



Angels of Mercy Welfare Services Inc  
PO Box 528 St Marys NSW 2760  
Tel: (02) 9623 2798

Email: [angelsofmercy40@hotmail.com](mailto:angelsofmercy40@hotmail.com)  
ABN: 85 931 014 984

---

Good afternoon Madam Chair, members of the Joint standing committee, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Antoinette Abdelseed, I'm the co-ordinator of Angels of Mercy Welfare Services Inc. I feel honored to stand here today before you on behalf of Angels of Mercy Welfare Services to thank you for this opportunity and comment on issues in regards to Multiculturalism. I will also like to table this document as an attachment to the submission which I have previously sent to the Committee.

Angels of Mercy welfare services inc. is a mobile service, which aims mainly to help newly arrived migrants and refugees from Africa. It started in 2002 with the help of Africans and for Africans and it was a new model of service delivery which was designed especially to address the special needs of the African communities. The main objective of the project is to reach the unreached and those who are unable to access services due to their family, health and life circumstances – this includes African widows, single mothers, single dads, youth etc...

Our services include case work, referral assessment, Information and Training sessions, community support groups i.e. women, men and youth support groups, youth and families' camps, volunteer training groups, advocacy e.g. attendance of case conferences in hospitals as well as organising community consultation sessions. They are all programs to help Africans in building better confidence, skills and knowledge to help them to know better about the existing family and health systems as well as the Home and community care services.

We also help them to know their responsibilities as citizens and to understand and acknowledge their rights and obligations better.

We organise joint multicultural and inclusion programs and events for both the wider community and Africans so together they can interact, share meals, talks and know better about the different cultures. Africans will then feel welcomed, respected and accepted in their new home land, and born Australians will know better about the new cultures.

We introduce them to services and introduce service providers to their needs in a culturally appropriate manner. We encourage and support service providers to

understand Africans better and to facilitate more practical and culturally acceptable learning techniques in dealing with Africans. We also encourage people to listen to what they need to say and to respect their choices and decision making and this will help them to design models of care packages which will be more effective for helping and supporting the African communities.

We also motivate Africans for projects of pathways to primary industries encouraging them to return back to higher education and workforce training. We encourage them to volunteer and participate in helping the general community and mainstream services.

We are also invited to other states to meet other community leaders, deliver training sessions, motivating speeches and attending different community celebrations.

We encourage better attitudes when facing racism and injustice encouraging safe guards in our society by helping them to adopt positive attitudes towards themselves and others, developing better relationships, forming better habits, developing their inner wellbeing and staying passionate about life.

I am here talking today about people who were badly tortured and traumatized and affected both physically and psychologically.

## **CHALLENGES:**

The Challenges which we are facing

1) Firstly, Our clientele is growing and the funding support is decreasing. This is extremely hard for our organization, which has over 700 clients in the western Sydney region and referrals from the Sydney Metropolitan Areas. The government is now focusing in funding only the big access services ignoring the role of the community organizations who can reach the unreached? Generally, people need to be reached and helped first by their own communities then they can be linked to the rest of the services.

2) Secondly, Settlement services are only designed to cover the first five years of their settlement. How will this work if we still have to deal with lots of side issues example child protection, raring and discipline issues, child nutrient, health and wellbeing issues, inter generational and cultural issues, behaviour management and family issues, legal issues and imprisonment of those who are intentionally and unintentionally breaking the law, youth and relationships, sexual abuse issues, bullying, discrimination issues – how would we cover all

these issues as settlement services in the first five years of their arrival while they still need support in their Torture and Trauma experiences?

3) Thirdly, The assessors and people, who are in positions to determine the community services decisions regarding addressing needs and funding, they really should be people who know the real issues and are knowledgeable of the ethics of multiculturalism and the needs of the new emerging communities as well as our existing community care resources. There should be an equitable and fair distribution of funds and better determination of which services are needed now and which we can stay without.

4) Fourthly, if we choose to ignore and turn a blind eye now, we will have future issues which will be extremely hard to fix. Being a worker in the Welfare field since the 80<sup>th</sup>, the welfare system policies and protocols which have been running and used previously are not necessary effective and useful for now, we need flexibility and openness in addressing the new needs.

5) There should be a good framework to ensure the following:- adequate protection for Australians, support of refugees who are really experiencing Trauma and Torture in their own homelands, thorough assessment and investigation of all the migration claims i.e. Backgrounds, previous activities, goals and objectives etc....

Along the years, we have learned the best way to reach people and to get them involved in community programs is to concentrate on what they need and not on what we can offer. Also, we encourage others i.e. instead of pointing a finger to invest on a reaching hand to help them to develop their self worthiness, dignity and self respect. It is good to ensure that they are supported in finding a secure and peaceful living.

We are all today standing on pillars which were put by great people who were before us; I challenge you to think about the seeds which we are sowing for those who will follow us.

Thank you

Antoinette Abdelseed

Angels of Mercy Welfare Services Co-ordinator