



# Submission the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

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## Centre for Multicultural Youth - Background

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) is a community based organisation that advocates for the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In supporting young people, CMY combines policy development and direct service delivery within a community development framework. This approach gives CMY strong connections with young people and their communities while enabling positive change on a local, state and national level.

CMY undertakes:

- Direct one-to-one support of young people
- Policy advice
- Information provision and research
- Sector support and development
- Leadership and mentoring programs
- Training and professional development
- Community education

## Submission

This submission addresses the following terms of reference

### **Multiculturalism, Social inclusion and globalisation**

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

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

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

CMY believes that respect for the human rights of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is fundamental to a fair and equitable Australia.

CMY is committed to diversity through encouraging and promoting inclusiveness and recognition and respect for difference in all its forms. We believe that the philosophy of multiculturalism underpins, strengthens and promotes this diversity.

CMY welcomes the inclusion of multiculturalism in the Social Inclusion agenda, as we previously deplored its absence.

We wish to make the following points:

- There can be no social inclusion without an acknowledgement that ethnic and cultural diversity is at the core of Australia's society, and that no Australian resident, regardless of their ethnic and cultural origin, should be left behind.
- There can be no meaningful social inclusion without considering the factors of disadvantage specific to the refugee and migrant experience, and how these factors intersect with other disadvantages in areas such as socio-economic status, employment, disability, or homelessness.
- Social inclusion requires an acknowledgement of the specific disadvantage experienced by some young people, and how this intersects with the refugee and migrant experience.

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

CMY advocates for meaningful participation and engagement of migrant and refugee young people in decision-making and leadership. We welcome The People of Australia's mention of rights and responsibilities as 'fundamental' to living in Australia. Many CMY programs are aimed at developing young people's understanding of their rights and responsibilities towards their family, their peers, their community and the community as a whole. CMY also works with families and with agencies to strengthen their understanding of their rights and responsibilities towards the young people they support.

Some of the young people we work with face a number of difficult challenges as they try to settle in Australia. Conflict with family, risk of homelessness and problems at school are often combined with sadness, loss and loneliness. We start where the young person is at, we focus on their strengths and capacities and we build trust and understanding.

CMY is committed to providing opportunities for young people to develop skills, lead change and become fully active participants in their communities and in the broader Australian community,

We use a range of engagement strategies including arts, sports, leadership training and mentoring as a means to building the capacity of young people to realise their vision for change.

Below are examples of innovative programs developed by CMY to support young people's full participation.

#### **Voices of Young Australians: Uniting for Social Cohesion**

***Focus: connecting all young people to address racism***

The program model involves bringing together diverse young people (refugee, migrant and Australia-born), providing them with training to develop their leadership skills and to organize and deliver a youth-led project promoting social cohesion in their local area. Through this initiative we connected diverse young people from a range of schools and supported them to develop projects that promote respect and understanding between all Australians.

It was important that the participant group represent a diverse range of cultural and faith backgrounds, including young people from Anglo-Australian and Australian-born backgrounds. This allowed the program to overcome the issue of simply involving those who might experience racism and discrimination, to include those who may have negative views towards cultural diversity. It also provided an opportunity to build relationships between diverse young people.

Over 40 young people in the Shire of Melton developed their confidence, leadership and project management skills whilst developing relationships and broadening their personal and professional networks. They delivered an exciting and varied array of projects aimed at building understanding and

combating discrimination; these included the Multicultural World Cup, the Culture Shock Festival and the Expose Oppose and Conquer Youth Forum.

## **Youth Statewide Forums**

***Focus: consultation and participation of young people in social policy***

CMY delivers three youth statewide forums every year on issues facing young people. Young people come together in their local government area to discuss positive and negative aspects of their settlement. Issues raised focus primarily on access to employment, racism and safety in public places. The forums are always very well attended and an ideal way for young people to add their voice to the debate. Local Government services, who participate in the forum, then liaise with other local stakeholders to respond to the issues raised.

## **Short Burst Training**

***Focus: developing leadership skills to improve active participation***

This training series is designed to assist young people (between 12 and 25 years of age) from refugee and migrant backgrounds who are involved in youth groups and/or youth-led initiatives. The modules cover topics including leadership, fundraising, project management, media and team building. Delivered with young people as peer facilitators, the training is free for all young people to attend.

## **Sport and Recreation**

***Focus: social connection and engagement of young people, including refugee minors***

CMY has long recognised that sport and recreation helps newly arrived young people settle and connect with the broader community. Alongside health benefits, sport helps develop new friendships, networks, leadership skills and team work.

One of the projects we are currently involved in is a partnership with the City of Casey and YouthWorks Victoria, using sports as a means to provide life skills and socialisation to young people in the Refugee Minor Program. The Healthy Living Program runs soccer or cricket games in combination with a healthy eating and cooking course run by the local TAFE. At the conclusion of the ten-week course, participants receive a Food Handling Certificate.

This program has given unaccompanied refugee minors, who have to settle without their family to support them, an opportunity to meet other young people, develop their social skills, and learn essential life skills.

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

### **Unaccompanied minors**

We would like to attract the attention of the Joint Standing Committee on the situation of unaccompanied humanitarian minors, be there in Australia seeking asylum or recognised as refugees.

CMY supports the Federal Government's commitment to release all unaccompanied minors into Community Detention by June of this year. The detrimental effect of immigration detention on the mental health of asylum seekers is widely documented, and we believe that it is particularly acute on young

people, who are detained for months, sometimes years, at a crucial time in their emotional and intellectual development.

Many of the young people in Immigration Detention (and soon in Community Detention) will be recognised as refugees, and will eventually become Australian citizens. It is therefore important to start building the foundation of their long-term settlement as soon as they arrive in Australia, rather than undermine these foundations by depriving them of freedom, and of the right to access education and appropriate support.

Young asylum-seekers who are recognised as refugees will then become the responsibility of the Refugee Minor Program until they turn 18, and will receive settlement services through AMES.

There needs to be better connection between the Community Detention program, the Refugee Minor Program, and settlement services at the state and federal levels. Currently, unaccompanied minors receive a different range and quality of services depending on their state of residency, and models of care are not integrated. In order to promote the long term settlement of this group of young people, the Department of Immigration needs to develop indicators that are common to all states and territories, and tools to ensure consistency in the delivery of services and quality assurance.

### **Family and intergenerational support**

Settlement creates huge stress for families, and family breakdown is unfortunately often a consequence of this stress. In its recently-released Policy Discussion Paper *Finding Home in Victoria*, CMY highlighted how family breakdown is the number one cause of homelessness for newly-arrived young people. A statewide sector forum run by CMY in March about refugee and migrant young people in the Youth Justice system also saw family breakdown as a factor in newly-arrived young people's involvement in the justice system.

CMY believes that support to families in the early stages of arrival is essential to promoting positive settlement outcomes in the long term. We welcome the acknowledgement under the new Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) contract of the specific settlement needs of young people. We also believe that the different experiences of settlement of young people, in comparison with the adults in their families, need to be taken into account in the support provided to families at the point of arrival, in order to prevent conflict and breakdown further down the track.