduce unemployment and underemployment of migrants and allow for the greater utilisation of migrants’ skills, leading to increased productivity. This will fall in line with Australia achieving its commitment under CEDAW to implement target measures to address existing barriers to workplace participation of migrant women’... (para 45)*
- **Recommendation 38:** recommend that the government to, as quickly as possible to sign, and ratify into law the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. The ratification of this Convention by the government would help bring Australia into line with contemporary human rights standards, whilst demonstrating, both to Australia and to the broader international community, a real commitment by the government to the rights of migrant workers, and would ensure the implementation of best practice development and implementation of laws and policies related to migrant workers into the future.

7. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises.

In Australia, according to ABS census 1996-2006, businesses have been predominantly operated by males, 35% of their small businesses are operated from home, and where businesses are predominantly operated by females, 40% of these businesses are operated from home. In addition while 52% of male-operated businesses are non-employing businesses, 66% of female-operated businesses do not employ workers (Lows (2010)). Of the businesses that employ workers, female-operated businesses tend to employ a smaller number of workers. However, female-operated businesses are generally newer than male-operated businesses.

Lowe states that ‘more than 17% of female-operated businesses are less than a year old and another 40% are between one and five years old. With 57% of businesses less than five years old and compared with a total of 45% of businesses operated by men that are less than five years old, it is not surprising that female operated businesses are smaller, given that generally the age of a business has an impact on size.’ However, women’s participation in small business is increasing (ABS, 1997c, 2001c) and, despite their disadvantaged positions at start-up, women continue to constitute an important portion of the small business landscape and their contribution to employment and job creation should not be discounted, but recognised and encouraged.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 39:** AIRWA urges government to fund CALD women's employability program that incorporates career planning, specialist caseworker management support groups and provide ongoing support.
- **Recommendation 40:** AIRWA recommends ethno-specific training and specific training program designed and focused on identifying the skills developed through the individuals' women's experiences.
- **Recommendation 41:** AIRWA supports work experience placement in a work area relevant to the participant's skills and aspirations. This will ensure maximise effectiveness of training for CALD women regarding Australian workplace cultures and practices. The work experience combined with language tuition and other training options and placement with Specialist services that understand differences between CALD women's groups, their cultures, and needs; employs workers who speak a number of different languages; work closely with ethnic employers; have much closer relationships with employers generally; provide information in the appropriate form about industrial relations in Australia, income support, taxation etc; and are able to link up with services such as local settlement services;
- **Recommendation 42:** AIRWA recommends a mentoring program be managed by specialised business agencies such as the Asia Pacific Business Council for Women. This will ensure the women are matched with appropriate mentors and role models based on the skills and employment goals of the women. This will also move migrant and refugee women from the Centrelink system to more professional business environment.
- **Recommendation 43:** AIRWA urges government to resource partnerships between specialist services with other employment and business agencies and/or link with other service providers to CALD women in order to increase their participation in the workforce.

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