



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

Migrant settlement outcomes

WEDNESDAY, 23 AUGUST 2017

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

Wednesday, 23 August 2017

Members in attendance: Mr Neumann, Ms Vamvakinou, Mr Wood.

Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Migrant settlement outcomes with reference to:

- the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants;
- national and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects;
- the importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome;
- whether current migration processes adequately assess a prospective migrant's settlement prospects; and
- any other related matter.

The Committee shall give particular consideration to social engagement of youth migrants, including involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behavior such as gang activity, and the adequacy of the Migration Act 1958 character test provisions as a means to address issues arising from this behaviour.

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ABBASI, Miss Sahar, Young person, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

GILLET, Ms Amanda, Acting Manager, Community and Business Development, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

MICALLEF, Miss Terese, Youth Community Development Coordinator, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

Committee met at 10:32

CHAIR (Mr Wood): I declare open the public hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. In accordance with the committee's resolution of 12 October 2016, this hearing will be broadcast on the parliament's website, and the proof and official transcripts of proceedings will be published on the parliament's website. Those present here today are advised that filming and recording are permitted during the hearing. I also remind members of the media who may be present or listening in on the web of the need to fairly and accurately report the proceedings of the committee. I call representatives from the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre to give evidence. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear.

Miss Abbasi: I'm from Balga Senior High School.

CHAIR: Thank you. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to discussions.

Miss Micallef: I will give you a bit of background for the submission that we entered. In January, the Metropolitan and Migrant Resource Centre and Youth Futures—who are, unfortunately, absent today—held a mentoring and leadership camp for young people from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds. We used this opportunity to incorporate a consultation with the young people, of whom we have one here present today, to discuss the response towards the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes. We used it as an activity to encourage the understanding of civic participation and the democratic system in Australia. It was important for us for the young people to share their views and have their voices heard in this inquiry. A template was supplied by MYAN WA and MYAN Australia, and we used that as prompt questions for young people.

CHAIR: Would anyone else like to make any further comments?

Miss Micallef: Just to say that, for the prompt questions in the submission, the answers are in dot form of exactly that what the young people said. I can go on further about specific issues that were talked about more in the actual consultation.

CHAIR: That would be good if you could do that.

Miss Micallef: I will just highlight a few because you already have the submission before you. I will discuss in more depth what the young people were discussing. A lot of them had a common idea in the answers. We'll go by each question. In the first question we asked the young people what went well. All of these questions are in relation to what is happening in Australia and also their lived experience of settling into Australia. The majority of the young people have been here for five years and under. There were two main answers for what went well. The first was youth activities. They all expressed that having to access to free youth activities was very beneficial for their settlement outcomes mainly because they gave them a space to meet new friends and also to learn about other external organisations that they could go to for assistance. The second one highlighted was the law. They all had a very positive response to the law. They all understood and respected the law and also felt safe knowing that the police here are seen in a good light as opposed to in some of their home countries where it is quite unsafe for them to approach police officers. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer.

I will mention too what was difficult, their concerns with living in Australia and their settlement. One of them was education. That was really highlighted. Although it was also mentioned in what went well, there was a big distinction between the two. So what went well for education was the ability to have free access to education but then what came with that were the things that were not going well. One of the main gaps that the young people identified was the length of eligibility to stay in an IEC centre. I'm not sure, Sahar, if you want to talk a bit about that. Some of the responses were that they only get two years and that is not sufficient for them to be able to acquire the right language and literacy skills, which makes it quite difficult to go into mainstream when they are amongst everybody for whom English is their main language. Sahar is meant to be grade 10 but she has actually asked the teacher to put her into grade 9 because she is still learning English. You probably would have heard some of this from other submissions as well.

Ms Gillett: But I should add that she got 77 per cent in her chemistry test.

CHAIR: How receptive is the school if you say, 'I want to go and undertake the same year twice or go down a year or two'? Were they helpful?

Miss Abbasi: Because I graduated from IEC and because my English is not really good and I cannot understand everything, that is why study is harder for me. I cannot understand everything. I have lots of questions for my teachers. That is why asked them if I can go to year 9 this year. It is better for me for next year because in year 10, 11 and 12, students have pass the OLNA test. I sat the OLNA test last semester because I was in IEC at the beginning of the year but I did not pass because the questions were so hard. Most of the questions I just guessed so that is why asked them to put me in year 9—to help me for next year.

CHAIR: That is a smart tactic, well done.

Miss Abbasi: Not every student has a chance to do that because they must go straight to year 11 and 12. But it is good for me.

CHAIR: We have heard what you're saying before, especially from a number of the African communities. Please continue.

Miss Micallef: That was the second major gap in the education, which Sahar already mentioned, the OLNA test. Here in WA, to have the OLNA test is a requirement to receive WACE, which is the Western Australian Certificate of Education, which can then give you an entry into university pathways. That's a major gap already for young people from migrant backgrounds going further into tertiary education. That was one thing that was highlighted.

CHAIR: What recommendation number was that? I'll get Paul to make a note of that.

Miss Micallef: What number?

CHAIR: We'll include it—basically, you just don't get the funding support to continue, is that the situation?

Miss Micallef: Yes, basically. Another highlighted concern of the young people was Centrelink requirements and the process of Centrelink. The young people expressed their concerns and also their experiences that they hear of from their parents that their parents also have to deal with, which then indirectly affects the young people. Their main concern is that navigating through the Centrelink process and the system can be quite difficult when you've arrived. One young person in the group had mentioned that he's actually studying full time in a senior campus, but he always gets contacted by Centrelink and his payments are getting cut because he should be looking for work. However, if he's a full-time student, he should not have to have that requirement to look for work, because being a full-time student automatically crosses that out. He should be on Youth Allowance and not on a Newstart allowance, where he has to look for work. It's those little things that can create a big impact in that young person's life. That's navigating the system.

Also, the young people mentioned that sometimes their parents might get text reminders or emails from Centrelink, and the parents aren't understanding that avenue or what the text means, but it's an appointment. They don't know that they have to attend this appointment and that if they miss that appointment the payment gets cut, which then affects the young people. Those were the two highlighted concerns that were brought up.

I'll highlight some recommendations that the young people have spoken about the most in the consultation. One was to have continued services, such as the youth activities. During the session, a lot of the young people talked about doing sport—extracurricular activities and social activities for the young people to have that space to meet other young people who come from similar backgrounds and journeys to them. That was one thing that they highlighted. They said, 'We just want to keep going on camps!' That's one major thing. They also really highlighted the experience of their family upon arrival, where they were greeted by caseworkers who collected them from the airport, assisted them in going to their house and provided clothes upon their initial arrival. They said that that was really beneficial for their first experience entering into Australia. It made them feel safe and more belonged. They said that having that caseworker was really essential for them. Having caseworkers throughout the length of their settlement was also highlighted, because you can't really settle in two years; it takes more than five years to settle.

They also made recommendations to ensure that young people who come from similar backgrounds to them have equal opportunities. A lot of that discussion came about because their skills from overseas aren't recognised here—especially for their parents, they were saying. Coming here, even having a major skill set, their parents weren't able to utilise their skills to get employment that matched those skills. Equal opportunities were a big thing that they wanted to recommend, and trying to make it easier for skills to be recognised. Those were the major recommendations.

Mr NEUMANN: Which free youth activities that your organisation delivers were really enjoyed by the young people? What specifically do they do?

Miss Micallef: Sport and art are some of them. There are a lot of school holiday activities that we do—a lot of sports: soccer, basketball, volleyball and whatever. They really enjoy that, especially because it gives them something to do on those school holidays, not just stay at home. They enjoy that. What else do you enjoy? Cooking classes? Did you enjoy those?

Miss Abbasi: Yes. Cooking classes and dancing.

Ms VAMVAKINO: What range of art?

Miss Micallef: Collage making and music. We also run a star search program—that's highlighting young people from migrant groups' talents. We also run programs in schools using art as an engagement tool to discuss life skills. Camps are another thing that all of the young people really expressed that they—

CHAIR: Everyone loves a camp.

Miss Micallef: Yes, everyone loves a camp, but they're very expensive.

Mr NEUMANN: Do you organise any organised team sports? For example, do you play in a soccer division somewhere?

Miss Micallef: We have a multicultural indoor soccer tournament. There's actually one coming up fairly soon. We do that, and that gets young people from all different cultures. They make their own teams and then we have two weekends where we do kick-offs and then grand finals. We also find opportunities for young people to enter external programs as well—that's including sporting clubs, like local football clubs. We currently have a jiu-jitsu program where young people come in and work together with the Western Australia Police to incorporate an understanding of law while also learning and being engaged in jujitsu. We do provide a lot of activities that are hands on and engaging for young people. That gives us the opportunity to work with these young people, instil various life skills and, basically, keep them connected with the organisations.

CHAIR: Do you have any final comments to make? Otherwise, thank you very much for your submission and your recommendations. We are finding that your recommendations—the committee has been going for a while now—are very similar to other states'.

Mr NEUMANN: And very supportive. We'll bring home the issue. You've nailed so many issues today. We've got other recommendations and you're backing them up very well indeed.

Ms Gillett: Great. Going on from the activities and things that we provide for young people when they first arrive, I think one of the big issues that we have identified—which didn't necessarily come out of this—at the Migrant Resource Centre is the need to work very closely with young people in the latter years of high school to ensure that they do get meaningful connections to post-school pathways. That, I think, is a really high-risk area. If young people are disengaging from school for whatever reason but not finding a meaningful pathway, then you've got really big issues in terms of long-term unemployment, the cycle of poverty et cetera. Also, I think that's really putting young people at risk of being perhaps enticed by other activities or ideologies that might fill that void for them. I think that's really very important.

CHAIR: What you're saying, that's one thing the committee's learnt. We've had situations in Melbourne with the need to get jobs and be involved in youth activities. Thank you very much for that. Thank you for your attendance here today. If the committee has any further questions, they will be put to you in writing. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, and will have the opportunity to request corrections to transcription errors. Miss Abbasi, you can put down in your resume in the future that you've come before a parliamentary committee to give evidence. Well done.

ESSA, Ms Tamkin, Project Support Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

SHENGEB, Ms Sara, Project Support Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

WORTHAM, Mr Ross, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

[10:56]

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives of Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Western Australia. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by *Hansard* and attracts parliamentary privilege. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement, before we proceed to discussions.

Mr Wortham: Thank you. We have prepared a brief, five-minute opening statement. The hope after that is that I am not the one responding as much, but we have Tampkin and Sara here to provide as much evidence to the committee as possible.

First, I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on today, the Wadjak Nyoongar people, and pay my respects and the respects of the Youth Affairs Council and all of our members to their elders, past and present. I extend a deep sense of appreciation and thanks to the committee for the efforts it is going to and for inviting us to come along to give evidence today.

Just by way of brief introductions, we have given our formal titles, but I think we will just hand back to these guys. I am the CEO of the Youth Affairs Council, but also YACWA, auspice and formally the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Western Australia. So both Tampkin and Sara are here as representatives of the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network for Western Australia, or MYAN WA for short, and the work we are doing through MYAN WA.

Briefly, the Youth Affairs Council are WA's peak body for young people and services that support young people. That is nearly half a million young people in Western Australia. We have just under 500 members at YAC WA. We have been around for nearly 40 years, and we believe that young people have the right to be involved in and to influence matters that affect them. So part of what we want to do through our submission and through evidence today is ensure that young people are part of the process. The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Western Australia, equally, is also a peak body, specifically focusing on multicultural young people in WA. It is part of a national consortia, the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, which I believe you have already met with in previous states. We are an arm for Western Australia. MYAN WA equally also has an additional 400—almost 500 members, as I was corrected this morning. It represents youth-specific and mainstream settlement services and youth services that aren't settlement specific, that work with multicultural young people and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The specific projects that MYAN WA undertake are things along the lines of the Catalyst Youth Summit, which is in the addendums to our submission, where we get young people together on an annual basis to talk about settlement issues in Western Australia, which are very relevant to the committee's work, I believe. And we will have an additional report from this year's Catalyst Youth Summit, which has just been completed by these two amazing leaders to my right, which we can provide to the committee upon its completion in the next month.

I want to start off by saying thank you for the invitation and for having us along today and we acknowledge that our submission is focused on young people and on Western Australia. Although, we acknowledge that this is a national conversation. Our evidence and our testimony is relevant to Western Australia, and based on evidence that is collected here in WA—

CHAIR: That's why we came here, Ross.

Mr Wortham: Great. It is important to note that in Western Australia we have a vibrant settlement services sector, one that works quite well for the majority of people settling in WA. That being said, as with any sector, there are significant opportunities for improvements and enhancement, and one of the exciting things we see through this inquiry is an opportunity to highlight those enhancements and areas for improvement. It is also important to start off by acknowledging that multicultural young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds settling in Western Australia are diverse. They come from varied backgrounds, with varied needs and varied experiences, which highlights the importance that no one service is going to solve the problem for everyone. So we need to acknowledge and respond to and adapt and change services to meet the needs of young people as they arise.

Areas covered by this inquiry touch on critical areas that need to be enhanced in the settlement services system in Western Australia and nationally. And we implore the committee to consider the recommendations in our submission, as well as in other submissions provided to the committee through Western Australia, which we have reviewed and are in support of. Enhancing the settlement services system by breaking down barriers specific to young people and increasing access to existing services is acknowledged in our submission, and we can talk more on the barriers as we go through questions. Secondly, it is around improving English language courses and English-language proficiency of young people and families settling in Western Australia. We are very aware that the current English courses are either not long enough or not relevant enough to the colloquial needs of young people and the lives they experience in Western Australia.

Thirdly, we implore the committee to consider the implementation of the National Youth Settlement Framework, in addition to the National Settlement Framework, to increase consistency of support for young people through mainstream and youth specialist services. This is something we can provide more information on, but it has been included in our submission. And fourthly, it is considering the long-term view of settlement and acknowledging that settlement isn't completed at the end of a five-year period and that families and young people will often need additional support beyond the five-year current tenure. In addition to that, services also have challenges, which we can explore, with short-term funding. As we know, one of the biggest barriers for young people is trust. If we have a breakdown in services and a breakdown in relationships between staff and community, that is one of the biggest issues that young people face.

I want to close by reiterating our deep concerns about the ongoing rhetoric and misrepresentation of the size and nature of youth crime and antisocial behaviour from migrant and refugee young people and any punitive responses to such behaviour. In addition, we are also concerned about the considerations for additional screening measures that could potentially undermine the non-discriminatory approach of Australia's migration program. With those words, I will close our opening statement. Thank you again for allowing us to come here to provide some evidence.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for the very detailed submission. Obviously, a lot of work has gone into the submission, and we very much appreciate that. I just noticed one your recommendations relating to mentors is:

Provide resources to implement a peer based mentorship program at a state based level, and provide positive role models for young people to guide them through the settlement process

And this can be extended, and I note some other comments. We had, sadly, other youth in Melbourne appearing in the newspapers for gang related crime. Every young person we see before the committee is just the role model of what we want to see. Potentially, when it comes to these mentoring programs, how could you see that working? Is it in place at the moment, and can it be extended to help the youth going down the wrong path already? Who would like to talk to that?

Ms Shengeb: I can answer that. I think there are programs that are out there, one of which is Catalyst. The idea of the mentorship is young people empowering other young people to be participants in their communities, and the way that encourages them is through leadership activities, through advocacy training and through creating the space and area for young people to come together and share the experiences that they face on a daily basis. That has an impact on their sense of belonging, and once a sense of belonging is restored in the young person they can be positive contributors to their communities. We've seen that that is a very powerful tool, and it can also be extended to young people who come to Australia—as in recent arrivals—by creating the space and making sure that programs like this continue and are existent for the young people.

Ms VAMVAKINO: The committee has taken a lot of evidence about youth mentoring programs, and I have had my own experience with them through the people that I come into contact with. Tamkin, I now do remember, we were close to each other in Melbourne. My view has always been that the large majority of young people are going to be like you guys. What we're trying to get our heads around—and I'd appreciate whether you've reflected on this, as young people—is how you engage the ones who probably would benefit the most from these programs but who are not engaging with the programs. And there may be a series of reasons why they're not engaging. It's not a reflection on the nature of the program; it's, rather, a reflection on the circumstances. What we're trying to get our heads around is how to tailor approaches and use the resources, or add to them, in order to be able to make them feel wanted, useful participants—all the things that you guys clearly do really well. Have you given some thought to anything that could form a recommendation?

Ms Essa: Definitely. I totally agree with that. Just from personal experience and from the experience of others who have worked in the youth sector and with CALD young people, I've seen and heard a lot of stories of young people who are really troubled and need assistance, but the problem is there is a barrier with cultural competence and with services having enough of it and understanding the basic needs of a young person. Most of the time they

—and especially, I know, a lot of boys—go through a lot of these things. It can be something as simple as their family not understanding what's going on in school and that not being communicated well through the school system to the family. I think one of the best approaches to fixing that is getting people like me and Sara—people with experience—and funding us to actually go out and have a service to help these kids who need the assistance but are too scared to ask for it. Some of them want to tackle it by themselves, but, as we all know, there is no issue that you can tackle by yourself, especially when they're that vulnerable—being in schools; that is the time when they grow—and they don't have that service.

When I was going through a public school I struggled a lot, but I came out of it because I had a really good family. I had a big family and they really helped me. They noticed a problem; it was because I was so young when I came. A lot of these young people who are coming here in the settlement sector are 15- or 16-year-olds. They're not a seven-year-old growing through the system. So I think that's something we need to understand, and we need to provide culturally competent people to go through and help them. I've been approached by a lot of young people who look at me like, 'You're an inspiration.' But I think that's an overstatement—is that the right word for it?—because they can do exactly the same, but they haven't had that support service. The service is there to help them and to assist them in growing up. It is just something really basic: you have to add a human touch to it, a more human approach. I think that is the only way you can really get through it. That is just my opinion and experience.

CHAIR: We hear that all the time—about being culturally sensitive. Ross, do you want to add to that?

Mr Wortham: We need to acknowledge that young people disengage from systems. It is not specific to those who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, young people from migrant backgrounds, from CALD backgrounds, have particular challenges and barriers added onto the experience of a mainstream or non-migrant and refugee person in Western Australia. The youth sector across Australia, for the last 40 years, has been working very hard to try and embed systems and processes to engage the disengaged. It comes down to a very simple fact, which is trust—and the human element, which Tamkin mention, is exactly what that is. How do we build trust in systems and services that we know can support a young person who has complex needs? That trust will bridge the divide and allow a young person to access a service at a time and place when they need it. The point around peers is that young people, more often, will trust their peers. If we can encourage leaders like Sara and Tamkin and others in the community to be some of those conduits into services, there is a phenomenal opportunity to bridge that divide of distrust.

CHAIR: The committee members visited both the UK and the US. Law enforcement, youth advocates and refugee advocates there were all very much on the same message: when it comes to young people involved in crime and gang-related activity, you need former gang members or people who have had a really bad life experience to talk to them. They are not going to listen to anyone else. Why? 'Because you haven't been where I've been.' Do we have any programs like that in WA, with former gang members or other people who have gone through really tough times?

Ms Essa: We have not had something exactly like that. But through Youth Connections, and also through the MMRC, there was another program for young people under the age of 18 where they would go out to prisons and sit down with the young people. A lot of those families said how much those kids had improved, and a lot of them went onto university and TAFE and to lead a better life. That was just because two CALD people went and spoke to them about basic things, just had a discussion. We need people like that. Anyone who goes through the justice system feels so alone. But they are not alone; they just need to be shown that there is a space and people are there to help you.

CHAIR: Could you provide to the committee the details of that program. Was that program of going into prisons effective? Does it still continue?

Mr Wortham: We mentioned Youth Connections. It is worth acknowledging that that is an initiative which had a significant impact when it was functioning in Western Australia, when it was funded. The Youth First Council is a significant advocate for the re-establishment of Youth Connections.

Ms VAMVAKINOU: It is the state that has funded this? It was previously federal. From which department was that?

Mr NEUMANN: It was about giving to children who had dropped out school and who were disconnected or had dysfunctional families the opportunity to complete their schooling and get connected with tertiary institutions and the job market.

Mr Wortham: Youth Connections had a particular engagement mechanism that worked to engage young people disengaged from school, and also those coming out of the criminal justice system, to successfully re-

engage in community and society. As a universal service, it was also quite effective in working with multicultural young people. Unfortunately, historically, it was defunded by the federal government. It would be a recommendation of ours to refund that.

Mr NEUMANN: It is very good with young Indigenous people too. In my electorate, I have a large number of Indigenous kids.

Mr Wortham: Mr Neumann, you mentioned previous gang affiliates engaging with young people in gangs today. I think it is worth acknowledging the importance of understanding the small cohort that that may be in Western Australia and refocusing our attention on the significant cohort of the community—migrant and refugee young people in Western Australia—who are not in that experience of crime.

Mr NEUMANN: I understand.

Mr Wortham: Yet the example is still so very relevant in that there are so many amazing young people for whom, if they had the opportunity to engage with a peer, a youth worker they trusted, we could create phenomenal opportunity in WA.

Ms VAMVAKINO: I agree with you: there is the smaller group and the large group. But what we are also trying to do is find a process of delivery of services that ensures that the big group does not necessarily drift into the smaller group. I think that is where it is important to try and find something that picks this up early before it develops into perhaps something like the antisocial behaviour in Melbourne, which you have probably read about, and some of the other stuff that is going on in our country, because there are similar sorts of issues. And we need to frame that into a program that succeeds in doing exactly that, rather than picking it up at one end or whatever.

Mr Wortham: One of the experiences that we have had in the last 40 years of quality youth services in Australia is about understanding the needs of the spectrum—from intensive support through to universal services. I agree with you that we need a response to young people in crisis with complex needs. The real solution to that in the long term is really effective early intervention and prevention programs that engage young people in meaningful, constructive and positive ways that help them build their identity. The concern that the COUNCIL has around the rhetoric of gangs or radicalisation is the labelling that that puts on young people who might not be associated to those predilections.

Mr NEUMANN: I think it is an outstanding submission and you should be congratulated. It is fantastic work that you did. We have to come up with recommendations. I applaud your comment about Youth Connections, which I think is terrific. Can you explore further the implementation of the National Youth Settlement Framework and how that would benefit? I think there is some value in it, but could you explore that further.

Ms Essa: I have worked in the settlement sector before. I have worked with the majority of the parents who come through the settlement sector. We did not have a youth aspect to it. It has only been a year since we have the National Youth Settlement Framework. I believe if we have it we can definitely fix all the cracks in the system so far with young people being left out of the services and not being helped earlier on and being expected to learn in the schools and that the schools will help them. But really it is a service, and the public schools have to work together and do this. The National Youth Settlement Framework is there to help with youth, not just the general settlement sector, and to help the parents. I could talk about that for hours and hours but young people—

Mr NEUMANN: What I would like you to do is go back and do some more homework. I am sorry about this, but could you address that aspect—I do not expect you to give us *War and Peace*. I am aware that it does not solely focus on settlement services. But if you could provide us additional information, that is the sort of thing we could pick up as part of a recommendation to the government. Could you provide us a bit more information on how the implementation of the NYSF would make a difference.

Mr Wortham: We can do that straightaway. We do have the background on the development of the National Youth Settlement Framework. It is worth acknowledging that that was developed by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Australia. Each of the state and territory affiliates, us being one of them, has the opportunity to utilise that resource. That previously had funding in its establishment but not in its rollout. We see huge opportunity in applying the National Youth Settlement Framework, specifically for young people, to mainstream settlement services. As Tamkin said, it should be much broader than that: let's look at our doctors, our health practitioners, our schools. How can we build the capacity of our mainstream systems to support young people settling in Australia? The training package and the opportunity to do that right now are sitting at the doorstep. The training package is done. We'll happily provide you with more information.

Mr NEUMANN: Most of your submission backs up most of what we've heard in a very strong way. That particular aspect of your submission, I think, is something which comes through, particularly from a peak body as reputable as yours. So I think that's really important.

Mr Wortham: Thank you.

CHAIR: We'll just close it there unless you've got any final comments to make. Your submission was outstanding. Whoever did all that work and spent hours at the computer—

Mr NEUMANN: Sorry, Tamkin and Sara haven't told us their backgrounds. It would be good for the record.

Ms Shengeb: I was a refugee prior to coming to Australia. I was a refugee in Ethiopia for three years. It's been five years since I settled here. Currently I work for the Youth Affairs Council of WA and I'm in my last semester of uni.

Mr NEUMANN: What are you studying?

Ms Shengeb: Chemistry and psychology. I'm also a ministerial adviser to the Hon. Paul Papalia.

CHAIR: Excellent. Well done.

Ms Essa: I don't know where to start. I come from a migrant background. I came to Australia when I was seven.

CHAIR: Where did you come from?

Ms Essa: From Afghanistan. I came with my mother and my five siblings. We had lost contact with my father, but we reconnected with him three years down the track when he came here. I work for the Youth Affairs Council of WA and I also study full time at Curtin University, doing international relations and journalism. That's me in a nutshell.

CHAIR: Thank you both. You're very talented. Excellent. Again, thank you for your attendance here today. If the committee has any further questions they will be put to you in writing. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence and you will have an opportunity to request corrections to transcription errors. Again, thank you very much.

BOGOYEV, Ms Kathryn, Senior Solicitor, The Humanitarian Group

[11:24]

CHAIR: Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to discussions.

Ms Bogoyev: Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to appear at today's hearing. By way of background, The Humanitarian Group is a not-for-profit organisation that provides migration assistance, legal advice and education to people who are new to Australia. We're based in Victoria Park in Western Australia, but we service the entire state and we assist new arrivals to Australia who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This includes asylum seekers, refugees, humanitarian entrants and other new migrants who are disadvantaged in terms of their access to legal services. Our clients come from a very broad range of national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As an update to the information that was in our submission, I can advise that, in the 2016-17 financial year, we assisted over 3,300 people from 80 different countries. Our staff are lawyers and migration agents and we are an accredited community legal centre.

As several of the submissions have noted, Australia's settlement services for humanitarian entrants are recognised internationally as being of a very high calibre. It can, of course, always be improved, but our general view of those settlement services is a supportive one. We note, however, that since 2013 many of our clients, including refugees with protection visas and people who enter through the family stream are not provided with settlement services. We see that as a significant gap.

I'd like to highlight a couple of points in relation to the inquiry's first term of reference, which refers to the mix coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of those services. Firstly, it's our view that settlement outcomes for new migrants would be improved by the provision of comprehensive community legal education for all humanitarian entrants and refugees. Lack of knowledge and understanding about Australian law and the legal system makes people who are new to Australia vulnerable to exploitation in a range of areas, from employment, housing and family violence to anything that involves a financial transaction. This is something that we see cropping up again and again in our practice. For some people, and particularly for those who have come from a country where the law is used to oppress or persecute people, lack of knowledge can contribute to their sense of alienation—the idea that the legal system is not there to protect them, but, rather, is a weapon to be used against them. The worsening availability of free or affordable migration assistance and legal advice, as well as interpreting services, exacerbates this problem. We believe it's vital that funding to these services be prioritised. When it comes to asking questions, I'm happy to talk about some of the education that we see would be needed in that area.

Secondly, we're concerned that some of the changes to the Migration Act and regulations that have taken place over the last few years are having unintended negative consequences on the settlement outcomes of refugees. The closure of viable avenues for family reunion for protection visa holders is something that we see as particularly problematic. In Western Australia, there are many young people who arrived as unaccompanied minors. They're now permanent residents reaching adulthood, with no realistic hopes of being reunited with their families. Many others have partners or children overseas who they haven't seen for many years and, needless to say, this has profound effects on their capacity to become productive, healthy and well integrated residents and citizens. It's not just in their interests but in the interests of the whole community that they be able to reunite, at least with immediate family members.

Finally, the inquiry's terms of reference raise the question of whether the character test provisions in the Migration Act are adequate in addressing antisocial behaviours, such as gang activity. We are, in fact, very concerned that since the cancellation powers in the Migration Act were expanded, in 2014, there has been a significant increase in people being detained in immigration detention centres because their humanitarian or protection visa has been cancelled on character grounds. We absolutely understand that community protection is an important aspect of immigration regulation, but a large proportion of people seeking our assistance following visa cancellations haven't committed crimes that are considered particularly serious if they are committed by citizens.

In some cases, we see clients whose cancellations are later revoked but—because they've been held in immigration detention—they may have lost employment or suffered educational setbacks as a result. Often, their

family relationships have suffered through separation and stress, and they feel considerably less included and more excluded from the Australian community as a whole.

Those are the matters I wanted to emphasise in my opening statement. Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR: I was reading your submission regarding community legal education and community legal centres. For new migrants, from what you see, how much legal education do they receive? I was dealing in Victoria recently with our community legal services, which have programs now in schools. Firstly, what is the knowledge they have through the process of migrating to Australia? Secondly, how do we fill those gaps?

Ms Bogoyev: Individuals who enter through the offshore humanitarian program will receive some education on their basic rights and responsibilities through the settlement services that they receive. There is scope for improvement in that kind of program. But, like I flagged in the opening statement, people who apply onshore for protection visas or who enter through the family stream don't receive any formal settlement services or legal education. Community legal centres like ours do provide community education. Our centre sees a real need to provide education to new arrivals.

By way of an example, I will have some staff next week providing a series of community legal sessions to year 11 and year 12 students from Cyril Jackson college, which is one of the colleges here that has a very high proportion of new arrivals. The aim in running that kind of session is to be proactive in educating the students about both their rights and their responsibilities and educating young people generally. The aim is to educate them about services available—if problems arise what services are available, and what the law states in that regard. That includes flagging options available for clients or students or family members who might be victims of family violence, for example, and about options for family reunion and that sort of thing. It also includes education about the risks if they engage in antisocial and criminal behaviour.

We believe that this type of education can be key to raising awareness and understanding of Australian law and the legal system, because there are often very large gaps in knowledge about what they can and can't do. A lot of clients who have approached us for assistance with criminal law matters have friends who are Australian citizens who might commit fairly minor criminal offences, and there aren't really any serious implications of that behaviour. They often don't have any knowledge of the fact that if they're on a temporary or permanent visa they're subject to having that visa cancelled if they engage in the same sort of behaviour. But there isn't the funding available to roll out the kinds of education programs that we think would be really useful.

CHAIR: The committee visited this as part of international research or as an extension of this committee inquiry. Sweden had 100 hours of how to become a Swedish citizen, including a legal aspect. I think it was to cover the gap that you're talking about. Is that something you would support here?

Ms Bogoyev: Yes. I think that any time that funding and resources are allocated to educating people proactively about what their rights and responsibilities are is crucial, and too often people approach our service for assistance when the problem is already there, and it's a big problem. Being able to roll out education sessions at an early stage we would absolutely support.

Ms VAMVAKINO: I think that was the area that I was thinking of—the importance of early intervention.

Ms Bogoyev: That's right. With community legal centres, obviously we want to provide frontline services to clients, that's our priority, but we also see that if there was more resourcing for those kinds of education sessions, you are potentially reducing your need to provide those services later on. I think that's backed up, too, by the Productivity Commission's report into access to justice; the front-loading of resources to services that provide that kind of assistance is crucial.

Mr NEUMANN: You're giving me flashbacks here. When I was an accredited family law specialist, I used to give lectures on family law in the last semester of clergy at a theological college in Brisbane. I notice you mention that specifically in paragraph 13: the extraordinary ignorance of people of a basic knowledge of the law. Men and women in their last semester at theological college, before they go into ministry, lacked basic knowledge of things such as child support, family law, international law, property settlements and divorce et cetera. It is the very thing you talk about here, and these were people who were studying to go into the ministry.

A number of community legal centres like NAAJA in the Northern Territory and TASC in Ipswich and Toowoomba in South-East Queensland, where I come from, engage in programs where they actually lecture and teach people. Would it be your recommendation that we should fund education programs through community legal centres and legal aid—like Caxton Legal Centre in my home state, about 40 kilometres from where I live in Caxton Street in Brisbane? Would they be the appropriate organisations to fund?

Ms Bogoyev: I think one of the advantages of funding centres that provide services to clients is that you've got that on-the-ground awareness of what the needs of clients are, whereas sometimes if it's done in a more theoretical

space you're not necessarily responding to the types of queries that are coming through the door every day. So whether the services are provided by the community legal centres or done in consultation with community legal centres, I think what's key is having on-the-ground information about the needs of clients. Obviously, there's a broad range of issues that you could cover: criminal, civil law, family law—the list is endless. But I think understanding what current issues are is really important.

Mr NEUMANN: Yes. I think Jason nailed it—and you mentioned rights and responsibilities. I can't think of a better organisation on the ground than a community legal centre to give community legal training. They're not going to go to QUT, the University of Queensland, or Monash or Melbourne University to get that. Community legal centres that provide the legal advice to them in relation to all the issues you mentioned in paragraphs 11 to 14 are the kinds of organisations which should be funded, perhaps for that extra training—the Swedes call it citizenship type training. You could talk about the rights and responsibilities from basic law, traffic, criminal law, debt, tenancy, contract, torts and a whole range of areas, where your staff could actually engage them and say, 'Well, hang on a sec, we've got this on a regular basis,' or run courses that you can get program funding for.

Ms Bogoyev: That's right. What we've seen at different times is an influx of clients coming in with issues—for example, with mobile phone contracts, where they've entered into contracts that they haven't understood. Or we'll see an influx of clients with tenancy issues, where they've had issues with recovery of a bond or that sort of thing. You can really respond to need at a particular time when you're seeing that particular influx of clients coming through. I think, too, that education in those areas is important to reducing criminal offending later on, in that we know that social and economic disadvantage is often the key indicator to perhaps potentially engaging in criminal behaviour down the track. If we can put in place education programs that mean that people are less likely to get into financial crises, then that's one step along the way to encourage prevention.

Mr NEUMANN: Yes. I've thought long and hard about which organisations should get that funding. In Victoria and Queensland, for example, there are big regional councils. That is not always the case in New South Wales and elsewhere. Those big regional councils could deliver those types of services, but I'm not convinced that they could do it better than the community legal services, which I think are the best places to deliver those types of services.

Ms Bogoyev: I think another option that could be worth exploring is holistic hub-type model of service delivery. In the temporary protection visa space, our organisation has started running a hub for asylum seekers that they can attend and can get advice about their legal and migration questions. That's often the key reason they're approaching and making contact. But we also have a counsellor who's experienced in speaking with people who are survivors of torture and trauma. We've got case workers who provide financial and other support there. We've got crisis care organisations. And I think that holistic sort of model that can be geographically based and potentially can be done in concert with local councils is something that's very well worth funding.

Mr NEUMANN: Yet I can't see that the Brisbane City Council, the biggest council in Australia, could deliver it better than, say, RAILS in Brisbane. I can't see that they could. RACs could do it well in Victoria, for example. I can't see, for example, anyone doing it better than some of the legal organisations up in the Northern Territory or South Australia, either.

Ms Bogoyev: There certainly is that specialist knowledge that the legal organisations hold that I think is key to providing the kind of education that's really needed.

Mr NEUMANN: And if you bring in people who can partner with other organisations to deliver those services, yes.

Ms Bogoyev: Yes.

CHAIR: Is there a booklet or anything, to your knowledge, that is supplied to migrants? You spoke about people committing crimes that they don't believe at the time will have an impact on their potential visa status in Australia. Do you know of anything that the government supplies or that legal centres are giving out? There are all these migrants out there who wouldn't even be aware of the basic laws.

Ms Bogoyev: I do believe that the Commonwealth government has put out some kind of brochure that has some information about settlement in Australia. I can't recall the name of it off the top of my head. It's not actually something that we distribute to our clients per se.

CHAIR: Is there something you produce to give to your clients to assist them?

Ms Bogoyev: No. We don't have anything—

CHAIR: What about your training package that people are presenting in a couple of days time? Obviously they've—

Ms Bogoyev: I think one of the big issues in providing written resources is that the use of that depends upon the language and the literacy capabilities of clients. Particularly for people who are at risk, that level might not be there, and that's where the verbal presentation is key.

CHAIR: Thanks very much for that. The committee is definitely looking at that space you're talking about—legal advice, and that seems to be international best practice, too.

Thank you for your attendance here today. If the committee has any further questions they will be put to you in writing. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence and will have the opportunity to request corrections to transcriptional errors. Again, thanks very much for your attendance.

GILLETT, Ms Amanda, Acting Manager, Community and Business Development, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc.

HUSIC, Ms Samira, Coordinator Community Services, Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors Inc.

[11:51]

CHAIR: I now call the representatives of the Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors and the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre to give evidence. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to discussion.

Ms Gillett: This is a joint submission between the two organisations. We have basically presented you with a summary of the key issues that we believe are confronted by, particularly, humanitarian refugee and asylum seeker people. Other than that, I think what we have put can stand. I might add something later in relation to the employment area, because that has developed over the last few months as being really critical.

CHAIR: When it comes to the services provided to trauma survivors—for example, English lessons—do you find you have to go to an extra level of the service because of what they have gone through?

Ms Husic: Yes. Certainly, that was our recommendation. Apart from the fact that jobactive, as a service, is largely viewed as unsuccessful in the sector, we believe there are additional barriers to refugees and torture and trauma survivors. Obviously, language is a barrier, but we have tried to outline some other barriers in the submission here. Trauma survivors are dealing with much more than just the language barrier. These are people who have been forcefully removed from their places of residence. They have lived through horrendous experiences and have lost family members, belongings and everything and then have arrived in Australia. The point to remember with trauma survivors is that atrocities that people have survived are done to them by other people. Therefore, the basic trust in humanity, in other humans, has been disturbed. Through our client work, we know that when people go to job-seeking appointments, to Centrelink appointments, to a lot of systemic services that they have to attend, they often feel they are being interrogated. They are being made to think that they are not telling the truth. This is let alone the fact that the majority of these people come from more collectivistic cultures, where there was a lot of support around them, where they had people who would kind of hold their hand if they were experiencing difficulties. They don't have that here. The majority of them come from cultures where they are not used to 'selling themselves'—I say that in adverted commas. To look for jobs in Australia, you need to be accustomed to the culture of not only being good at English, not only having capability and providing a good resume, but applying for jobs over and over and selling yourself in a job interview.

Ms VAMVAKINOU: I was having this discussion with our secretary. We took evidence from a group of young students from here, who talked about the difficulty their parents were having in meeting the bureaucratic requirements of Centrelink and the way they were being treated. I agree with you about the job network provider, by the way—not just where refugees are concerned but right across the board—and the payment structure you observed being such that it doesn't give them any incentive. Is there a need for government to think about the refugee cohort that receives the Centrelink payment and goes to the job network provider, as opposed to the local cohort—it could be anybody, including me—and to think about how those two might be treated differently in terms of the requirements, ticking the boxes? That is with the knowledge that one group has additional pressures and requirements to go to English class—the young man's father, who would look after all the children, or the women. Is there some space in policy for a really concerted effort to put some meat onto that structure?

Ms Gillett: Absolutely.

Ms VAMVAKINOU: In looking for solutions, that is very practical.

Ms Gillett: Previously to working at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, where I have been for about a year now, I did work at ASeTTS. But moving into MMRC, which has the humanitarian settlement service provision, and so dealing with people in their first year of coming into Australia, the issue of employment is a really major one and has got more difficult since July 2015, when the rules were changed, with the requirements that you have to apply for 20 jobs per fortnight. What we see on a daily basis in MMRC is what Samira referred to—we are constantly seeing people turfed off their benefits coming into us. Our staff, who are supposed to be working on settlement issues, spend hours trying to advocate on behalf of that person to reinstate the Centrelink payments and to sort out the issue with jobactive. It is patently ridiculous to ask somebody to apply for 20 jobs a

fortnight when they don't speak English or have very limited English, when they're trying to learn English language—I think it is about 25 hours a week that they have to give—

Ms Husic: Yes, minimum.

Ms Gillett: and when they've never opened a computer in their life and so have no idea how to seek online types of jobs. It would be like picking me up and planting me in Iran without a word of Farsi and saying, 'Go for it,' and all these things would happen to you if you didn't comply. You've got no chance of complying. It's so counterproductive.

I'll give you an example of the employment issue. I can give you a case study of a young man I know. This morning we were talking—when I was doing the youth one with Sahar and Terese, she referred to a case. Another case that we've been dealing with in this past week is another young man who is over school age. Because he missed about eight years of education, as a refugee, he's at Cyril Jackson high school, which offers a program for young adults getting back into education. He's being harassed on a constant basis by his jobactive provider, because he's not applying for 20 jobs a fortnight and he's not making all his appointments there. So they keep dragging him out of school to go and account for himself, even though he's a full-time student. They know he's a full-time student. They seem to have this policy that he's got to come and explain himself every two weeks, and yet the other jobactive down the road don't require that.

The policy is inconsistent. Who benefits from that? He's not benefiting. He's a former child soldier who saw most of his relatives murdered in front of his eyes and survived because he hid under a pile of dead bodies. That's how he survived, and now he's here trying to make the best of the situation. He's got no immediate family around him. He's trying to get his education so that he can move on, and he's getting a jobactive wasting huge amounts of time and effort to harass the poor kid.

CHAIR: Can I ask a question. Through your group, would you go and advocate on his behalf?

Ms Gillett: Yes.

CHAIR: Has there been a solution?

Ms Gillett: We do normally get a solution, but I think the issue here is that we're funded to deliver a settlement program; jobactive is funded to deliver an employment program, and we end up having to do both.

Ms VAMVAKINO: That's why there is a grey area emerging around—

Ms Gillett: It is very grey.

Ms VAMVAKINO: Because we're talking settlement, even for this young person, but he's not being treated as such at the jobactive joint that he goes to and therefore he comes to you.

Ms Husic: No, because they are required to look for jobs in the same way as anyone from the mainstream population.

CHAIR: It's defeating the purpose. If you can't get the education, you can't get the job.

Ms Gillett: That's right. It's not doing anybody any good. We did get some statistics from one of the jobactives, because this has been an ongoing problem for years—and I know we're not the only organisation that has complained about this. This is a national issue. We are aware that RCOA have recently put together a report on this.

CHAIR: What is your recommendation?

Ms Gillett: The recommendation is that the whole jobactive system needs to be rejigged; it needs a really big look at. At the moment, it's compliance based, so it's a tick-a-box system. If you don't comply, you are dropped off your benefits. You're not given the support, though, to be able to comply.

As you're probably aware, the way the jobactive system works is they have a streaming process. They have stream A, stream B and stream C. Stream A and B are the people who are the most job ready, and stream C are the ones who need support. The statistics that we got, looking at 778 of Metropolitan Migrant Resources' clients over a couple of years, were that 38 per cent of them are put in stream A. These are people who don't speak any English, are traumatised, have limited education and have been in the country less than 12 months—and they're stream A? I'm stream A. I have a master's degree; I speak English as a first language—I'm a stream A. You're probably a stream A. But somebody who's just arrived from Iran or Iraq is not. So the recommendation is that jobactives have to provide a service that's appropriate for clients from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds.

CHAIR: That means categorising them in the right way.

Ms Gillett: It means that they should be assessed properly, that the time should be put into them, and what that means is—and I don't understand completely the government's whole of policy in this area of how to work

around the unemployment issue—doing it in a way that's supportive of the individual and not forcing them to comply with things that they can't comply with. And it needs to be—

CHAIR: What's you're saying makes perfect sense.

Ms Gillett: Another thing—and I'm sorry if I'm going on about this—that is really annoying is we know that jobactive has access to a whole lot of resources which they can allocate to an unemployed person in order to increase their chance of getting employment. Over the last couple of years we've probably seen somewhere between five and 10 out of more than 800 clients actually get access to any of those resources, because they don't know to ask for them. The whole thing about their staff is that they have to meet their targets and they don't meet targets with refugees. It's too hard; it takes too long; they don't get the points. It is a payment point system. I'm recommending that the system fundamentally needs to change. It should not be linked to getting paid by getting somebody a job. What you do is you focus on the easy people and you flick away the hard people. That's very much what jobactive is about.

Mr NEUMANN: I'm going to talk about District Mothers that Maria loved when we looked at them. District Mothers is a program run by a council on the outskirts of Berlin. They actually engage migrant women to engage with other migrant women as contacts, particularly for resources. They have a bag they go around with—and I won't even try to pronounce it in German, even though my ancestors are from Germany. It is funded by the local council, but it is a resource centre. There are a lot of women in particular there who don't get access to German language and a whole range of other resources. They don't know about citizenship, they don't know transport and how to get around and all those sorts of issues.

Having looked at your submission, I wonder whether you think a similar program could be adopted in Australia. This is migrant women talking to migrant women, particularly about their experiences. How can we do that in Australia and who could be funded to do that, or should we have a program that people get access to? This program is particularly successful, they believe. They don't have a lot of empirical evidence but they think anecdotally it's very useful.

Ms Husic: Is that leading to employment?

Mr NEUMANN: It often leads to employment. It leads to better engagement, to better resources, to better parenting and to better engagement with the community. There are dropouts but overall they're very supported and very committed to it.

CHAIR: They said that the migrant mother thinks she's the only one who stays at home, but someone comes in and says, 'We've been down that path' and they talk about jobs and what other services they can ask for.

Mr NEUMANN: Like the location of schools and German language training.

Ms Husic: What you are describing is similar to the program that ASeTTS has been running for the last three years called Friday Village. It's a space for women of any age—

Ms VAMVAKINO: But they come to you.

Ms Husic: They come to us.

Ms VAMVAKINO: This program did a couple of things. It actually trained these women—a six-week course, I think—so they were actually benefiting from the training.

Mr NEUMANN: They themselves get employed.

Ms VAMVAKINO: Yes, counselling training and they get employed for a period of time. The other benefit is that in using the women, the program itself is also looking at what confidence measures will be built between the two women for the purposes of helping them with services but also if there are other issues in the family—such as the more difficult issues of domestic violence and things. It was that sort of relationship and identification. It worked on three or four levels.

Ms Husic: It sounds perfect.

Mr NEUMANN: I will show you all my phone, where I have a photograph of the actual bag they all carry around with them.

Ms VAMVAKINO: My phone was stolen and I lost all my photos. I'm glad he's got that.

Mr NEUMANN: All the women were identified by having this particular bag over their shoulder.

Ms Husic: I'll have to spell that out.

Mr NEUMANN: It's very interesting. We thought how could this operate in Australia and are we doing anything similar?

Ms Gillett: I think we are doing similar things, not exactly like that. Many of the organisations, and I'm sure many of the other organisations that have appeared before this committee, run volunteer programs—ASeTTS does it; MMRC does it—where you link volunteers, who are Australian volunteers, usually, but could be people who have been here a long time, to individuals to help support them to navigate the systems, whether that is about transport, using a supermarket or linking to schools and things. So there are systems like that.

Mr NEUMANN: But nothing quite the same.

Ms Gillett: Nothing quite the same—

Ms VAMVAKINO: And this is very formalised and branded. It's branded.

Ms Husic: As to what you are saying, I think what would fit really well is this. For example, we run our group, Friday Village, on our premises, because it's not very hard but it's not easy to negotiate with local councils. As you were saying earlier, in Germany local government funds it. I'm thinking that, for a lot of our services that we try to provide as place-based in areas where people live, like Mirrabooka or Gosnells, we often have to have an agreement with the local council, and we quite often also have to pay for venues. We would be happy to bring people there and run the program if there was a bit of a collective effort.

CHAIR: You need federal funding.

Ms Husic: You need funding to bring everyone onto the same page. Going back to the trauma experiences: you were referring to women being together and talking to each other about their experiences; in a way, that normalises how they feel: 'I'm not the only one sitting somewhere in the suburb with my little baby, and sending two kids to school, and I don't know anyone else in the neighbourhood.' So those are avenues that we try to provide but we're not able to, because ASeTTS is quite a small organisation. But looking at engaging people through the lens of their trauma and the things that trauma brings to people is the key to working with refugees. Otherwise, we're just completely alienating people. As I said, trust is a huge thing. People have lost language, home and family members. They've often been tortured. They might have had jobs, and people come with professions, but they need time to settle. As Amanda was saying, you cannot expect someone to be applying for a job two weeks after they've arrived.

Ms VAMVAKINO: I have a very large Iraqi-Syrian refugee community. The community itself is doing a lot of work to establish itself. But one of the concerns with that is the isolation of women in particular; therefore, not only do they not get to go out and learn what is available to them in their local community; they may never progress and, as a result, may become totally dependent on what is a very restricted community interaction. So a program like this is the one we saw in Germany, which is run by an organisation; it's targeted; it's got a specific purpose; it's branded and it's recognised. It becomes an official part of the service delivery, so it has that imprimatur as well—

Ms Husic: Yes, and it's positive.

Ms VAMVAKINO: Absolutely, but it's conducted by women who they can relate to.

Ms Gillett: And that links them to the broader society.

Ms VAMVAKINO: That opens up lots of doors and encourages them to walk through them.

Ms Husic: It's beautiful. But also what's important is that it's positive, so there are no taboos around it. We know, at ASeTTS, that we have to often communicate our services in a different way to clients so that they don't feel ostracised because of having to access mental health services, but, at the same time, we know that healing from mental illnesses requires not just medication and not just counselling; there need to be communal spaces, breaking isolation and all of those things. I suppose what I'm saying is: this is the bar around the employment outcomes, but really, for refugees, there need to be staggered things to allow people time to feel established, because this is a whole new world for people: learning how to live in the suburbs; learning about renting a house and what you need to comply with; in addition, there is Centrelink and work and all of that. There is heaps that people need to learn.

CHAIR: Something which the committee was looking at potentially having as a recommendation was that in Sweden they have 100 hours on how to become a Swedish citizen. It includes legal understanding—precisely what you're talking about. The previous group was talking about the need for that. So this is something we'll look at as a recommendation. Is there any other final recommendation you would like to make? Otherwise, your submission and the evidence today have been very helpful and very much along the lines of what we're looking at.

Ms Husic: What I'd like to emphasise is that we said here that ASeTTS had run an internally funded pilot project around employment.

CHAIR: Yes, I saw that.

Ms Husic: That was extremely successful because it was individually tailored. Again, it was delivered by our staff, who were trauma informed. What was interesting is that a lot of clients who accessed this service knew they had to work and wanted to work, but they didn't even know what kind of jobs they would want to have, what sort of skills they had or what they would like to do. So it needed to be individual—sitting together and going step by step. So it's completely the opposite of what Job Services are doing.

CHAIR: I understand.

Ms Husic: So I think that's our major recommendation—to look at tailored services that will also be aware of clients' background and what their situation is. If somebody is late for an important this morning with the job service, it doesn't mean their Centrelink payment should be cut, which is what happens—they tick the box and the payment stops. It could be that their child got sick, they've been in hospital all night, or they don't have drivers licences or cars. So these people are struggling with basic living, and sometimes they have to prioritise themselves, and they're not sure how to cancel appointments, how to call someone or what to do.

CHAIR: What you're saying is very much in line with a lot of the other evidence we've got. I might leave it there. Thank you very much for your attendance here today.

Ms Gillett: Can I just ask a question. You might not be able to answer this, but it might be a question that can go back to government. One of the things in Western Australia is that what we've noticed over the last few years is that, among the 13,500-odd humanitarian entrants that come into Australia per year, there's been a real downturn of the numbers of people coming in Western Australia. The Syrian and Iraqi cohort is an example. We know that a lot of the Syrians and Iraqis went to New South Wales because there's a large and established community there, but then the services were under a huge amount of pressure in New South Wales, whereas there were services here in Western Australia. It created a huge problem for MMRC under the settlement program, because basically there was this whole gap where virtually nobody was coming into Western Australia for months at a time, so there were no payments being made to us or to Community Care, which was the other organisation, and nothing happened, and then there was suddenly a big rush. But in general it just seems that there's not an even spread going on. We're down to about seven per cent of all of the humanitarian entrants now coming to WA, whereas we had closer to 11 per cent a few years ago. That is really unbalancing the system.

CHAIR: Unfortunately, I can't answer. Shayne, would you be able to answer that? No. You've caught us on the spot with something we wouldn't be aware of.

Ms Gillett: That's fine. It's just a question that we had. Otherwise, I just endorse what Samira says and would like to say that MMRC is currently working with the City of Stirling around employment issues. The City of Stirling is a very proactive local government authority around migration and is the most multicultural LGA in Western Australia and, I think, about the 11th in the country. So we are currently putting in a submission to do a project where they're going to bring on board local employers, we're going to have the clients and we're going to partner up and work together.

CHAIR: Thank you. Well done. If the committee has any further questions, they will be put to you in writing. You'll be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence and will have the opportunity to request corrections to transcription errors. Again, thank you very much for coming today.

Proceedings suspended from 12:19 to 12:32

PETTIT, Mr Colin, Commissioner, Commissioner for Children and Young People

CHAIR: Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to discussion.

Mr Pettit: Thank you. I understand the notion of what you just read. Can I first of all thank you for the opportunity to appear before such an important inquiry. I would like to commence by congratulating the committee on hearing the views of children and young people. In fact, I think having children and young people sit in on the hearing, as we have today, is fantastic.

Can I also note that the contribution of migrants to our great nation is something that needs to be celebrated. We need to make sure that their ongoing development and growth is of as high a quality as it possibly can be. I'd like to reiterate that all children and young people from migrant backgrounds continually express a desire to belong and accept where they live in this great state of ours. That's a reflection on whether they receive a strong and healthy measure of support when they arrive in this particular location. I also note that the services dedicated particularly to these children and young people need to be supported into the future. While there are many great successes, there are still issues that need to be ironed out and supported.

As you know, I'm the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and I'm an independent government authority. Therefore, I speak on behalf of the best interests of all children in this state. As such, I must ensure that their voice is heard, and hopefully this is an opportunity for their voice to be heard in that context. In that context, I offer whatever information I can to this hearing and, while you have my submission, I'm happy to expand on that if you wish to.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Colin. I'm just reading through your submission regarding the literature review that found children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have a higher risk of mental health problems, have a low rate of health service utilisation, participate less in sport and recreation, are significantly more likely to be at risk of homelessness and have low engagement in the workforce—which all looks fairly grim. In your role, how can you make change occur? Do you advocate on behalf of young people for organisations or government to address these concerns?

Mr Pettit: One of the issues identified by a previous commissioner—I've only been in the role for 18 months—was that there was a need to have a look at children from various backgrounds, particularly culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The way we normally do that is through consultation. Part of the consultation is we develop a literature review, which you've just referred to. That was put together by Lisa Roberts in 2014, based on information that was available at the time. Of course, since that time there have been some changes. We start with a lit review purely to ascertain what it is that needs to be resolved and then, from that, we talk to children and young people. I do have a copy of the lit review here if you would like a copy of it, and I'm happy to table that for you.

As you identified, there are a number of barriers, and I think we need to put on record that, while it applies to many children of migrant backgrounds, we shouldn't paint all children of migrant backgrounds in that light. Like all walks of life, some come with very resilient characters and can survive probably more readily than others. So I would hate to think that we are casting an eye on all children in the same way. It's about identifying where there are vulnerabilities and fixing them.

So what do we do? We run a consultation. That consultation resulted in a document that I'm happy to table for the committee, called *Speaking out*, which gathers the voice of around 300 children and young people from CALD backgrounds in particular. It was a peer-led consultation. We got around 13 mentors from the CALD community and we trained them up and then went out and spoke to a range of children and young people from ages six to 17 and had been in this country from two weeks to 17 years.

CHAIR: You said that you trained up the mentors. How did you go through the selection process? We heard evidence today on how important it is to make sure that mentors are culturally sensitive to the needs of their client. Could you elaborate, please?

Mr Pettit: We went to a range of organisations that interact with CALD children and young people. We asked them who they would see in their immediate communities who are leaders and asked them if anyone would like to volunteer. We ended up with about 14 who volunteered and then, unfortunately, one dropped out. We then offered them training and supported them in how they would consult, the questions we'd ask, what it is that we are trying to chase and to make sure that the voice they hear is the voice that is translated, so that they don't put

interpretation on it. Then we worked them in pairs and teamed them up with people from my office and supported them into the communities. That is when we spoke to about 296—almost 300—children and young people.

CHAIR: Who provided the training and how long was it for?

Mr Pettit: That was from my office. There was a half-day seminar and we then had further on-the-job training where they sat with people from my office who had backgrounds in consulting with young people, in particular, and making sure that their safety and security around their responses were as important as the responses themselves.

CHAIR: When you get that very small percentage of young people who have, sadly, gone down the way of crime—it normally comes back to a lack of education, a lack of employment, a lack of opportunity and a lack of hope—are you aware of any programs over here that are targeting those people? For example, we were in the UK and the US, and in America they have former gang members, which the FBI, the LAPD and also the refugee advocacy groups all recommended was the best way of helping young people.

Mr Pettit: I don't have specifics for you other than that I know that police are active in this space, and they work very closely with the local communities to develop programs. There has been a range of successes through the police, particularly the policing unit in Western Australia, around children who have found themselves perhaps in the wrong spot at the wrong time and around how we get them out of that position.

Mr NEUMANN: In your submission you highlight a real problem in Western Australia for young people on temporary protection visas. On page 60 of your submission, you say that there are 150 of them on temporary protection visas, and accordingly they can't get access to free education. Why is it that Western Australia is the only state or territory that doesn't do that at this stage?

Mr Pettit: There's some very good news on that issue. We've been advocating since I've been in the role to overcome that particular issue. The previous government had a position that it was not their issue but a federal government issue, so at a policy level the cost of that education was pushed back onto individual children. I have to say that in the short term Catholic Education stood up and in many cases supported children in that space at a very low cost or no cost. They need to be commended for that.

Since this new Labor government has come in I have, again, advocated to the current minister. I'm happy to say that the current minister has now looked at that issue and has written back saying that any illegal maritime arrival child in that space or legal child coming into the state will now have a notional fee of \$1 as opposed to the full fee. That still doesn't get over everything else in terms of other bridging visas et cetera. However, it's a massive step for this state, and I'd certainly commend the minister on that. We're going back to talk to the minister about how we can progress that to all children who are migrants. The good thing is that we now line up with everyone else in Australia in terms of that policy, and I think it's at a policy level between state and federal governments about how we further support children who are of migrant backgrounds.

Mr NEUMANN: On that, although you don't specifically go to it, you've raised the issue of children on temporary protection visas. What's the implication, from your observations, on those children if those temporary protection visas continue ad infinitum?

Mr Pettit: I do not think they can go ad infinitum. I think there needs to be resolution for those children. When there are temporary visas, normally there's a trauma somewhere in the background, and we know that to overcome trauma young people, in particular, need certainty.

Mr NEUMANN: What would your recommendation then be in relation to the legacy case load on the unauthorised maritime arrivals, particularly the impact on children?

Mr Pettit: I probably don't have enough information on that to give you a definitive answer. However, if we look at the rights of children generally under the United Nations, every child has the right to feel safe and secure and to have a good education. If that's the premise on which this country bases itself in terms of maritime or other illegal immigrants, then we should be applying that to all children.

Mr NEUMANN: Do you recommend, for example, that they should be transitioned onto a permanent residence arrangement?

Mr Pettit: I think that's a policy that needs to be well discussed. Certainly I would like to see them supported to become as confident in a community as possible and to share in community needs, and that means that they need to be accepted by the community.

CHAIR: Thank you for your attendance here today. If the committee has any further questions, they will be put to you in writing. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, and you'll have an opportunity to request corrections to transcriptional errors.

Mr Pettit: Thank you. May I leave you with this other document, which may help you into the future. It probably replicates many of the young people sitting up in the audience. It is just a compilation of stories from children from CALD backgrounds. It gives not only their journey but also their aspirations. It will maybe cover some of the questions that you've raised here, through the eyes of children. I'm happy to leave copies of that for you.

CHAIR: Thanks very much.

RAJAN, Mr Suresh, Treasurer and Media Spokesperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia

SANKARAN, Mr Ramdas, President, Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia

[12:47]

CHAIR: I welcome representatives of the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia to give evidence. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege. I invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to discussions.

Mr Sankaran: Thank you for the opportunity to appear today, and can I start by commending the inquiry for holding the inquiry here, in this school. You heard the commissioner talk about the tremendous role that the Catholic Education Commission has played in terms of addressing the needs of refugee children, and this school, in particular, has done a hell of a lot for refugee and migrant children. So I wish to commend you and the school.

The council wishes to record its commendations to the Attorney-General for his spontaneous and very thoughtful and decisive response to Senator Hanson's recent stunt in the Senate. It also wishes to commend senators Penny Wong and Richard Di Natale for their support of the Attorney-General's stance and, indeed, all senators, especially those who stood and applauded the actions of the Attorney-General. He would be surprised to hear this! However, we wish to draw this inquiry's attention to the media release we issued on that occasion, which I wish to table and briefly quote from.

The vast majority of victims of terrorism globally are Muslims and not members of other religions, and it is the criminality of the perpetrators, not their religious backgrounds, that we should be focusing on if this is an issue of law and order. Substituting racial profiling of criminals with religious profiling will not help us eliminate terrorism or, indeed, any other crime. Our council urges the federal government and indeed all parliamentarians to cease labelling as Islamic terrorism dastardly deeds that are committed by ISIS and such groups, when it is obvious to everyone, including blind Freddy, that Islam does not condone terrorism.

Two things make Senator Brandis's stance remarkable and very noteworthy, and I will quote one of them from our media release: 'Senator Brandis infamously argued that Australians have the right to be bigots in championing the changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. This response shows he has found the road to Damascus in accepting the unfettered freedom to abuse, insult et cetera residents of Australia is clearly not in anybody's interest.' If I may emphasise, this is particularly relevant to the subject matter of this inquiry.

The citizenship fiasco that has been playing out in our federal parliament and in the media is incredible from the perspective of the rule of law. And then there was the criticism of judges made by Ministers Hunt, Tudge and Sukkar in an article in *The Australian* in relation to appearance in two cases in which the court had reserved its decision. That was a very poor example to set by way of respect for the rule of law for migrants and refugees aspiring to become Australian citizens, particularly given the importance this factor is being accorded in the proposed changes to the Australian citizenship eligibility.

As we indicated in our submission on the character test, it provides for ministerial cancellation of visas without rules of natural justice applying, and that is astounding in a democracy such as Australia, especially when the minister is only expected to be 'reasonably suspicious' that the person has been or is involved in conduct constituting one or more actions mentioned in the act. Denying a person natural justice on such a basis of so-called reasonable suspicion is deplorable for a country that believes in the rule of law and expects its migrants and refugees to abide by it. Examples such as this make it obvious that we have double standards when it comes to applying the rule of law to parliamentarians and to the rest of us in this society, particularly migrants and refugees.

Mr Rajan: If I can just touch on a couple of things as well, the issue around English competency is one that we come up against quite often. One of the things that we've done in recent times at the Ethnic Communities Council was to do a study as to how long it is taking most people to achieve their 510 hours of language lessons. The average length of time that we've discovered is about seven years. That's clearly going to the view that, for that seven-year period, without the English competency, there are going to be some issues around integration of people who are coming in without the language skills necessary. So we want to look at the possibilities around that as well.

Mr NEUMANN: I'm sorry to interrupt. Can you provide us with the evidence from that—

Mr Rajan: Yes, certainly.

Mr NEUMANN: That would be very helpful, thank you.

Mr Rajan: Yes, we can get those to you. The other issue is also around disability services and the provision of translator and interpreting services under the NDIS. I had a previous capacity and just completed my term as the President of the National Ethnic Disability Alliance, and in that capacity we found that the NDIS will fund translator and interpreting services only in respect of a disability related language. The only one that comes under that criterion therefore would be Auslan or disability related languages of that nature. So, for a person with a disability that is maybe a physical disability of some kind who is looking to get access to interpreter services, that will not be funded as part of the plan now.

As a result of much advocacy on our part, it has actually got to the stage where the NDIS has now agreed to have access to TIS National services for those people. However, the basis of NDIS is choice and control. Once you've removed the ability of a person to go and choose their own service or language service, then you've removed the choice-and-control principle immediately there. You only have one choice of interpreter, and that's the TIS. Those are two of the issues that we really would like to touch on as well just in terms of settlement services.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your evidence. You mentioned in your submission the 510 hours of English provided, and you're saying that to reach that, to actually use that, it normally takes seven years. Is that what you're saying?

Mr Rajan: Yes. I guess the issues that go to that are that, in the first seven years, your priorities as a parent are around such issues as schooling and—

CHAIR: So they don't have—

Mr Rajan: That's right. It doesn't get a priority—to get into those English lessons. The other thing that we did have in recent years is that, up until 10 or 12 years ago, we used to fund an ethnic childcare resource unit. That's no longer funded. Again, that places an imposition on the parent, of having to place that child in mainstream childcare resources that may not be appropriate for the maintenance of culture and language et cetera.

CHAIR: The government, from 1 July, has increased the hours by another 490, bringing it up to 1,000 hours. Are you saying that's not going to be of much benefit, that parents won't be able to get access to that because they're looking after their children?

Mr Rajan: It is twofold. It is access to some of those ancillary services that will allow them to go and do those classes. But if we're taking seven years to complete 510 hours, I'm not sure that increasing that to 1,000 is—

CHAIR: What's your recommendation, then? How do we get the hours up of a parent who hasn't got time and is looking after the kids?

Mr NEUMANN: Sorry to interrupt. Surely, it's that we go beyond the five-year settlement service delivery. That's the No. 1 thing: flexibility in that area.

Mr Rajan: I also suspect that we should be looking at some of the community agencies to be possibly providing some of those English lessons, funding those agencies. For example, the Ethnic Communities Council and the Multicultural Services Centre could be doing that. It's a much more adaptable process, where it could be done after hours and at different venues et cetera.

Mr Sankaran: You can't just put all of your money into AMEP and get them to do it in a classroom situation. You've got to have a diversity of approaches. People's learning capacity and the way they learn is unique. Not everybody's—particularly if you are a fairly elderly person or not literate in your own language. You can't do it, so you need a variety of teaching methodology as well.

Mr NEUMANN: I think AMEP has been skewed towards education and employment rather than settlement services. In my view, it is quite clear that's the case, and that's the evidence that has come out here. There needs to be a recalibration towards that.

Mr Rajan: Exactly. It is peripheral services that allow them to not necessarily have to access those settlement services; they've been able to integrate into the mainstream community because of their ability to converse et cetera.

Mr NEUMANN: I'd like to pick up the jobactive thing you mentioned before about CALD and other types of involvement. How can we make sure that caters better to humanitarian entrants and other migrant job workers? You've mentioned one or two things in here. How would specialist CALD workers work better, and how can we improve the system?

Mr Sankaran: It's not just the jobactive situation; it applies across the board.

Mr NEUMANN: We know that.

Mr Sankaran: What I want to talk about is mainstreaming. I will give you an example through my involvement as the executive director of the Multicultural Services Centre. We recently learnt that the Australian government has committed up to \$3.9 million over three years for the Mental Health and Multicultural Australia project. The funding is for the period September 2017 to 30 June 2020. Its purpose is:

... to facilitate a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from CALD backgrounds.

Despite this focus, the Department of Health, in its wisdom, chose to have a closed tender. And guess what? They provided three mainstream providers, and completely excluded the CALD sector from applying for this tender. That, in a sense, would answer what you raised.

What is mindless about this approach to mainstream is this: for the first five months of this year my staff alone—just one agency—have known of 11 completed suicides. And the secretary of the ECC has drawn another one to our attention. One was as young as 14. One was a single mother with five children and a child as young as 2½. Surely, when you have a situation like this, to have a tender that is closed to three mainstream organisations—I invite you to pick up the phone and ring one of those tenderers and tell them. I did, in my language, that I was depressed and had suicidal thoughts. The response on the other end was: 'I don't understand you. We are a mental-health charity.' I repeated it three times, and that's the response I got. How do we justify putting \$3.9 million of taxpayers' money into those kinds of organisations when specialist multicultural organisations are not given a single cent to do suicide prevention programs? How?

Mr Rajan: If I could just pick up on a point that was made on suicide prevention—and I gave evidence at a Senate standing committee on this issue—we've been involved in the transport back to India of quite a few bodies of Indian students who have committed suicide here. One of the issues we pointed to—and this goes back to looking at it as a whole, integrated approach, not simply at settlement services—is that there are no statistics kept at the coroner's office around ethnicity of people who commit suicide, other than for Aboriginal people. So clearly we can't even identify, for example, whether there's a high incidence of suicides amongst the Indian student community or any of those other communities. It is all part of that whole thing that if we're going to look at settlement services we have to look at the mental health issues around CALD communities—the multicultural-transcultural mental health services that are available. We're not funding any of them in Western Australia at the moment. All of those things are things that go towards just looking at settlement services as an integrated whole, not simply around the provision of food, lodging or English classes. I think it's got to be looked at with a much more holistic approach.

Mr NEUMANN: You mentioned the community proposal, the pilot program—the sponsorship. Can you explore your views about that a bit more? There's a recommendation that we should expand that aspect of it.

Mr Sankaran: Do you mean in terms of social cohesion?

Mr NEUMANN: Exactly.

Mr Sankaran: I think there's a lot of good work in Western Australia, not just in the metro area but in regions like Bunbury, Albany and even further up north, where the community is prepared to take on a substantial amount of the money involved in resettling refugees and asylum seekers. Western Australia's the only state that does not have an organisation that the Commonwealth has contracted to provide its program, and the sooner they do it the quicker we can get into it.

From a social cohesion perspective, I think it's important to acknowledge that multicultural organisations are very well placed—if you want to call it de-radicalisation, so be it—to offer programs like that. Again, I think the funding closes today. The Commonwealth announced certain funding. Part of the requirement of that funding is that we must have an initiative on what the Commonwealth calls Harmony Day. Now, Harmony Day, for those of you who are not aware, actually started off in Western Australia. Minister Mike Board was the one who introduced it. And it so happens that Harmony Day is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to commemorate the Sharpsville Massacre. It is not a day that one would think you would have song and dance and food festivals. It's serious, what happened in Sharpsville. It is not something that should be celebrated by way of food and dancing and what have you.

We in WA managed to convince then Premier Gallop to substitute Harmony Day with Harmony Week, and since that happened Tasmania and Victoria have followed suit. We've been trying to lobby the federal government. The sooner we do nationally what is happening in these three states, the better it will be for all of us. It is totally meaningless to talk about social cohesion and then insist on us having an event on that day, a day which, as I just described, commemorates the Sharpeville Massacre. For that reason and that reason alone, the

multicultural services sector chose not to apply for the grant, despite the fact that in the last round of funding, a couple of years ago, two of our three applications attracted interest from the Attorney-General's Department.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your evidence here today and for the efforts put into your submission. If the committee has any further questions they'll be put to you in writing. You'll be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence and will have the opportunity to request corrections to transcriptional errors.

Mr Sankaran: Is it possible for us to provide additional information?

CHAIR: Yes, definitely.

Mr Sankaran: One of the points that we mentioned is that in a multicultural society—and both of us have worked for decades in this sector—despite all the lobbying and advocacy that has gone on, in a strange way the objectives of multiculturalism are now being achieved without ever having to use that word. The changes that have been brought about, particularly in the area of the NDIS and soon in the area of ageing, when you talk about concepts such as consumer directed care, choice and control, reasonable and necessary, will dictate that what multiculturalism has been advocating and lobbying for, for decades, will now become a reality—assuming that these concepts are going to be enacted in the way the policy is meant to be.

CHAIR: Yes, you're most welcome, if you want to add a further submission. Thank you very much for your attendance and participation.

Mr NEUMANN: Also, one of the good things FECCA has done: that University of Adelaide study that was looking at the experience of older Australians from migrant communities and the incidence of dementia and the challenges. They're more likely to be living with dementia, at three times the rate of people in other communities. So, I'm very keen to hear about your experience to date around older Australians from migrant communities and integration for them as well.

Mr Rajan: Yes, we'd be happy to give you that. On a personal note, my in-laws were from Europe and both ended up with dementia and reverted to their first language.

Mr NEUMANN: Yes. We forget about it, and that's not good enough in this country. Thank you.

Resolved that these proceedings be published.