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Dear Secretary,

We are writing in regard to the *Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia* currently being convened by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration of the Australian Parliament. As researchers in the areas of migration and multiculturalism in Australia, below we address the Terms of Reference regarding Settlement and Participation in relation to findings from our own research.

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

There is a growing body of research suggesting that schools act as a primary site in which newly arrived migrants and refugee families meet members of their new community, and begin to participate in the community. Our own research in the area of school inclusion for newly arrived refugees and migrants indicates a number of positive innovations for inclusive schooling that brings together newly arrived students, their families, and the broader community. For example:

- Programs for newly arrived students and their families work best when they are structured around areas that do not rely solely upon English language proficiency. Sport, art and dance are three examples of programs that we found to be effective in fostering relationships between newly arrived families and the broader community, either in or out of school hours.
- Newly arrived students and their families are more likely to participate in, and feel they belong to, the school environment if it reflects the diversity of its students. This occurred in the schools that we examined when
 - a. All children were represented in school projects, sports, arts, or assemblies,
 - b. Important events for all cultures were represented in the school or community, and
 - c. Schools and classrooms were decorated with flags, maps and art work from all students
- Students were more likely to be engaged and invested in learning if the school curriculum reflected the diversity of student experiences, background and knowledge. Valuing and respecting differences in this area is an important aspect of education that equips newly arrived students and their families to become part of their new community.

In addition to our research in the school environment, the second author and colleagues (Dr Rainbird and Professor Proctor) have also undertaken research in communities where detention centres are located. In this research, we have identified best practices for fostering communities that are open to asylum seekers and refugees, thereby ensuring that these groups are able to

participate fully in the Australian community upon release from detention. Our research suggests that two key requirements to ensure community acceptance are: information and fostering relationships. Best practices in these areas may include:

- Information
 - a. community forums with invited speakers addressing community concerns and questions
 - b. community websites and umbrella groups bringing together residents wishing to volunteer, and which provide a one-stop-shop for information on volunteering and donating
 - c. community events run by grassroots groups: multifaith walks and barbecues, gifts for children in the centre
- Relationships
 - d. fostering positive relationships in the schools between children who have arrived as asylum seekers and local children through activities such as building bird boxes, teaching around diversity such as new geographies, and sports days
 - e. fostering positive interactions between visitors to the facility and asylum seekers, e.g. through the provision of interpreters, guidelines and training for volunteers

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

Our research into the school experiences of newly arrived migrants and refugees has also indicated a number of incentives to ensure that young refugee and migrant children, together with their families, are given the opportunity to contribute socially and economically to Australia. Our research has indicated that:

- Including newly arrived students and their families in leadership roles within the school and the community enables families to contribute positively to school environments. Examples of such initiatives include
 - a. Involving families in establishing programs to challenge negative views of asylum seekers and refugees,
 - b. Holding regular school review meetings where teachers with experience teaching refugee children, as well as parents with refugee backgrounds, share their knowledge and have a voice in the development of school practices.
- Ensuring that sufficient funding is available for newly arrived students for whom English is a Second Language. This includes:
 - a. Sufficient funding for English language classes through New Arrivals Programs (generally required for up to 24 months),
 - b. Additional funding and support for the transition from NAP to mainstream, and
 - c. Funding for adequate support staff skilled in languages and counselling.

Our research indicates that providing sufficient funding ensures that newly arrived children with English as a Second Language are given the best opportunity to participate in the school environment.

In summary, our research on the education of newly arrived migrants and refugees, and especially children, indicates a number of ideas and incentives which equip and encourage these young people and their families to participate in their new community, and which establish long-term, positive relationships and settlement patterns. Please do not hesitate in contacting us for copies of our publications which outline in detail the findings and their justification for the recommendations presented here.

Sincerely,

Dr Clemence Due, The University of Adelaide

Dr Danielle Every, University of South Australia

Dr Damien W. Riggs, Flinders University

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