Opening Doors to Our Community

A Framework for Engaging Victoria’s Newest Residents – Refugees, Temporary Protection Visa Holders and Asylum Seekers

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with the
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

All refugees face barriers when resettling in Australia. But research shows that the process of resettlement is particularly arduous for refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and asylum seekers due to the temporary and restrictive nature of their visa status. It is well established that improving the resettlement process leads to significantly better outcomes both for refugees and the wider Australian community. This report proposes a framework for addressing such barriers to resettlement based on the experiences and successful outcomes generated by an inner-urban service provider, the Fitzroy Learning Network. In particular, the framework addresses the need to prepare for potential ‘emergency’ situations – for example, the wide-spread granting (or refusal) of permanent protection to TPV holders – by proposing the adoption of improved funding mechanisms that will better support the work of organisations working in the refugee sector. It also identifies means for the volunteer support so vital to the sector to be better developed and effectively governed.

THE REFUGEE SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

Goal: To provide timely, effective support to refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers so that they are able to successfully engage in life-long learning and gain a sense of belonging to, and participate fully in, Australian society.

1. People-focused approach to service delivery

Positive outcomes for the target group are best achieved through a people-focused approach to service delivery, requiring both:

1.1 Core needs-based service delivery programs;
1.2 Complementary activities that break down the barriers to access and participation to such programs.

2. Implementation by Established Community Organisations

Existing, established community organisations are the key to successfully implementing a people-focused approach to service delivery. Such organisations are preferable to new organisations because they bring with them:

2.1 Established infrastructure;
2.2 Established referral pathways;
2.3 Support from the local community.
3. **Dedicated Refugee Funding Pool**

The essential costs incurred in supporting the target group place demands on established community organisations which cannot be met simply by drawing upon their own resources in terms of infrastructure, networks and community support. Without reliable and adequate financial support from relevant funding bodies, it is impossible for community organisations to implement the people-focused approach required. The Network looks forward to working alongside government agencies and other community organisations in scoping actual dollar costings for the five areas of funding identified as essential to the successful implementation of the framework:

3.1 Costs incurred providing specific services for which the organisation has been contracted to deliver;
3.2 Costs incurred while meeting the compliance and reporting requirements of funding bodies;
3.3 Costs incurred during ‘emergency’ situations where services need to be extended to adequately meet the needs of the target group;
3.4 Costs incurred meeting the material, welfare and social needs of emerging groups so that they are in a position to access services;
3.5 Costs incurred in maintaining infrastructure and providing coordination.

4. **Whole of Government Coordination**

No single government agency, such as the Adult Community Education (ACFE) Board or the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) within which it sits, carries responsibility for the complete range of issues and needs in the refugee sector. As a result, a whole of government approach is required for the support of refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. This necessitates the development of partnerships and protocols between relevant agencies. Given the complex nature of the government sector, it is has been impossible for the Network to develop specific protocols for government agencies to follow. It is, however, keen to contribute its knowledge of working at the ‘coalface’ to discussions relating to protocols which address the following key issues:

4.1 Coordination of refugee sector funding by a lead agency;
4.2 Formal agreement on key relationships and networks between government agencies and community organisations working in the refugee sector.

**KEY OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK**

Figure 1 on p.3 indicates that achievement of the framework’s goal can be evaluated at three levels:

1. Specific Service Delivery Outcomes;
2. Broader Social Benefits;
Figure 1: Refugee support framework

“GROWING VICTORIA TOGETHER”

1. Decent and responsible government
2. Getting the basics right (schools, health, jobs, safety)
3. Education and lifelong learning

Whole of government coordination

- OTTE/ACFE
- DHS
- Local govt
- DVC & other State/Federal agencies

Partnerships

3 Specific service programs
   - Extension of specific service programs
   - Reporting and Accountability costs
   - Identify/meet emerging needs
   - Infrastructure/coordination costs

Dedicated funding pool

Protocols

Community support

Established community organisations

Referral pathways

People-focused service delivery

Core needs-based service delivery program

EG: Fitroy Learning Network

Complementary activities that address barriers to access and participation

EG: Social Work
   - Social activities
   - Friendly environment

System-wide benefits

- Successful engagement in lifelong learning and a sense of belonging to, and full participation in, Australian society
- Better govt coordination
- Policy goals met

OUTCOMES

- Literacy and competency
- Pathways into employment and further education
- Social capital development
- Lifelong learning
- Social cohesion

Specific service delivery outcomes

Broader social benefits

Less service duplication

- Pathways into employment and further education
- Social capital development
- Lifelong learning
- Social cohesion

- Policy goals met
- System-wide benefits
RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed framework provides an integrated and replicable model that supports and renders sustainable the community organisations that work on a day-to-day basis improving the lives and resettlement outcomes of refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. OTTE/ACFE and other government agencies are urged to move quickly with the proposed framework, working from the following key recommendations relating to OTTE/ACFE’s funding of the Network, as well as the implementation of the proposed framework:

OTTE/ACFE and FLN

1. That the Network’s people-focused education delivery model which contributes to lifelong learning and community building be supported by OTTE/ACFE, due to the significant positive outcomes it can produce. In the immediate future, this involves two key elements:
   - A sustained increase in the student contact hour funding currently provided, to cover the cost of the extended hours needed to meet student demand. Even though the Network currently provides 300% to 400% more student contact hours than funding recognises, a long-term increase of 200% (approximately $150 000 per year) would allow it to establish a more stable financial footing;
   - Continued funding to develop governance processes over, and a professional development program for, volunteers so that they can best meet the specialist needs of refugees, TPVs and asylum seekers.

2. That while discussions are being held at the whole of government level regarding the proposed framework, ongoing funding supports the Network in a manner that allows it to continue implementing the people-focused service delivery model which has proved so successful.

OTTE/ACFE and other government agencies

3. That OTTE/ACFE initiate discussion with the Department of Victorian Communities and other relevant government agencies regarding the establishment of a whole of government approach to funding the refugee sector;
4. That protocols and partnerships be developed between government funding bodies regarding the funding of the broader costs associated with providing services for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers;
5. That, once a whole of government refugee funding mechanism has been established, the framework be implemented in areas where consultation with appropriate networks has indicated that refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers demonstrate the most severe need for improved support (see Appendix D);
6. That the refugee funding mechanism be guaranteed for at least a 3-year period subject to evaluation after 12 months of operation to identify any barriers to its implementation;
7. That the proposed framework be considered for implementation with other disadvantaged groups.
Opening Doors to Our Community

A Framework for Engaging Victoria’s Newest Residents – Refugees, Temporary Protection Visa Holders and Asylum Seekers

By definition refugees are survivors. They have survived because they have the courage, ingenuity and creativity to have done so. These are qualities which we value in Australia. The challenge for Australia is to assist newly arrived refugees to process the experiences of their past and rebuild their lives in Australia. If we do this we will reap the benefits of the qualities and experience they bring to Australia (Refugee Council of Australia 2003).

INTRODUCTION

The framework outlined in this report responds to the challenge identified above by the Refugee Council of Australia. It aims to provide timely, effective support to refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers so that they are able to successfully engage in life-long learning and gain a sense of belonging to, and participate fully in, Australian society. The framework of support has been developed by the Fitzroy Learning Network, a community-based and volunteer-backed multicultural Neighbourhood House and adult learning centre located in Fitzroy, an inner-city suburb of Melbourne. As a result of a long history of successful outcomes for refugees (see Appendix A), the Network was asked by the Adult and Community Further Education (ACFE) Board in March 2003 to produce a report that:

- Outlines a sustainable and transferable framework for ACFE to support a target group of refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers;
- Provides advice on the strategic benefits of the framework as an approach for other community groups;
- Offers costed and implementable recommendations to improve the educational and employment pathways for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers.
Following careful consideration in early 2003, the Network decided to use much of the research funding offered by the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE)’s Department of Portfolio Coordination ($100,000 over one year, administered through ACFE) to implement and assess an intervention that would make its people-focused approach to service delivery more sustainable. The Network contracted the Centre for Applied Social Research at RMIT University, Melbourne to undertake a discrete research project to evaluate the outcomes of this intervention. In summary, this project involved two key stages:

**Stage One** (March-April 2003)
- Define the Network’s existing learning model and its current outcomes;
- Identify the main reasons why this learning model has been successful;
- Identify the main obstacles to this learning model’s replicability and sustainability;
- Draft a report outlining and justifying a proposed framework that can both sustain and replicate the learning model.

**Stage Two** (August 2003-February 2004)
- Assess any changes in outcomes following the employment of the refugee project worker, an administrative assistant and the ‘buy out’ of some of the coordinator’s time;
- Gain support for the proposed framework from other ACE organisations, community groups, local and state government agencies in the Cities of Greater Dandenong and Yarra.
- Produce a comprehensible report bringing together the two stages of the research that the Network could present to ACFE.

The research methodology for this project is found in Appendix B, the results from the research consultation process in Appendix C and the specific outcomes of the research intervention in Appendix D.

The research as a whole aimed to provide a foundation upon which OTTE, the government agency that incorporates ACFE, can develop ‘evidence-based’ policy to support refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers at a much broader level than the Network can achieve alone. Indeed, having gathered ‘evidence’ gained through consultation with other organisations working in the refugee sector, this Final Report recommends a framework of support that is slightly different than that outlined in the Draft Report (April 2003). This is because consultation demonstrated that there are not enough ACFE-funded organisations within the sector to support the extension of the Adult Community Education (ACE) Cluster Program for which the Draft Report advocated. The Network intends to distribute the report widely so that other community organisations and government agencies may benefit from the knowledge it has gathered and documented during the research process.

The report consists of three main sections and several appendices. Before outlining the four main components of the proposed framework, the report first considers the key barriers to resettlement and educational success faced by refugees, including those specific to TPV holders and asylum seekers. This is because the framework proposed directly addresses those barriers. The report then provides detailed discussion about the people-focused approach to service delivery advocated, which should be implemented by established organisations with the support of a dedicated funding refugee mechanism and whole of government coordination. Finally, the key
outcomes and benefits of the framework are documented. For interested readers, the appendices contain detail about the Network’s history; the research design; Australia’s refugee policy; consultation on the proposed framework; the research intervention; and Australian Standard Literacy Proficiency Ratings (ASPLR).
BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL RESETTLEMENT

INTRODUCTION

No one finds resettling in a new country an easy process. It is, however, considerably more difficult for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers who left their home countries involuntarily and have experienced considerable trauma and/or persecution. This report proposes a support framework that will assist in this process of resettlement by addressing some of the most important barriers faced by TPV holders and asylum seekers in Australia. In identifying such barriers, this section considers first those common to all refugees, then outlines the barriers specific to TPV holders and asylum seekers.

BARRIERS COMMON TO ALL REFUGEES

International and local studies (see Williams and Westermayer 1986; Abbott 1989; Abdelmalak and Akguner 2003; Marston 2003) indicate that the most common of these barriers include:

- Loss, grief and traumatic experiences caused by war, persecution and displacement;
- Social and economic status inconsistency;
- A lack of material possessions due to an unplanned departure from their home country;
- The breakdown of family structure and guilt associated with leaving others behind;
- Uncertainty about the future during years spent in refugee camps or detention;
- Accelerated modernisation;
- Social isolation;
- Culture shock accentuated by little previous knowledge of life in the host society;
- Experiencing ‘minority’ status for the first time;
- Lack of employment, often related to little or no recognition of qualifications and experience;
- Racism and discrimination;
- Delays in family reunification;
- Inability to speak the host country language;
- Psychological and physical health problems.
BARRIERS SPECIFIC TO TPV HOLDERS AND OTHER ASYLUM SEEKERS

In addition to these issues which are of concern for all refugees, recent research indicates that TPV holders and asylum seekers may face specific barriers due to the temporary nature of their protection status and the restrictions in resettlement assistance they endure. To understand these specific barriers, it is essential to acknowledge that the type of visa granted to a refugee has significant implications for their resettlement experience. This is because the three main visa categories offer different rights and entitlements, as summarised below:

Permanent Protection Visa (PPV)

- Usually gained offshore by those recognised as refugees;
- Immediate resettlement in the community;
- Full access to all resettlement services and social security benefits;
- Rights to leave the country, family reunion and citizenship.

Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)

- Gained by those who arrived without a visa and/or valid passport but given temporary refugee status (usually for 3 years);
- Mandatory detention;
- No access to federally-funded resettlement services, including English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) tuition;
- Rights to work, Medicare and the Special Benefit;
- No rights to leave the country, family union or citizenship;

Bridging Visa

- Gained by those who arrived with a visa and/or valid passport but are awaiting a decision on their refugee status;
- Temporary resettlement in the community;
- No access to federally-funded resettlement services, including ESL tuition;
- Rights to work and Medicare for some, depending on the stage of their determination process. Some eligible for Australian Red Cross Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS) funded by the Department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA).

More detail on these rights and Australia’s immigration policy may be found in Appendix B.
In spite of their limited visa status, TPV holders and asylum seekers are living and, in many cases, working in the Australian community. They are thus practically and emotionally engaging in a process of resettlement. However, the temporary and uncertain nature of their legal status, as well as the restrictions associated with it, create enormous hardship and adversely impact on their emotional, mental and material resettlement. Research in this area is limited and we are only just beginning to understand the challenges that TPV holders and other asylum seekers face in resettling. However, Melbourne-based studies (see Brotherhood of St Lawrence 2002; Mansouri and Bagdas 2002; Abdelmalak and Akguner 2003; Marston 2003) suggest the following barriers are specific to TPV holders and asylum seekers:

- Exacerbation of psychological and physical health issues for those who have been in detention;
- High degrees of shame and guilt, due to the internalisation of their devalued status in Australia;
- The exacerbation of pre-existing trauma, distress and anxiety, resulting in feelings of depression and despair;
- More chaotic and less successful settlement experiences because most TPV holders are unable to survive without assistance from community organisations and volunteers;
- Extra strain due to restrictions on family reunification, which is always a high priority for refugees because it lessens their isolation and loss and provides a justification and direction for the future;
- Difficulties in accessing the private rental market due to the temporary nature of their visa and direct discrimination;
- Difficulties in accessing employment for TPV holders, particularly given the restrictions on federally-funded Intensive Support employment services provided by Job Network member agencies. TPV holders are also concentrated in low-paid industries and work that is often casual, temporary or part-time, despite relatively high levels of skills and qualifications;
- Ineligibility to work for many asylum seekers, resulting in poverty and homelessness;
- Difficulties in accessing English language tuition due to federally-funded agencies being prohibited from enrolling TPV holders and other asylum seekers;
- Difficulties in accessing health services (including specialist assistance, such as that for victims of torture and trauma), particularly while in detention and/or living in rural areas.

In combination with the more general barriers faced by all refugees, these issues specific to TPV holders and asylum seekers have resulted in a pressing urgency for adequate and sustainable support for this vulnerable group. The Commonwealth Government’s refusal to accept responsibility for providing resettlement support has resulted in community agencies taking on the task of trying to coordinate an appropriate response as TPV holders and other asylum seekers are ‘released’ into communities (see Mansouri and Bagdas 2002:7-9, 16; Abdelmalak and Akguner 2003:19). The Victorian Government responded to the shortfall in Commonwealth services to TPV holders by making a one-off grant of $140,000 to local governments and community organisations to assist in meeting the urgent needs of TPV holders.
released from detention centres, as well as picking up the cost of providing limited public housing. However, in 2001 it was estimated that the federal shortfall remained around $5 million for the 500 TPV holders then living in the state (Mansouri and Bagdas 2002:20). No significant further funding has been provided at the state level.
OVERCOMING BARRIERS SUCCESSFUL TO RESETTLEMENT: THE REFUGEE SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the proposed framework, which attempts to address the barriers to resettlement success highlighted in the last section. While many of the barriers specific to TPV holders and asylum seekers result from restrictions based on their visa status, this vulnerable group can nonetheless be assisted to participate in and contribute to their local community. This outcome benefits not only TPV holders and asylum seekers, but Victorian (and Australian) society as a whole.

The proposed framework’s goal sits snugly with “Growing Victoria Together”, the Victorian Government’s broad vision for the next decade, which recognises the need to balance economic, social and environmental goals and actions (DPC 2001:3). This vision has focused on three important goals:

1. Providing decent and responsible government;
2. Getting the basics rights – good schools, quality health care, more jobs, safe streets;
3. Leading the way to a better Victoria with education and lifelong learning as the key (DPC 2001:2).

In working to achieve these goals, the Bracks Government has prioritised early intervention and prevention, so that social problems can be halted before they become entrenched, as well as “community building based on listening to local experience, supporting local connections, providing responsive services and investing in the infrastructure which makes communities good places to live and work” (DPC 2001:10; 22). The Bracks Government has even established a specific Department of Victorian Communities (DVC 2003:2) to work in this area, which aims to “build strong, active and resilient communities across Victoria and to join up government services at the local level”.

The proposed framework contributes to this vision for Victoria because it promotes a people-focused approach to service delivery to be implemented by established organisations and supported by a dedicated refugee funding mechanism that is coordinated across the whole of government. Given the barriers to resettlement faced by refugees, TPV holders and asylum seeker, there is a clear need for this vulnerable group to be included in any plan to build strong communities.

The Bracks Government has stressed that “[e]ducation opens the doors to high quality jobs, to a full and creative life and a sense of common citizenship” (DPC 2001:8). The ACE sector is thus well-placed to play a key role in addressing barriers to
successful resettlement, because of its interest in promoting life-long learning. The proposed framework, which represents a bottom-up, community development approach to service delivery and support, is more likely to be effective in meeting ACE goals than the top-down models that have traditionally been favoured by government agencies. This is because a community-development approach not only has the flexibility and adaptability required for meeting the diverse needs of the refugee, TPV holder and asylum seeker target group, but promotes “the development and utilisation of a set of ongoing structures which allow the community to meet its own needs” (McArdle 1993:2). A community development approach is thus far more sustainable than a standard top-down model because it aims to empower communities to eventually meet their own needs, rather than continue relying on government or non-government bodies for material goods and assistance.

It was not part of the research project to look at the service delivery models implemented by other community organisations. However, the framework, although emerging from the Network’s experiences over recent years, is in line with general community development principles (see McArdle 1993:4; Kenny 1994:16) and is supported by organisations and representative bodies working in the refugee sector who were consulted as part of this research (see Appendix D). In addition, the community strengthening approach that the proposed framework advocates is in line with recent developments in adult education. For example, a brief overview of ACFE’s *Building Communities: ACE, Lifelong Learning and Social Capital* report (Falk, Golding and Balatti 2000) suggests that a people-focused philosophy already lies behind the success of many other ACE organisations and programs, while DHS (2002:1) indicates in its ‘Framework for Strengthening Communities’, that Neighbourhood House programs should be based on the needs of ‘citizens’.

Given the Victorian Government’s promise to “[s]upport new community building initiatives and develop partnerships with local government around local communities’ needs” (DPC 2001:22), a framework for refugee support constituted by four key components is proposed. It is argued that the success of the first component, a people-focused approach to service delivery, relies on the three other factors: its implementation by established organisations; the development of a dedicated refugee funding mechanism; and a whole of government approach to coordinating refugee sector funding.

1. **PEOPLE-FOCUSED APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY**

Based on research documenting the experiences of TPV holders in accessing services, Marston (2003:77-78) argues that involving community leaders and individual refugees in the planning and delivery of services that target them respects their right to define their own pathways into employment and further education. The proposed framework, which accounts for the specific needs and desires of the client group, aims to ensure that such involvement is paramount. It is argued that people-focused service delivery provides not only a particular service, but also identifies the barriers that
might inhibit a vulnerable group from using the service or gaining the most benefit from it. Early intervention can then minimise the risk of such a group becoming further marginalised within society.

To illustrate this approach, the Network’s experience in the ACE sector is documented. The Network has found that its successful service delivery outcomes (see p. 37) rely on two key components: a core (education and training) service delivery program and complementary activities that break down barriers to access and participation in this program.

1.1 Core, needs-based service delivery program

The Network’s core service is a needs-based education and training program constituted by three arms: ESL classes, life skill classes and a Computer Clubhouse. Together these provide refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers with educational competencies and life-skills that open pathways to employment, training and further education.

ESL classes

The Network’s major educational focus is on ESL, with free classes offered four days a week at three levels of instruction: beginners (6 hours per week); intermediate (9 hours per week); and advanced (5 hours per week).

In 2003, a total of around 300 students from 15 different countries were enrolled in these ESL classes, involving over 50,000 student contact hours. The Network’s ESL students are a diverse group on several indices:

- **Age** (17-70);
- **Educational level** (with a minority having tertiary education and the majority having little education, even in their own countries);
- **Immigration status** (citizens/permanent residents, recognised refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers);
- **Length of residence in Australia** (from days to many years).

Approximately 90% of the Network’s students live on statutory benefits and in Office of Housing accommodation or rooming houses.
MARIA

I was born in a small village on the coast of Croatia in 1939. As World War II continued all the schools were destroyed and the teachers were killed. When they started to rebuild, I was 12 years old, too old for a girl to study because it was thought that I would get married soon and did not need an education. I was 31 years old when I came to Australia and I couldn’t even sign my own name or read a street sign. I had worked my whole life in factories and found that English was not necessary because there were many Croatian people that worked with me. I worked hard so that my daughter could get an education and receive chances that I never had.

When I first started school, I was 50 years old. On my first day, I cried so much because I couldn’t understand what the teacher was telling me. I didn’t even know how to hold a pen. At the Fitzroy Learning Network, I have been able to learn how to speak English properly. The teachers here pay attention to my needs and are always right there to help. Before I started at the Network I didn’t know how to use a computer and I didn’t even know what the Internet was; Now I know how to use all the programs on my own and I can help new students use them too.

I am 62 years old now and I would like to volunteer my time when my English skills improve. I would like to speak at schools about my experiences and how important education is and how hard life becomes when you don’t have it. I want to tell them that anything is possible ....

Source: FLN (2002:20)

Reflecting a needs-based approach to learning, the Network’s ESL program has established teaching patterns that are flexible enough to be non-threatening and suitable for a diverse group. This requires a high degree of informality and flexibility, including the following measures:

- On-site childcare facilities organised for Hmong women who were not comfortable mixing with other students or leaving their children with strangers;
- One-on-one tutoring offered for those afraid to participate in a classroom situation;
- Provision of monthly Metcards for those unable to attend classes, seek employment or meet Centrelink reporting requirements because they do not have the financial resources to cover transport costs;
- Implementation of a continuous enrolment policy in recognition that it can often take a long time to muster the courage to begin learning and that students lead turbulent lives that may inhibit them from beginning classes at the start of the term. New students are thus placed in an educational program to suit their individual needs throughout the school year, following an interview with an ESL teacher, who assesses their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, as well as their education and employment background;
- Increased class frequency in response to the needs of TPV holders who, given the reduced social security benefits available to them, have needed to rapidly develop the language skills that will enable them to gain employment. This increase in class frequency has been funded by the Network’s fundraising activities;
- Incorporation of the process of producing and selling of Hmong handicrafts into ESL classes, because this was something the Hmong women saw as a way to financially support themselves.
Life-skill classes

Other classes run regularly by the Network include computer courses for both beginner and advanced students and a basic sewing skills program. Some Hmong women gained employment in garment factories once they had learned sewing skills. Knowledge of and access to computers has enabled students to develop and update their curriculum vitae, complete job applications and keep in contact with both news and friends in their home country.

Computer Clubhouse

In addition to life-skill computer classes for adults, the Network has established a Computer Clubhouse after-school program for disadvantaged children and youth (9-18 years). Based on an American model developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, the Clubhouse is an important extension of the Network’s people-focused approach to education and training, which regards individuals as embedded within families and communities. The Clubhouse runs 15 hours per week over 4 weekdays during term, with new school holiday programs developed in 2003. In 2002, with a full-time coordinator and increased opening hours, the Clubhouse became eligible for free software packages and robot kits, which complemented the high-end computers, digital cameras, video cameras and recent software already available to Clubhouse members.

Although targeting young people (and thus funded by the Myer Foundation and the William Buckland Foundation, rather than ACFE), the Clubhouse reflects the same educational objectives as adult programs, attempting to provide pathways into employment and further education for disadvantaged children by increasing their knowledge of, and access to, information technology.

Most participants are the children of refugee and migrant families, but others come from housing estate, sole parent, beneficiary or low education families. For students who do not have study facilities at home or whose families do not prioritise education for girls, the Clubhouse provides an important geographical and cultural space for learning. In fact, the Clubhouse developed out of the Network’s experience with Hmong refugees when it was recognised that there was a need for young Hmong women to gain computer access, enabling them to make career choices for which their cultural background could not prepare them. An after-school program was established to assist these young women in staying at school to finish the Victoria Certificate in Education (VCE). Today the
computers are used by parents during the day and young people in the evening, allowing a transfer of knowledge as children help their parents or vice versa.

1.2 Complementary activities that break down barriers to access and participation

Formal learning opportunities alone are not enough to achieve the broad educational and community building potential that adult community education holds. In addition to a core educational program, the Network has paid attention to the barriers which prevent access and participation to learning that are specific to refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. Three main barriers have been identified:

- The material and welfare needs of students;
- A lack of opportunity to develop friendships and networks within the community;
- A lack of belonging to any place or ‘family’ within the community.

Having identified these barriers, the Network has put considerable amounts of its own funding and time into breaking down the barriers to learning and participation identified within the target group. It has done this by providing social work assistance, as well as social activities and a welcoming, family environment. In combination, these initiatives aim to develop a sense of belonging in students and thus tap into a need in refugee groups that is often neglected because their material welfare concerns are so pressing.

Social work and related activities

As a Neighbourhood House, the Network is expected to act as a “source of information and referral to those seeking a wider range of services” (DHS 2002:3). However, over the years, the Network has developed a considerable social work and advocacy role that sets it apart from other Neighbourhood Houses (and ACE providers) and is directed towards breaking down the barriers to learning and participation created by the material and welfare needs of the target group. This role includes:

- Arranging accommodation, furnishing and other basic provisions as necessary. This was particularly the case when large numbers of TPV holders arrived in Melbourne at once from detention centres with few possessions;
- Providing sustenance through the Network kitchen. This is supplied with basic foodstuffs so that hungry students can build their concentration and ability to learn;
- Offering formal and informal counselling and support;
- Offering information or advice to refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers on a range of subjects;
• Linking refugees with Rural Australians for Refugee groups;
• Offering books, stationery, old computers and printers to individuals to improve their skills and increase the chance of finding work.

In providing such support to refugees and TPV holders, the Network has relieved some of the material and welfare barriers that stood in the way of its students being capable of learning.

Social activities

The Network has also placed significant energy into providing social activities for its clients. These have attempted to address the lack of friendships and networks that the target group demonstrates by offering opportunities for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers to build their ‘community skills’, thus encouraging their participation in, and a sense of belonging to, the organisation and Australian society more generally. Demonstrating the importance of informal learning situations to learning outcomes, these social activities have also helped break down barriers to learning in some students, as the following select list notes:

• Community lunches – Each Tuesday, the Network arranges a lunch at which students, staff, volunteers and guests from the community can mingle on a regular basis. Heather Stock, one of the volunteers, likened the lunches to the tea breaks at a conference because they are “where the real work gets done”. Certainly, the lunches, which have recently been attracting 30-40 people each week, allow an informal opportunity for English conversation after and between classes and provide a focus for former students to return and catch up with friends.

• Social events to mark important dates – In addition to the weekly lunches, the Network marks the end of term with a social function and the end of the educational year with Certificate Night. Both events provide formal recognition of the efforts and achievements people have made throughout the year within class and at the Network more generally. A party was also held to celebrate a TPV holder student’s selection as a 2003 finalist in the Adult Learner of the Year competition. While seemingly ‘frivolous’, these events encourage celebration of success, as well as help build long-standing friendships that go beyond the classroom. Scott Thornton, the Network’s financial officer, also stressed that it is important not to underestimate the significance of the students being able to “have a great time in a safe environment”, knowing, for example, that there will be halal meat and that other cultural customs, such as fasting during Ramadan, will be understood and accepted.

• Local excursions – Regular trips to local places of interest, such as St. Kilda and the Collingwood Children’s Farm, are made either as part as the formal ESL classes or on a more general basis. These broaden the students’ knowledge of Melbourne, with many not being aware of such places prior to
the excursions, and provide different environments in which students can increase their English language vocabulary.

- **Weekend-long visits to rural Victoria** - In October 2002, the Network organised a rather more ambitious excursion for its students over a long weekend. A camp held at Raymond Island in the Gippsland Lakes provided a chance for staff, volunteers and students to get to know each other better and to develop a sense of shared purpose through everyone ‘pitching in’ with cooking and cleaning duties. The camp also provided a direct learning opportunity for the students, both in terms of continuous English-language practice and in terms of the holiday experience itself, for many students had never been on a holiday before, while others had never travelled within Australia. In addition, the camp provided opportunities for personal growth which in some cases broke down barriers to learning. For example, the camp was based around a lot of water activities, including a trip on a yacht. This was a source of tension for some students, whose last experience of a boat was the leaky one on which they travelled to Australia. But with friends on board to help them overcome their fear, personal milestones were made.

In August 2003, the Network additionally took 45 refugees to Daylesford for the weekend, where they were billeted with locals and participated in a civic reception, a barbeque and various other activities that the Daylesford Rural Australians for Refugees group had organised. In return, the refugees put on a performance of the most recent play, described below.

- **Theatrical productions** - Over the past four years, the Network has been involved in developing two plays featuring refugees and their survival stories. With assistance from the Australia Council, ‘I came without my mother’s hand’ toured Melbourne and was seen by over 5000 people in 2000-01. In 2002, the Network commissioned a new performance, called ‘Kan Yama Kan’ (‘Once Upon a Time’), which emerged from the stories of the newly arriving ‘boat people’ from Central Asia and the Middle East. Both productions were highly successful at building greater awareness about refugee, TPV holder and asylum seeker issues in the broader community. The actors were also offered a chance to tell their story in a supportive manner and thus gain some relief from feelings of hopelessness and distress.

Play participants received a wage for contributing, which helped reinforce their sense of worth. Some gained training that might enable them to gain employment elsewhere. Equally important were the leaps and bounds that many actors made in developing English-language skills and their confidence
in using them. One TPV holder from Iraq told how he felt much more relaxed about speaking English after the play, while an audience member was able to speak in public about her own experiences after seeing the performance. A Syrian TPV holder stressed that the friendships he developed with Australians during the production and the after-play parties were the most important outcome for him. For the first time this man and others like him felt like they were living, rather than just existing, in Australia.

**Welcoming, family environment**

In the recent Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education (MCEETYA 2002:7) one of the key goals was to: “Create secure and comfortable community-based learning environments for adult learners”. Alongside its social work role and social activities, the Network has met this goal by providing a welcoming, family physical environment. In the Network’s latest Annual Report (FLN 2002:1), writer and activist Arnold Zable is quoted as saying:

> Fitzroy Learning Network is a house of welcome. It is a place where refugees and immigrants can begin to rebuild their lives and acquire the skills to start anew. It is a bridge between the past and future. Above all it is a place where newcomers are made to feel at home.

Certainly, students and former students interviewed as part of this research project indicated that they enjoy going to the Network because they always get a warm welcome and there is a friendly, family-like feeling to the place. When a new student first walks in the door, there is no reception desk to

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| I came here by boat from Syria to escape political persecution. I spent 5 months at Woomera Detention Centre in the deserts of South Australia. It was a terrible place where even the most basic things like letters, telephones, radios, newspapers and televisions were not allowed. There was nothing to do except eat, sleep and think. At Woomera, I did not have a name, just a number. The worst thing was what the children faced, I don't think anyone could understand the torture they went through in the camps.
| Many people got sick there, but little help was available. To see someone you had to wait two hours under the hot sun for permission to get into a vehicle where a few nurses waited to give you a glass of water with salt because they said there was nothing wrong with us. I was eventually released and sent to Melbourne. It was very difficult for me because I couldn't speak English and there was no one there to help me learn or tell me how to get my life organised.
| I had to do what I could to have contact with people and learn English. So in the commission flats of Collingwood, where I live, I spent a lot of time with drug addicts trying to get them to teach me some English in exchange for cigarettes. The Fitzroy Learning Network has changed my life. Here I found my family, my friends, and my community; here I found my life. Now I study English and computers when I can and at night, I am at Collingwood TAFE learning more. Through the Network, I also started to volunteer as a speaker for refugees at protests and rallies, on the radio and newspapers. With my volunteer work, I am also able to speak at schools where I tell the truth for all those people in the camps who cannot and hope that the word will spread.
| I like to spend all my time at the Network because I feel very isolated in my flat. Here I talk to people, practice my English and ask them for help if I need something like using the job network or other services. Maybe I will never see my real family again but these people are here for me forever.
| Source: FLN (2002:18) |
act as a barrier between them and staff members. No common areas are out of bounds to students (except where confidential files are locked away) and there are no separate bathroom or kitchen facilities for staff. In addition to being used for educational purposes, teaching classrooms are also the site of social events, providing another means by which to break the boundary between formal and informal learning. The kitchen, which volunteer Heather Stock describes as the “psychological centre of the house”, is like a ‘real’ family kitchen, always busy with people helping themselves to drinks and food from the fridge (which is stocked each week with basic food items). A lovely courtyard garden at the back of the Network’s buildings and a popular resident cat are some of the small touches that encourage students to feel at home. Interviewed students indicated that this homely atmosphere contrasted with the sterile offices they have encountered when accessing services elsewhere.

Gary Stillman, another long-term volunteer, believed that this sense of having a ‘home away from home’ explained why the Network now acts as a kind of ‘drop-in centre’ for former students. They no longer rely on the ‘umbilical cord’ through which the Network provided them with basic material goods and support, but return ‘home’ on a regular basis. He also noted that many students live in very stark, empty flats and are dislocated from their families, so they may not actually have anywhere else to feel ‘at home’ in the way that they do at the Network.

Summary

The combined success of the activities and environment provided by the Network indicates that what happens outside formal classes is just as important for learning as what happens in them. Due to the relatively small size of the Network, students and staff are able to get to know each other and their personal stories, developing the trust and confidence which is a necessary background to learning. In addition to dismantling important barriers to learning, the varied social activities provide real-life chances for learning to take place. Thus, human capital has been developed that meets the formal outcome indicators required for ‘success’ in the curriculum framework (PCETRC 2001:16). Perhaps more important, however, is the social capital that the Network builds, often through the less tangible aspects of its service delivery and support model. The two plays and the network of social relationships that developed around them are perfect illustrations of the way in which such social capital can be developed in disadvantaged groups and, as a result, the community at large (see p.40).

In implementing the refugee support framework, it is possible that either a core service delivery program, such as the Network’s ACE classes, or the complementary activities, often provided by churches or ethnic associations, may act as the foundation stone upon which a people-focused model of service delivery can be developed. However, the kind of early intervention assistance the model embodies, and which produces successful resettlement outcomes, is beyond the capacity of many community organisations. The proposed framework recognises that there are three precursors to the successful implementation of a people-focused approach to service delivery. First, organisations providing services must be adequately established, with the necessary infrastructure, networks and support from the local community.
Second, such organisations must have reliable and sufficient funding and, third, government agencies must work together to coordinate funding for the refugee sector. Each of these core elements of the framework is dealt with in turn.

2. IMPLEMENTATION BY ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The proposed framework relies on the expertise and goodwill of existing community organisations. Further consultation is required to determine exactly which specific community organisations might best implement the model and in which areas. However, it is argued that for timely and efficient support to be provided to refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers, the organisations involved in implementing the people-focused service delivery should demonstrate the following characteristics:

2.1 Established infrastructure

An established infrastructure embodies not only premises, staff and equipment, but also the policies and procedures that are increasingly required by organisations due to federal and state regulations. For example, the Network has invested considerable time in gaining and implementing Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) accreditation and meeting other regulatory requirements. Gaining successful outcomes for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers usually requires a very quick response, as it is often difficult to identify emerging needs well in advance. It would not be cost or time effective, therefore, to provide funds to a new organisation that does not already have significant infrastructure in place.

2.2 Established referral pathways

Established community organisations are also part of, and can draw upon, networks that are crucial to the support of refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. Marston’s (2003:77-78) research with TPV holders identified their having access to a well-informed community advocate, especially in the first few months after leaving detention and when negotiating the health and community services system, as a key factor in improving resettlement outcomes. To act as successful advocates, community organisations must already have established and relevant referral pathways. These are particularly necessary when an emerging group has just been identified and advice must be sought about the group’s needs and possible cultural barriers to those needs being met. Consultation with other refugee organisations and representative bodies in the course of the research confirmed this finding (see Appendix D). It is expected that reliable and sustainable funding will enhance the
ability of community organisations to develop further referral pathways. Certainly, the research intervention has already allowed the Network to develop stronger links with the community, in terms of participation in refugee and asylum seekers networks and a greater capacity to develop its advocacy role at the political level (see Appendix E).

4.3 Support from the local community

Established organisations are also already embedded in the community and thus able to draw upon longstanding local support. For example, the network is both located in and owned by the local Fitzroy community, which has provided the Network with strong community support. This, in turn, has given the degree of confidence and financial flexibility needed to learn by trial and error, as is necessary when meeting the needs of emerging groups. Given the limitations of current funding from government sources, the Network has also had to rely heavily on fundraising within the community to cover both its core educational activities and the social activities that it considers crucial to gaining positive educational and social participation outcomes. Since 1994, the Network has built its profile in the local community and is now widely recognised as an organisation that ‘makes our community a better place’. This active attempt to ‘bring the community with you’ has resulted in the Fitzroy community providing considerable financial support to the Network, through long-running fundraising activities, such as the Fitzroy Ball, the Fitzroy Women’s Dinner, and more recent trivia nights. These have provided significant, untagged funds ($30,000 in 2003)

MARY AND GULAM

Mary*, a retired school teacher, came to a Fitzroy Learning Network end-of-term party after hearing Anne Horrigan-Dixon speak at a community centre in the Eastern suburbs. At the party, Mary met Gulam, an Afghani TPV holder who still maintains close contact with the Fitzroy Learning Network even though he now works full-time. Hearing Gulam’s story, Mary was brought to tears and grew determined to help Gulam in whichever way she could.

In the few months since that first chance meeting, Mary and Gulam have ‘got on like a house on fire’, forging a strong friendship based on mutual admiration and a shared sense of humour. Gulam visits Mary each weekend for help with his English language study and calls frequently to ask advice of Mary in relation to a whole range of everyday matters. He has also been drawn into Mary’s own social networks, gaining further friends and work opportunities. This friendship has now been extended to Gulam’s wife, child and brother, who are detained on Nauru and appreciate the letters and parcels that come from Mary and her friends. Mary has also taken on the role of advocate, acting as an important middle person between Gulam, lawyers and political advisors as they together fight for the 9 women and 14 children who still remain on Nauru to be reunited with their husbands living in Australia.

Clearly, Gulam has gained a tremendous amount of assistance from the woman he now refers to as his Australian ‘Mum’. But Mary emphasises that their relationship is not based on a one-way, charity model. When Gulam visits he brings food he has cooked or bought for Mary and offers to fix things around her house or those of her friends. His resourcefulness, determination and love for his family detained on Nauru have also proved to Mary that he and other refugees will make wonderful citizens of this country. In speaking proudly of Gulam’s achievements and in showing a recent photograph of his beautiful daughter, Mary indicates that ‘he gives me much more than I give him’.

* Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.
upon which the Network has been forced to draw to survive financially in the last year.

However, fundraising activities have not only produced financial benefits. They have also enabled the Network to link up with and utilise the skills and knowledge of willing individuals in the community. For example, coordinator Anne Horrigan-Dixon estimates that the Network can now call up to 20 people who could respond within a day to meet and sort out a specific issue in a time of crisis. The publicity that has surrounded fundraising activities has also encouraged volunteers to offer their services, allowing much of the responsibility for the Tuesday community lunches and the Thursday Over 55’s bingo to be relieved from paid staff.

Marston’s (2003:77-78) study also found that informal networks – such as family and friends who offer invaluable knowledge and material assistance leading to better outcomes in terms of housing, employment and health – were invaluable to the successful resettlement outcomes of TPV holders. The proposed framework builds upon organisations already embedded within, and supported by, the community as they are best able to encourage social capital building within the refugee, TPV holder and asylum seeker target group. This is because once an individual or group has been assisted in meeting the basic needs required to function, the networks they have gained through this process remain and engender a sense of belonging to society.

McArdle (1993:6) indicates that networking is crucial to community building because it breaks down divisions and prejudices which marginalise and isolate the target group. The Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education (MCEETYA 2002:4) supports this view, arguing that funding is allocated to the ACE sector because it increases social participation and cohesion by connecting people within their local communities. Such networking also renews community capacity and social capital, creates environments that promote cross-cultural understanding and contributes significantly to local and regional economic development.

Summary

As Figure 2 on the next page demonstrates, there are multiple benefits to be gained from tapping into the existing infrastructure, networks and support of existing organisations, rather than attempt to establish one or more new organisations to assist the target group. However, funding bodies may need to ‘look outside the box’ by considering less ‘obvious’ organisations for funding. This may mean, for instance, that the North Yarra Community Health Centre, which has long provided the Network with social work support, is a better target for an ACFE-funded ESL program than the local TAFE (Technical and Further Education) provider.
Figure 2: The importance of embeddedness within the community

3. DEDICATED REFUGEE FUNDING POOL

Adequate funding is the second key element to supporting the people-focused approach to service delivery identified as the best means for addressing barriers to successful resettlement. ACFE’s brief for this report requested costed recommendations, but it has proved impossible for the Network, even in consultation with ACFE and other government officials, to achieve this goal. It is clear, however, that to enable a quick response to emerging groups such as TPV holders, there is a need for a significant pool of funding to be set aside which can be drawn upon as soon as new groups are identified. This would allow early intervention work to proceed that could reduce the risk of such needs becoming entrenched and thus harder to solve. Recent literature (see Mansouri and Bagdas 2002: 63-64) and consultation conducted as part of this project (see Appendix D) indicate that organisations assisting refugees are, at present, under considerable financial strain. This is because the expansion of their services to meet the specific needs of TPV holders and asylum seekers has required heavy reliance on resources gained through fundraising activities.
The Network provides a classic example. Funding for the services provided by the Network has traditionally come from a variety of sources. ACFE funds the Network’s ACE programs, while the City of Yarra has contributed towards rent, coordination and building maintenance on an as-needed basis. Through the Neighbourhood House Coordination Scheme, DHS provides 11 hours of funding for the coordinator’s position, as well as supporting the Over 55s group and the Network’s childcare facility. As noted earlier, the Computer Clubhouse is resourced by two philanthropic foundations, while commercial and individual sponsors in the local community have generously supported specific fundraising activities. Despite this multiplicity of funding sources, much of the Network’s funding, particularly that for infrastructure and coordination costs, is allocated on a short-term or one-off basis. Analysis of the Network’s staff meeting and management committee minutes reveals that this has resulted in the organisation being under constant pressure to apply for further funding grants, as well as organise the regular fundraisers that contribute a significant amount to the Network’s income.

Financial vulnerability has not only taken time away from the actual job at hand, but created an atmosphere of instability and uncertainty. In addition, the Network’s staff and volunteers have found themselves working in areas for which they are not professionally trained, as they juggle social work activities with their other roles, and routinely working well beyond their contracted hours. The substantial stress this situation has placed upon individual staff members has in turn affected the organisation’s viability as a whole. For example, funding short-falls have meant that the Network has had difficulties covering sickness leave or Workcover entitlements when required. Recent Commonwealth Government policy relating to refugees and war in Iraq has made future health issues even more likely because Network staff are supporting students directly affected by such policies.

While only in place for six months when evaluated, the intervention undertaken as part of this research demonstrated the difference effective funding can make to the sustainability of an organisation like the Network. The majority of the $100,000 provided for the research project was allocated to supporting key roles that the Network identified as essential to achieving successful outcomes with refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. In addition to the existing governance role of the committee of management and the roles of coordinator, Computer Clubhouse coordinator, financial officer, teachers and volunteers, the Network identified the need for a refugee support worker and an administrative assistant. While it was anticipated that all staff and volunteers would benefit from the establishment of these two new positions, they were targeted at ‘buying out’ some of the coordinator’s time so that she was able to focus more specifically on a strategic, lobbying role. The benefits of the intervention, both for the Network’s students and its staff were enormous (see Appendix E for further detail). In particular, the Network has begun to assist asylum seekers, who demonstrate the most extreme needs of all refugees, for the first time.

However, the funding provided was for one year only and reliable, sustainable funding is now sorely required. The Network is facing a $60,000 deficit in 2004 if it wishes to maintain its current level of service and staff. In 2005, this deficit is expected to rise to $162,000 because funding from the Myer Foundation (to support the Computer Clubhouse), the Hmong program and ACFE clusters will no longer be available. In 2006, Buckland Foundation funding will also come to an end, leaving an
anticipated deficit of $235,000. Other organisations consulted in regards to the proposed framework faced similar situations. As a result, the proposed framework argues, using the Network’s experience as an example, that five key areas of work need to be adequately resourced if the people-focused service delivery model for refugee, TPV holders and asylum seekers is to be successful.

### 3.1 Costs incurred providing specific services for which the organisation has been contracted to deliver

The Network receives recurrent funding from ACFE and DHS to deliver specific services. In the case of ACFE, funding for educational services is based solely on a student contact hours funding formula. Table 1 demonstrates that the Network provides considerably more student contact hours than for which it is funded.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funded hours</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10 217 ($45 153)</td>
<td>37 538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>9571 ($53 153)</td>
<td>36 665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>9571 ($58 031)</td>
<td>50 558</td>
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</table>

In 2004, the Network will be funded for 11 619 hours, but it currently provides between 300% to 400% more hours so that classes can be extended from 4 hours to a more realistic 10-12 hours per week for each learner level. This figure does not cover the many social work and social activities offered that act as an informal site of learning, as well as break down barriers to learning and enhance the sense that students belong to the community and wider society. Other ACE providers have made similar complaints and advocated that the hourly rate be raised, although not at the expense of current cluster funding (PCETRC 2001:5; see Appendix D). ACFE did recently provide extra resources so that the Network did not have to cut classroom hours for financial reasons. However, this funding has been guaranteed for only three months. A long-term increase of at least 200% (approximately $150 000) would allow the Network to establish itself on a more stable financial footing.

### 3.2 Costs incurred while meeting the compliance and reporting requirements of funding bodies

A recurring concern highlighted in the interviews conducted with Network staff was the way in which increased reporting and accountability demands made by funding and other government agencies took time away from their actual jobs. Similar complaints about reporting and accountability requirements have been made by other
organisations receiving ACE cluster funding (see PCETRC 2001:5). However, OTTE/ACFE is not the only funding body to place extremely high expectations on community organisations. In the Network’s case, for example, the City of Yarra has recently introduced a new reporting requirement, while new state and federal government regulations relating to Goods and Service Tax, food handling and Occupational Health and Safety all place extra pressure on small organisations. Scott Thornton, the Network’s financial and administrative officer, commented that the typical Neighbourhood House has the same legal and financial requirements as a large corporation in terms of requiring a business and strategic plan, an acquittal, privacy legislation and quality audits. However, a large business has specialised people dealing with different kinds of requirements, thus spreading responsibility and the work load across the whole business. In a small organisation, however, this is all concentrated upon one or two people who need to be an expert in everything.

Accountability and reporting requirements are necessary, for they act as an ‘insurance policy’ if anything goes wrong and help to ensure that services provided are cost-efficient. Nonetheless, the Network believes it is unfair that poorly resourced community organisations should bear the entire load of complying with such requirements without support from the funding bodies that develop them. An important part of the proposed framework is thus recognition of, and support for, bearing this load. Clearly, each funding body should take responsibility for the accountability or reporting requirements that it sets for community organisations. It might, however, be useful for some degree of uniformity as to the level of this responsibility to be negotiated as part of the partnerships and protocols developed between funding bodies and community organisations.

3.3 Costs incurred during ‘emergency’ situations where services need to be extended to adequately meet the needs of the target group

The Network has also had to cover the costs of extending services in ‘emergency’ situations. For example, when the TPV holders arrived in Melbourne and needed to learn English as fast as possible so that they could support themselves, the Network used fundraising money to extend ESL classes by 8-10 hours a week. Former students commented that they would have preferred the Network to offer even more ESL classes, over five days instead of only four, but understood that without substantial extra government funding this was not possible. ACFE funding mechanisms, however, were not flexible enough to allow further funding in this kind of unplanned, emergency situation.

The Network can foresee other ‘emergency’ situations arising. For example, in the event of large-scale granting of permanent protection to current TPV holders, their changed visa status will allow them to access tertiary education and training schemes, such as apprenticeships, which have previously been out of their reach due to ‘international student’ fees or Federal restrictions. This will require organisations such as the Network, which are experienced in working with refugees, to provide
appropriate careers counselling and advice. Alternatively, large-scale refusal of permanent protection to current TPV holders could create an ‘emergency’ demand for psychological and legal support.

3.4 Costs incurred meeting the material, welfare and social needs of emerging groups so that they are in a position to access services

The importance of the social work services and social activities that the Network provides to enable refugees and TPV holders to begin learning and to integrate them into the local community has already been noted. Yet, these activities have had to be covered by the Network’s own fundraising resources. Government agency resources are always locked down so far ahead in time that, when an emerging group is identified, they have no financial capacity to meet their urgent needs. It is acknowledged that ACFE did eventually provide the Network with limited ($7000), short-term funding for assisting TPV holders. But Anne Horrigan-Dixon, the Network’s coordinator, suggests that it is not acceptable for extra resources to be offered only if community organisations “put up a stink”. Rather, this funding needs to be reliable and sustainable long-term to have guaranteed positive outcomes.

As a result of funding shortfalls, the Network relies on a critical mass of volunteers. At present there is inadequate funding available to community organisations working in the refugee sector, either for training themselves in the governance of volunteers or for providing the necessary professional development required by volunteers working with such a specialist target group. The Network has historically experienced difficulties in offering adequate coordination and support for volunteers, due to more pressing demands exhibited by its students. The research intervention, which employed a trained social worker whose job description included a volunteer coordination role, has improved this situation enormously. However, the Network still lacks sufficient funding to adequately screen potential volunteers and to provide the kind of specialist training that would be an appropriate background to assisting such a vulnerable group. ACFE recently provided some short-term funding related to building the Network’s volunteer capacity. But given that the activities which complement the core service delivery program rely on effective and committed volunteers, a lack of sustained funding threatens the ability of organisations like the Network to implement a people-focused service delivery model.

3.5 Costs incurred in maintaining infrastructure and providing coordination

It is clear that the Network would find it impossible to achieve its successful education and employment outcomes (see p.38) without the physical infrastructure it has established and without the coordination funded partially by the City of Yarra and
DHS. Yet, there is no recurrent funding for these broader costs associated with service provision, such as the organisation’s premises, operating and governance costs and some or all of the coordinator’s salary. Recent funding from the Community Support Fund to contribute to the physical infrastructure needs of eligible ACE organisations and Neighbourhood Houses gave priority to rural and regional Victoria and to ACE organisations who had not received funding in previous ACE Capital Funding rounds. In addition, the ACE Cluster Program has put a small amount of funding into infrastructure building (PCETRC 2001:4). Yet, given the importance of a welcoming, family environment to the success of a people-focused model of service delivery, it appears incongruous that neither OTTE/ACFE nor the DHS regard themselves responsible for the costs of establishing or maintaining such an environment.

To survive in this environment, the Network (which began as a stand-alone ACE provider) solicited funds from the City of Yarra for rent, coordination and on-costs in 1996, without which it would never have been able to become a Neighbourhood House. In this latter role, the Network receives 11 hours of funding for the coordinator’s position, but in return has been expected to generate 22 hours of programs that fit the Neighbourhood House ethos. There has been a long history of chronic lack of adequate funding for Neighbourhood Houses, as well as anomalies relating to the amounts of support received by different houses in relation to buildings and infrastructure. In effect, the Network has had to find other ways of covering rent, operating and coordinator costs, even though without any of these, the provision of ACE and Neighbourhood House services would be impossible. This financial pressure has worsened in the last year as significant funding shortfalls have required surpluses gained through fundraising to be used to support core activities (see FLN 2002:27). As a result, even though the Network has consistently achieved significant educational outcomes given the meagre resources it has gained from ACFE, the organisation was at risk of having to close its doors in late 2002.

4. WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

To ensure that organisations like the Network – and, more importantly, their clients – do not continue to be placed in such a precarious position, there is a need for a whole of government approach to funding the refugee sector. This is because a single government agency, such as OTTE/ACFE, is alone unable to carry all of the costs associated with successful outcomes in the refugee sector. The DVC (2003:3) has noted that: “Local community initiatives work best when government resources are coordinated and integrated or ‘joined up’ ” and the framework recommends that such integration be implemented in the refugee sector. Given the complex nature of the government sector, it is has been impossible for the Network to develop specific protocols for government agencies to follow. However, the framework has identified two key elements which they must address: the coordination of the framework and the formalising of key relationships and networks between government bodies and the refugee sector.
4.1 Coordination of refugee sector funding by a lead agency

It is anticipated that an appropriate agency will act as a lead agency in coordinating the proposed framework. The framework fits snugly with the goals of several agencies that promote lifelong learning and/or community building. Implementation of the proposed framework would also provide a mechanism for the Bracks Government to put into practice its articulated goals relating to “Growing Victoria Together”.

4.2 Formal agreement on key relationships and networks

The proposed framework relies on the development of protocols that formalise existing key relationships between community organisations working in the refugee sector and their funding bodies. Such protocols would:

- Outline and place parameters around what each partner might realistically be able to contribute and the procedures through which help should be sought;
- Address the question of responsibility for funding the broader costs (including those related to infrastructure and coordination) of supporting refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers which are not currently covered by funding bodies.

Experience gained from an evaluation of ACFE’s Learning Towns Network Program – which aims to develop collaborative learning partnerships by linking ACE, TAFE/educational institutions, industry, local government and community activity – suggests that it is hard to get a commitment from government agencies and community organisations for such a partnership approach if only short-term funding is offered (see La Trobe University 2001:4; PCETRC 2001:5). It is thus argued that funding be guaranteed for a period of at least three years, ensuring support for the partnership arrangement proposed. However, an evaluation to identify any barriers to the implementation of the refugee support funding mechanism should be conducted 12 months after operation begins.

The framework has established a set of principles that can be customised to suit specific communities, depending on their particular circumstances. It is flexible enough to be applied beyond the refugee, TPV holder and asylum seeker area as the needs of other emerging groups are identified in towns and cities across Victoria. However, given the urgency of refugee, TPV holder and asylum seeker needs in the current political climate, the formation of a whole of government approach to supporting refugee, TPV holders and asylum seeker should be a top priority.
KEY OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS
OF THE FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

It is anticipated that the proposed framework will produce important outcomes and benefits in three areas: positive service delivery outcomes as a consequence of the people-focused model; broader social benefits relating to social capital development and social cohesion; and system-wide benefits stemming from the whole of government approach adopted. Evidence for these anticipated key outcomes and benefits are based on the experience of the Network as it has trialled the model (through the intervention discussed earlier) over the last year (see Appendix E).

SPECIFIC SERVICE DELIVERY OUTCOMES

A people-focused approach to service delivery holds the potential for achieving significant positive outcomes. This is because it not only provides a service but acknowledges the barriers inhibiting service access and participation. It thus accounts for the whole lived experience of an individual, rather than just part of it. The Network’s experience, for example, demonstrates how the educational outcomes for which it is funded have been successfully achieved in two, related areas: ESL literacy and competency, and pathways into employment and further education.

ESL literacy and competency

The Network has achieved consistently high outcomes in terms of ESL, its core educational program. These outcomes have been achieved even though ACFE funds each learner for approximately 4 hours per week. This highlights the different resettlement experiences of TPV holders and asylum seekers when compared to refugees on PPVs, for the latter are entitled to considerably higher levels of ESL tuition (510 hours over two years).

The Network’s ESL teachers took a representative sample of 19 of their past and present students and classified them in the following categories. All but one of the students started with less than functional or below survival language levels (0-1 on the
These students have gained confidence and language skills enabling them to be productive within the community, as the following table demonstrates.

### Table 2: Students by year enrolled at the Network and ASPLR at September 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year enrolled at the Network</th>
<th>ASLPR 3+</th>
<th>ASLPR 2-3</th>
<th>ASLPR 1</th>
<th>ASPLR 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>71% (5 of 7)</td>
<td>29% (2 of 7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>50% (3 of 6)</td>
<td>50% (3 of 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>80% (4 of 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% (1 of 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>42% (8 of 19)</td>
<td>52% (10 of 19)</td>
<td>6% (1 of 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Definitions of the ASPLRs can be found in Appendix F)

The table above indicates that the Network has successfully assisted all but one of 19 students (94%) in reaching a highly functional level of English language, whereby they can communicate easily with others in day-to-day life. Not surprisingly, those enrolled in 2000 demonstrate the highest levels of achievement, with 71% already having reached the 3+ rating after only three years and with the remainder at a highly functional 2-3 rating. This significant level of achievement is reflected in the fact that all of those enrolled in 2000 are now in work and/or further education, with many also having been involved in public speaking or advocacy work (see p.41). Indeed, one of these students demonstrated such a high level of achievement that he was recently nominated as one of three finalists in the Adult Learner of the Year 2003 competition.

Although only half of those enrolled in 2001 have thus far reached a 3+ rating, the remainder already have a 2-3 rating. This means that within 2 years of enrolment, 100% of such students have reached a highly functional level of English. In addition, all but one of the students enrolled in 2002 and the one student who enrolled in 2003 have already gained the ability to effectively communicate outside the classroom. This is reflected in the fact that only two of the students in the sample continue to attend English classes, with all others having moved into work or further study.

The importance of these outcomes in terms of English literacy and competency is two-fold. First, as has been noted, positive outcomes have significantly increased the chance of the Network’s students being able to find employment or take up further education. Second, the successful ESL outcomes have enabled students to effectively participate in the community and Australian society more generally. As further discussion indicates, literacy is a pivotal component of nation-building because it enables people to take part fully in the society in which they live.
Pathways into employment and further education

The Network was able to gather a range of data on employment, educational and social outcomes for a sample of their past and present students. The sample represents 37 individuals, 28 of whom had been in detention (for an average of 11 months each). The majority of the individuals included in the sample are Afghani and Iraqi males.

Table 3: Pathways into employment and further education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathways</th>
<th>Employment only</th>
<th>Further education only</th>
<th>Employment and further education</th>
<th>Still studying at the Network</th>
<th>Other/Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>22% (8 of 37)</td>
<td>27% (10 of 37)</td>
<td>19% (7 of 37)</td>
<td>10% (4 of 37)</td>
<td>22% (8 of 37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table demonstrates that the refugees on TPVs and asylum seekers in this sample are a highly motivated group. Almost a fifth of the sample (19%) have participated in both employment and further education (that is, any education other than the classes run by the Network). Another 22% went from studying at the Network into either part-time or full-time employment without further education, while a significant 27% of the sample are currently involved in some form of education beyond the Network. These figures may well have been more remarkable if it were not for the high number of ‘unknowns’. Nonetheless, if we remove the students still studying at the Network, it is possible to argue that the Network has achieved significant positive outcomes, with 76% of its former Network’s students having moved into employment, further education or both. Given the barriers to resettlement and educational success outlined earlier, this is a significant achievement.

Table 4: Pathways into employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathways</th>
<th>Full-time work</th>
<th>Part-time work</th>
<th>Actively looking</th>
<th>Full-time carers</th>
<th>Prohibited from working</th>
<th>Other/unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>30% (11 of 37)</td>
<td>11% (4 of 37)</td>
<td>5% (2 of 37)</td>
<td>8% (3 of 37)</td>
<td>19% (7 of 37)</td>
<td>27% (10 of 37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 demonstrates that almost a third of the sample have moved into full-time work and another 11% are working part-time. All eleven of the full-time and one of the part-time workers are self-supporting (see Table 4), while the other three part-time workers still rely on the Special Benefit to supplement their income. If we include the full-time carers (mothers looking after children), it is possible to argue that 49% of this sample are actively employed in some form of work. If we remove the seven individuals not allowed to work due to the regulations of their Bridging Visa status, this figure grows to 60%.
Table 5: Income of full-time workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. Income pa.</th>
<th>$35,000</th>
<th>$30,000</th>
<th>$25,000</th>
<th>$20,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>36% (4 of 11)</td>
<td>9% (1 of 11)</td>
<td>9% (1 of 11)</td>
<td>45% (5 of 11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that the average yearly income for full-time adults working in the private sector is approximately $46,654 a year\(^1\), the above table suggests that the Network’s former students have been unable to achieve the earning capacity demonstrated by many of their Australian counterparts. However, most former students are currently located in lower-paid occupations. For example, while one former student works in computer sales and three are tradespeople, another two work in factories, while other individuals work as a security guard, a cook and an attendant carer. Importantly, all of the full-time workers earn considerably more than the entitlements they could receive on the Special Benefit, which at the basic rate is around $10,000 per annum.

The significant educational outcomes documented were achieved prior to the implementation of the research intervention. Since then, the quality of the Network’s services has improved considerably (see Appendix E). This is because the different components of its people-focused approach to service delivery were financially supported for the first time and staff did not spend as much time worrying where the next dollar was going to come from. In addition, the Network became a more sustainable organisation because responsibility for the many roles it carries out was more evenly spread across key staff. It is expected that reliable and sustainable funding through a refugee-specific funding mechanism will ensure the continued achievement of the positive service delivery outcomes documented here.

**BROADER SOCIAL BENEFITS**

In addition to the educational outcomes highlighted, the Network’s experience illustrates that broader social benefits may be achieved by a people-focused approach to service delivery. This includes the development of social capital in local communities and the potential enhancement of social cohesion at the national level.

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\(^1\) This figure was achieved by multiplying the average weekly earnings of workers in this sector by 52 weeks. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures were used.
Social capital development

International and local literature suggests that the development of social capital produces benefits at the individual, community, regional and national levels (see Bordieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993; Cox 1995; Stone 2001). ACFE’s conceptual framework, Transforming Lives Transforming Communities highlights that ACE programs play an important role in building both human capital and social capital (see Falk, Golding and Balatti 2000:v). Development of human capital, which is related to the capacities of individuals established through knowledge, skills and competencies, is the most obvious outcome of ACE programs. However, growth in social capital, which is concerned with the relationships between people and the norms and infrastructure that help to build relationships and networks within communities, is often a less tangible but very important outcome of the same programs (see PCETRC 2001:16).

The proposed framework will contribute to building social capital in local communities by providing early intervention assistance to a vulnerable group that could potentially be a drain on local communities and Australian society more generally. The outcomes described demonstrate that the Network’s model is built on a hand-up rather than hand-outs, with former students going on to be as self-reliant and independent as their legal status within Australia allows them. In this way, many of the Network’s students and former students are still struggling, but they have been offered pathways into a resettlement process that over time may be as successful as that of the many Southern European communities that came to live in Australia after World War II.

The following tables provide some indication of the levels of social capital developed through the Network’s people-focused approach to learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Participation in advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in advocacy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 demonstrates that more than two-fifths (43%) of the Network’s former and current students regularly participate in advocacy. This is defined in terms of activities that raise awareness about the situation of refugees or the Network’s role in supporting refugees, including talks to schools and interviews with the media. However, former students have also been involved in the development of their own advocacy organisations. The Al-Amel TPV Holders Association, for example, was established to promote change in immigration law, liaise with other groups on refugee issues and assist with health, employment and legal issues. This is a dramatic illustration of the positive outcomes that the Network has had in working with this emerging group, whose members have been largely excluded from mainstream educational and other social services. They no longer rely on the Network staff to act
as meditators or ‘interpreters’ of government and other bureaucracies, but are empowered to assist others.

**Table 7: Number of ‘friends’ identified by refugees on TPVs and asylum seekers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of ‘friends’</th>
<th>1-5</th>
<th>6-15</th>
<th>16-25</th>
<th>26-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10 of 28)</td>
<td>(8 of 28)</td>
<td>(6 of 28)</td>
<td>(4 of 28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that of the 28 individuals for whom data was available about their ‘friends’, just over one-third (36%) had a small number of ‘friends’, who were defined in terms of being someone the refugee socialises with and/or can call upon to assist them when needed. Most of this group are relatively new students who are still studying at the Network. Half (50%) of the sample had what might be considered a more ‘normal’ range of 6 to 25 friends, with 14% identifying themselves as having around 50 friends. While this number seems very high, it is notable that those individuals making such a claim have been heavily involved in advocacy work and may well feel they have a large network of people they can call upon for assistance in different ways. Given the regular social events held by the Network, they may actually socialise with this many people! The figure below indicates the way in which the Network’s students are located within a web of social networks. Figure 3 illustrates how, through theatrical productions, community lunches, trips to

**Figure 3: A web of social networks**
Figure 3 illustrates how, through theatrical productions, community lunches, trips to visit rural Victorians and other social activities, the Network has acted as a point of intersection between its powerful friends and its clients, who are some of the least powerful people in society. The development of trust and networks between refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers and other Australians has been essential in integrating the newcomers into the community. There are numerous examples where not only have friends been made, but jobs have been gained, as the Network’s catchphrase ‘Opening Doors to Our Community’ has been put into action through a snowball effect of contacts and alliances. This stresses the importance of funding organisations which do not sit separate from, but rather are embedded within and supported by, the community. The success of the research intervention has also highlighted how adequate funding can enable a community organisation to better address this barrier to positive resettlement and educational outcomes (see Appendix E).

As a result, the refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers that have been assisted by the Network demonstrate all three types of social capital usually identified in the literature.

**Bonding capital**

This links individuals with those like themselves through social connections that are built on similarity, informality and intimacy. Bonding capital is the kind needed to ‘get by’ (Healy and Hampshire 2003:13; Healy and Ayres 2003:2; see Coleman 1988). It has already been noted that close friendships have been formed at the Network, with some refugees referring to staff, volunteers and other students as their ‘family’.

**Bridging capital**

This links individuals with those unlike themselves, based on common interest. Bridging capital is needed to ‘get ahead’, for example by gaining access to employment, training and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOHAMMAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weary after more than a decade of traipsing from country to country, Baghdad-born asylum seeker Mohammed Aljanabi .... recently visited Immigration Department offices in the city to collect copies of documents that will help him prepare his case in the lead-up to a six-month period in which the authorities will decide whether he can remain in Australia after expiry of his temporary protection visa on August 14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ I want to make a life,” he says.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among nearly 8600 boat people seeking permanent asylum in Australia, he was recently elected to the committee of a new organisation set up by asylum seekers, the Al-Amel (Arabic for hope) TPV Holders Association .... Its creation comes as the first of thousands of three-year temporary visas expire amid concern for those facing reviews of their claims to remain in Australia ....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Aljanabi shares an inner-city Housing Commission flat with two of his brothers who followed him to Australia. He works part-time at an aged-care home and, if given permanent residence, hopes to study for accreditation of physiotherapist qualifications he completed before fleeing to Jordan, then Turkey, in the early 1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After being imprisoned in Turkey and forcibly repatriated to Iraq, he spent six years in Iran until authorities threatened in 1999 to expel Iraqi refugees. He made his way to Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta. Then he was among 284 on a small boat that sailed from Java. He was detained on Christmas Island in early 2000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Aljanabi is worried that war against Saddam will drive millions more Iraqis into exile. He fears he may find himself back in a detention centre or be forced to leave. &quot;I have no passport. Where do I go? I am in limbo,&quot; he says.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
educational opportunities (Healy and Hampshire 2003:13; Healy and Ayres 2003:2; see Coleman 1988). It is clear that the Network’s educational and social welfare activities contribute to creating this kind of social capital. Some refugees have also gained jobs through the networks they became engaged in through the Network’s social activities.

**Linking capital**

This allows individuals to forge alliances with ‘sympathetic individuals in positions of power’, including direct access to members of parliament, policy makers, business and philanthropic organisations (Healy and Hampshire 2003:17; see Putnam 1993). For example, the Network can claim a role in several recent successes whereby the volunteers associated with the Network have assisted TPV holders to develop linking networks which have resulted in them being relocated from Australia and Nauru to New Zealand.

**Supporting life-learning**

In addition to the benefits gained from the development of social capital within refugee, TPV and asylum seekers communities, it is argued that the Network’s people-focused model of service delivery has supported the lifelong learning of the volunteers who assist the organisation. It has been noted that volunteers provide a critical mass of support which enables the Network to run, through assistance with the implementation of day-to-day services as well as fundraising. Acting as ‘interpreters’ of Australian society, these volunteers clearly support the learning of the target group. But interviews conducted with Network volunteers indicated that their involvement with the organisation was also a stage in their own lifelong learning, as they gained experience in various vocational capacities, in addition to knowledge about the different countries and cultures of the Network’s students.

**Enhancing social cohesion**

Both Commonwealth and state government political rhetoric and policy discourse suggest that social inclusion at the community level is a dimension of social cohesion. Emphasis has been placed on increasing social participation, community capacity building and volunteerism at the local level as a means of preventing or intervening early in social problems. It is assumed, therefore, that communities with strong networks and supports are less likely to experience major social problems (see DHS 2002: 4-5; DPC 2002:10; MCEETYA 2002:1).

It is now widely recognised that investment in the ACE sector encourages social cohesion, community integration and the preservation and regeneration of communities (see Falk, Golding and Balatti 2000:v). The potential for the proposed framework to have a positive impact is thus not limited to individual refugees, TPV
holders and asylum seekers or their families and local communities, but also has broader implications at the societal level. One needs only to compare the situation of Melbourne to Sydney, which also has a large number of Muslims living in the community. There are significant differences in terms the level of conflict and tension between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in these two cities. While the relative lack of tension that exists in Melbourne cannot be attributed Network alone, it has certainly been a key player in reducing the potential for such tension by not only teaching its students English, but assisting them to become active and valued members of the local communities in which they live.

**SYSTEM-WIDE BENEFITS**

The success of the proposed framework is centred upon a whole of government approach to supporting the refugee sector. This approach, in addition to achieving the service delivery and broader social outcomes highlighted earlier, holds the potential to contribute to the articulated policy goals of relevant government agencies (DVC, ACFE and DHS). These include:

- Better supporting communities so that planning and delivery can be coordinated and integrated more successfully (DVC 2003:2). This would improve the sustainability of successful government-funded programs by avoiding ‘crisis’ situations, like that the Network experienced when TPV holders began to emerge as a new group in need. Organisations would be able to concentrate on meeting the required outcomes set by their funding bodies and making a positive impact in the daily lives of the target group, rather than simply chasing the funding necessary to survive;
- Reducing the likelihood of duplication because funding for the refugee sector would involve all relevant agencies, but be coordinated centrally by a lead agency such as DVC (see MCEETYA 2002:4). This would minimise the risk of government and community agencies ‘reinventing of wheel’ because they would no longer be working in isolation;
- Better coordination of effort across government and partnerships with local government, business and community groups in community strengthening strategies (DVC 2003:1);
- Developing community-based prevention and early intervention strategies that address community concerns before they become entrenched (DVC 2003:1-2);
- Promoting local solutions to local problems by expanding and sustaining an innovative community-based, people-focused service delivery model (see MCEETYA 2002:4);
- Establishing partnerships between state government, local government and communities to sponsor new directions in service planning and delivery (DVC 2003:1-2);
- Encouraging community building that creates strong communities which are active, confident and resilient (DVC 2003:2).
It is in this manner that the proposed framework offers government agencies a unique opportunity to achieve their own outcomes, as well provide reliable and sustainable support for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. As a result, the catchphrase “Growing Victoria Together” could be realised.
APPENDIX A: THE HISTORY OF THE FITZROY LEARNING NETWORK

The Fitzroy Learning Network is a community-based and volunteer-backed multicultural Neighbourhood House and adult learning centre located in Fitzroy, an inner-city suburb of Melbourne. Originally established as a standalone ACE provider in 1985, the Network is now also a Neighbourhood House and has been running from its current venue in Napier Street since 1995. In the 19 years since its inception, the Network has played an important role in providing relief from poverty, helplessness, misfortune, suffering and distress, while also offering the basic skills required for living and working in Melbourne. Unlike many other Neighbourhood Houses or ACE organisations, the Network has long placed a particular focus on meeting the needs of refugees and migrants, many of whom live in the Fitzroy area. People from approximately 15 different countries attend the Network on a weekly basis to participate in the wide range of services available. Families, couples, single people, men and women are all welcome. The majority of the Network’s clients are referred by word of mouth.

Prior to the research intervention, the Network employed seven core staff: a coordinator; a Computer Clubhouse coordinator; two ESL teachers and a sewing teacher; and a financial officer. In addition, a small but committed contingent of volunteers support the Network on a regular basis, while other volunteers are called upon for specific tasks, such as fundraising. The Network is governed by a Committee of Management constituted by seven local business and humanitarian leaders.

In late 2002, the Network was approached by ACFE to develop a sustainable and replicable framework of support for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers because it had a successful record of working with this target group. In particular, the Network had demonstrated an ability to adapt to the emerging needs of specific groups within the refugee, TPV holder and asylum-seeker community. This flexibility was evident in the way in which the Network was able to quickly respond to the needs of two emerging groups, the Hmong and TPV holders.

**Working with the Hmong**

In 1994 the Network began working with the Hmong community, in particular the women with pre-school children and older women who were the most disadvantaged members of this group. These women had not been able to participate in funded Australian Multicultural Education Service (AMES) programs, due to their family responsibilities. The Network responded by designing specific programs aimed at understanding and addressing their particular needs. These evolved through a ‘trial-and-error’ process as the Network gained more knowledge about the Hmong culture and the needs of that group. This flexible approach was necessary given that the Hmong hill tribe is a pre-literate culture. Hmong who fled from Laos into refugee
camps in Thailand, where they lived until they were resettled in Australia, thus had little or no experience of formal education.

In partnership with the Collingwood AMES, the Network established the Hmong Women’s English classes which ran for 6 years. AMES supplied an experienced ESL teacher for 6 hours per week, while the Network provided the venue and raised funds of some $20,000 per year to support an on-site childcare program, without which the women would not have been willing to participate in the ESL classes. The women then requested assistance for their children who were not succeeding at school. As a result, the Network set up an after-school program using ACFE-funded computers which has since developed into the Computer Clubhouse. Recognised as a leader in its field, the Network took responsibility for running a Settlement program for the Hmong community funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) in October 1999. As the Hmong community was moved to Meadow Heights and Craigieburn over the period 1999-2001, the Network employed a Hmong worker to assist in this relocation and set up a new service for Hmong in these suburban areas.

Overall, the Network’s outcomes for the Hmong group were excellent. All students learned to read, fill out simple information and be confident and comfortable in a non-Hmong environment. Many of the women (who traditionally would never have worked outside the home) are now employed in factories, while younger Hmong women have sat the VCE and gone on to study at TAFE institutions. These outcomes reflect the way in which the Network did not let the Hmong culture act as a barrier to the learning of the Hmong women, who suggested that: ‘people think Hmong women want to be at home with our large families, washing, cooking and cleaning – but it’s boring!’ Rather, they worked with, and adapted to, the Hmong culture to achieve important results for this target group.

**Working with TPV holders**

Much of the assistance the Network offered the Hmong community was planned and funded by DIMIA, but this was not the case for the services it has provided for TPV holders since contact was first made in August 2000. Despite receiving no specific government funding for this group, the Network nonetheless quickly designed special programs to assist TPV holders as they were released from Woomera Detention Centre and arrived in Melbourne to live, yet found themselves unable to access ESL education elsewhere due to federal government restrictions.

During 2000-2001, the Network provided assistance to more than 300 TPV holders from the Middle East and Central Asia, with the majority being Afghans from the persecuted Hazara tribe. They came from East Ringwood, Box Hill, Preston and Coburg, as well as Fitzroy, to access the Network’s ESL programs and, in the initial months, assistance with finding accommodation, getting jobs and meeting their most basic material and social needs. The ‘trial-and-error’ model that the Network had developed through its experience with the Hmong was again employed, producing positive outcomes for this new emerging group, the TPV holders. Within six months, the majority had gained enough English language and confidence to enrol in further
education or find work, with resumes prepared and computer skills gained. Former students interviewed for this research believed that without access to the Network’s ESL classes and social support, they would not now be working. One recently employed as a taxi-driver indicated that things were very hard at the moment for him, but they would not be possible at all without help from the Network. Given that the visas of many TPV holders have expired or are due to expire over the coming months and there is great uncertainty as to what action the federal government will take when they do, there is still a very significant need within this group for information and social work assistance.
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research project constituted a form of ‘action research’, aiming to capture changes in the Network as they happened over a period of months. Owen and Rogers (1999:45) have commented that action research “involves determining whether or not innovatory approaches to delivery are making a difference”. It thus comprises a learning experience for those involved, aiming to better social practice by evaluating a possible solution to a local-level problem.

As part of a ‘plan of action’ developed by the Network, the research project aimed to improve the current situation for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers. The implementation of the plan involved the employment of a full-time refugee project worker, a part-time administrative assistant and the ‘buying out’ some of the Network’s coordinator’s time. Qualitative research methods were used to assess whether additional funding from the Office of Portfolio Coordination could effectively ‘spread the load’ of the organisation’s work and make its current people-focused practice more sustainable. The results of the research were used as a basis for further planning and action within the Network (see Owen and Rogers 1999:224-225). However, the research as a whole aimed to provide a foundation upon which OTTE/ACFE can develop ‘evidence-based’ policy that supports refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers at a much broader level than the Network can achieve alone.

To provide the depth of knowledge necessary to support better social practice, a range of qualitative research methods were adopted. These included:

- 20 interviews with:
  - 8 Network paid staff members (4 of whom participated in repeat interviews following the intervention);
  - 1 member of the Management Committee (this interview was repeated after the intervention);
  - 2 volunteers;
  - 3 ‘support people’ from organisations with which the Network maintains close ties (one of whom participated in a repeat interview);

- 5 focus groups with:
  - 14 TPV holder and asylum seeker students and clients of the Network.
    - In the first research phase, 5 mainly Afghani TPV holders took part in 2 focus groups;
    - In the second research phase, 9 Afghani, Iranian and Iraqi TPV holders and asylum seekers took part in 2 focus groups;
  - 11 Network staff and volunteers (some of whom were also interviewed separately);

- Observation of Network processes at the Fitzroy site;
- Analysis of written Network policies, procedures, reviews and relevant client files;
- Consultation with a Reference Group established to guide the research project;
Consultation with other ACE providers, community groups, local and state government agencies in the Cities of Greater Dandenong and Yarra regarding the proposed framework.

Figure 4 demonstrates the way in which the use of these qualitative research methods was distributed over the course of several months.

**Figure 4: Data collection framework**

Stage One

- 9 Interviews
- 2 Focus groups
- Observation
- Analysis of written documents
- Reference Group meeting 1

Stage Two

- 11 Interviews
- 3 Focus groups
- Observation
- Analysis of written observations
- Consultation
- Reference Group meeting 3


**Implementation of the Intervention:**

- Refugee support worker employed
- Administrative worker employed
- ‘Buy out’ of coordinator’s hours

Reference Group meetings 2 + 4 (March 2003-October 2003)

**Research Ethics**

Every research project requires careful consideration of the ethical implications the research has for participants. This is even more so when refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers, whose backgrounds include trauma, persecution and hardship, are involved. As a result, the research investigator was careful to respect the rights of participants, following the procedures outlined by the RMIT University Ethics Committee. This included providing and explaining a plain-language information sheet to all interview participants prior to gaining their written consent for participation in the research. At this time, participants were reassured of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the right to withdraw any information offered if they wished to do so, even at a later date.
Interviews with refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers were conducted in a sensitive manner that avoided any undue focus on the immigration status or detention experiences of the participant. For this reason, the personal stories of Network students already published in the Network’s recent Annual Report (FLN 2002) and in *The Age* newspaper have been utilised in this report, so participants did not have to relive their experiences unnecessarily. The research investigator was also careful to ensure that all Network clients, staff and volunteers were aware that research observation was in process when the researcher visited the Network.

In the case of a focus group with 5 Iraqi students, an official interpreter was provided through the telephone interpretation service. In the remaining three focus groups, the little interpretation required was provided amongst the participants themselves.
APPENDIX C: AUSTRALIA’S RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Australia is a signatory, defines a refugee as:

Any person who owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country (cited in Refugee Council of Australia 2003).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is responsible for protecting refugees and overseeing adherence to the Convention. Having become a signatory to the Convention in 1958 (and later to the 1967 Protocol which extends the scope of the Convention), Australia is obliged under international law to offer support to a person meeting the definition of a refugee and ensure that s/he is not sent back unwillingly to her/his country of origin (Refugee Council of Australia 2003).

The Convention and Protocol also outline other refugee rights to employment, education, the legal system and civil rights, although these are shaped by each country’s interpretation as embodied in their domestic immigration laws and practices. Australia has historically enjoyed a positive international reputation for its policies on multiculturalism and its interpretation of the Convention and Protocol. Indeed, Australia has accepted an estimated 650,000 refugees as permanent residents since 1945. In the current context, approximately 12,000 places are set aside each year for the ‘humanitarian’ component of Australia’s permanent immigration program. This figure includes and now links both ‘onshore’ (made from within Australia) and ‘offshore’ (made through the UNHCR or Australian authorities overseas) applications for refugee status (Marston 2003:14).

Since the late 1990s, however, Australia has come under increasing criticism from international and local human rights bodies for domestic legislation which now incorporates policies on mandatory detention, border protection and temporary protection. Particularly controversial was the introduction of the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) in October 1999 as a means to deter ‘unauthorised’ people from entering Australia. This reflected a shift in which asylum seekers, who were characterised by the Commonwealth Government as ‘queue jumpers’, began to be dealt with in terms of ‘border protection’ policy, rather than the protection of their human rights under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol (Marston 2003:14).

Most refugees come to Australia under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program, which is the humanitarian component of the migration program. Selected overseas, usually after referral from UNHCR, these people enter Australia with a visa that entitles them to permanent residency (and to apply for citizenship after the prescribed waiting period). The Refugee Council of Australia (2003) notes, however, that for many of the world's refugee population, it is either impractical or impossible.
to go first to a neighbouring country, then seek resettlement from there. This might be because the neighbouring countries are not signatories to the international laws that would ensure their protection or because refugees would not be safe in a neighbouring country, in particular if that country was sympathetic to the persecutory regime. In these cases, individuals may choose to try to go directly to a country, such as Australia, where they can seek protection.

All such asylum seekers arriving in Australia since October 1999 without ‘authorisation’ (a visa and/or a valid passport) and found to be refugees have been granted TPVs for a period of three years (in some cases, five years) rather than the Permanent Protection Visas (PPVs) formerly offered. Prior to September 2001, refugees on TPVs could apply for a PPV (which grants them Australian residency status). Since that date, however, ‘unauthorised’ arrivals assessed as meeting the refugee classification are no longer able to seek a PPV if, since leaving their home country, they resided for at least seven days in a country where they could have sought and obtained effective protection. As a result, many refugees granted TPVs since 2001 may have the right to seek another TPV but will never be able to seek permanent protection in Australia (Marston 2003:15). In August 2003, these restrictions were extended to those who make a protection visa application after making an ‘authorised’ arrival (on a student or tourist visa) (Ruddock 2003).

**Legal and resettlement entitlements for refugees, TPV holders and other asylum seekers**

The type of visa granted to a refugee has significant implications for their resettlement experience. Refugees with a PPV (now usually gained ‘offshore’ before their arrival in Australia) are able to begin their resettlement process immediately and have access to a variety of resettlement programs and services. In contrast, those arriving without official documents, usually by sea, are subject to mandatory detention in one of several detention centres placed around the country. There is evidence to suggest that the poor conditions and ‘prison-like’ nature of such detention centres has detrimental effects upon the physical, social and psychological health of refugees (see Mares 2001; Brotherhood of St Lawrence 2002; Mansouri and Bagdas 2002; Marston 2003).

However, if a person enters Australia with a visa/and or valid passport and then applies for asylum, they are given a Bridging Visa that allows them to remain legally in the country while their application for refugee status is being considered. They are entitled to a work permit and to receive Medicare assistance if they apply within 45 days of arrival. After a six month waiting period and only during the primary application stage, some may receive income support equivalent to 89% of welfare benefits. This is administered through the Australian Red Cross Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS) and funded by DIMIA. Asylum seekers are not, however, eligible for any other welfare assistance or state government support programs (Brotherhood of St Lawrence 2002:3; Refugee Council of Australia 2003). If an asylum seeker’s application is rejected at the primary DIMIA decision, s/he is no longer eligible for welfare assistance (with a few exceptions) and if the application also fails at the level of the Refugee Review Tribunal, her/his bridging visa is changed.
to class E to remove the rights to work and Medicare. The Refugee Council of Australia (2003) estimates that 75% of rejected applicants take advantage of the option of having their application decisions reviewed by the Refugee Review Tribunal. This means that a considerable number of asylum seekers are forced to survive without any regular means of government assistance if they appeal to the Minister for Immigration to grant residency on humanitarian grounds or lodge an appeal to the Federal Court. According to the Hotham Mission, there are approximately 8000 asylum seekers living lawfully in the community on bridging visas, with about 500 in Melbourne who have no support at all (Thomas 2003:14).

Figure 5 on the next page indicates that the financial and other assistance provided to TPV holders and asylum seekers is substantially less than that given to refugees who have come through official offshore channels. This is despite the fact that more than 90% of onshore applicants are found to be genuine Convention refugees by the Commonwealth Government’s own process (Mansouri and Bagdas 2002:16).
### Figure 5: Visa Entitlement and Restrictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entitlement</th>
<th>Permanent Protection Visa (accepted as refugees)</th>
<th>Temporary Protection Visa (temporary refugee status)</th>
<th>Asylum seekers living in the community on a Bridging Visa (awaiting final outcome of case)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Income Support</td>
<td>Immediate access to the full range of social security benefits</td>
<td>Access only to Special Benefit for which eligibility criteria apply.</td>
<td>No access to any benefits from Centrelink. If waited 6 mth+ for Primary Decision then some eligible for ASAS payment, but lose if appeal a decision beyond the Refugee Review Tribunal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Same access to education as other permanent residents</td>
<td>Access to primary, secondary and TAFE education subject to state policy (access granted in Victoria). Effective exclusion from tertiary study due to imposition of full fees.</td>
<td>May get access to primary and secondary following consultation subject to state policy. Full fees must be paid for tertiary education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement Support</td>
<td>Access to full DIMIA settlement services, including Migrant Resource Centres and ethno specific agencies, interpreter service and integration assistance.</td>
<td>Not eligible for most DIMIA-funded services, except for health screening and referral.</td>
<td>No access to DIMIA-funded settlement services. Not eligible for HRC access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reunion</td>
<td>Ability to bring immediate family members.</td>
<td>No family reunion rights, even for spouse and children.</td>
<td>Only if arrived on permanent visa (before Aug 2003) and granted permanent residence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Same ability to leave the country and return as other permanent residents.</td>
<td>Travel, even if permitted, voids the protection submission.</td>
<td>No automatic right of return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work rights</td>
<td>Permission to work.</td>
<td>Permission to work but job search severely restricted by TPV.</td>
<td>Only if apply for a permanent visa within 45 days of arriving in Australia. Work rights removed if appeal decision beyond Refugee Review Tribunal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English classes</td>
<td>Access to 510 hours of English language training through AMES.</td>
<td>Not eligible for federally funded English language programs or translating and interpreting services.</td>
<td>No access to federally-funded English language programs. No access to Translating and Interpreter Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Benefits</td>
<td>Same eligibility for Medicare and Health Care Card as other permanent residents.</td>
<td>Eligible for Medicare and Health Care Cards.</td>
<td>Eligible for Medicare only if eligible for work rights (problems for unattached minors). Removed if appeal decision beyond Refugee Review Tribunal. No access to Torture and Trauma Services. No Health Care Card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Assistance with public housing included within settlement services.</td>
<td>Not entitled to on-arrival accommodation. Limited access to public housing.</td>
<td>No access to housing support – reliant on community-based or church-affiliated organisations. Significant rates of homelessness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 There were some changes to these areas of eligibility in light of amendments to social security legislation that saw some refugees on TPVs (those that apply for Special Benefit after January 2003) being able to access the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program provided through Department of Employment Services and Training. The above table is slightly adapted from the Ecumenical Migration Centre’s and the Brotherhood of St Lawrence’s Changing Pressures Bulletin ‘Seeking asylum: Living with fear, uncertainty and exclusion’, November 2002, [available online]: http://www.bsl.org.au/catalogue/33.html. The table does not include asylum seekers confined in detention centres and does not claim to show all the details of eligibility for every specific category of visa-holder.
Consultation was conducted about the main components of the proposed framework. Although the funding mechanism that is part of the framework has since been modified, the results of the consultation are still valid because they focused more on the appropriateness of the people-focused approach to service delivery than the specific means of funding such an approach. Consultation was conducted by the Network with five organisations/representatives. These included the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre run by the Hotham Mission in Footscray and SPAN Neighbourhood House in Thornbury, organisations providing services that complement (and in some cases overlap) with those of the Network. Consultation was also conducted in the two areas, Dandenong and Mildura, identified by the Network as possible sites for a trial of the proposed framework. The Dandenong Asylum Seeker Centre, the Dandenong Association of Hazaras and a Mildura church were represented in the latter consultations.

The outcomes of the consultations are as below:

- Organisations funded by OTTE/ACFE shared a similar problem to that faced by the Network, in that they were consistently delivering more hours than service delivery funding covered. For example, SPAN House receives funding to deliver 5500 hours per year, but actually delivers 8000 and believes an optimum level would be 25 000;
- There was general agreement that the Network’s people-focused model is very successful and essential when working with the target group. This is because it combines ESL with unconditional, accessible welfare services, a safe, welcoming, culturally-sensitive environment and an approach based both on social justice and a desire to nurture the independence and build the capacity of refugee communities;
- All consultations highlighted that organisations supporting refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers are woefully under-resourced. In particular, funding for ESL learning, including that from ACFE, is never adequate enough to meet the needs presented by this group;
- There was also agreement that support for refugee, TPV holders and asylum seekers requires multiple funding sources and that a whole of government format would create a united front benefiting everyone involved in the refugee sector;
- There was some feeling, however, that the specific areas and sources of funding depicted by the framework would need to be discussed in greater detail before it could be adopted wholeheartedly;
- It was agreed that the service delivery model might be replicable if existing resources and networks were built upon, with established organisations/groups providing a clear pathway, guidance and strategies to put in place for those new to working in this field;
- Consultations in Dandenong and Mildura identified significant need within these two communities for improved and more expansive support for the target group.
Dandenong

A representative from the Association of Hazara in Dandenong indicated that there were few services in Dandenong/Springvale for TPV holders. Some assistance was provided by the Afghan Welfare Association of Australia (which included non-Hazara individuals, a potential source of tension), a volunteer ESL program run by the Monash Students Association and TAFE. But these did not begin to address the barriers to learning faced by the Hazara community. The same Hazara representative saw a great need for the Network’s service delivery model to be replicated in Dandenong, given this is where many of the TPV holders live, and believes that if such a model was put in place it would be widely utilised.

A representative from the Dandenong Asylum Seeker Centre also highlighted significant need amongst other asylum seekers. This organisation assists approximately 80 adults and 50 children, mainly refugees on bridging visas, through the provision of emergency relief and whatever other support possible (such as rent assistance and informal networks of support and friendship through volunteer one-on-one English tutoring). Only running two days per week and critically short of space, the current centre is funded by donations and supported by the structure of a local church. Although this organisation did not consider itself as a suitable site for implementing the service delivery model, the benefits to be gained from the framework were recognised.

Mildura

A representative from a local church in Mildura indicated that approximately 110 people (mostly Iraqi with some Afghani TPV holders) including children, are currently being assisted in this area. Some of the TPV holders with families have settled permanently in the area and are in standard rental accommodation, but the nature of the fruitpicking work which attracts them to Mildura means that the population there is more transient than TPV holder communities in Melbourne.

There is no formal support mechanism in Mildura, with a minister’s wife acting as a contact person and the local doctor, community health centre and TAFE (which runs ESL classes two nights a week) providing a degree of support. The Ethnic Communities Council arranged a welcome for the TPVs and used to run a volunteer English tutoring program, while the minister’s wife has tried to encourage friendships and support in the community through morning teas. It was difficult for the representative consulted to regard any particular organisation as a suitable site for implementing the Network’s proposed framework without further consultation in the community, but support was offered for the framework in general.
Summary

There was unanimous support for better relationships, networking and inter-agency referral to be developed between organisations assisting the target group. Indeed, the consultation process provided a first step in this direction, with those contacted keen to stay in touch with the Network and to learn from and utilise the successful services it has developed.
APPENDIX E: RESEARCH INTERVENTION

Having decided to use much of the research funding to implement and assess an intervention that would allow it to spread its workload in a more sustainable manner, the Network firstly identified the key roles that needed to be filled to continue achieving successful learning outcomes. In addition to the existing governance role of the committee of management and the roles of coordinator, Computer Clubhouse coordinator, financial officer, teachers and volunteers, the Network identified the need for a refugee support worker and an administrative assistant. While it was anticipated that all staff and volunteers would benefit from the establishment of these two new positions, they were targeted at ‘buying out’ some of the coordinator’s time so that she was able to focus more specifically on a strategic, lobbying role.

Employment of a Refugee Support Worker

The Network identified that the effective support of refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers required the employment of a fully-trained social worker. Previous discussion has already highlighted the importance of the social work role that the Network provides. The Network’s experience demonstrates how easy it is for staff and volunteers, who are not trained as social workers and who do not have the necessary professional support to fall back on, to make mistakes and/or become burned out. All of the staff and volunteers interviewed for this research indicated that they had engaged in a social work role with students at some point in their time with the Network and for many this role was undertaken on a daily basis. They spoke of the stress this placed on their own personal lives and how they expected this to increase as the visas of TPV holders expired.

Recognition of the need for a dedicated person to manage and coordinate volunteers has also come from the Network’s own experience in recent months. Given that official funding is never likely to cover all of the activities that a non-governmental organisation becomes involved in, any organisation working from the proposed framework will require a committed pool of volunteers to provide assistance to paid staff. The Network relies on a small number of regular volunteers to organise the Tuesday and Thursday lunches and to assist with routine tasks such as gardening. Other volunteers may be called upon less regularly to help with fundraising. However, potential volunteers have remained unharnessed by the Network because Anne Horrigan-Dixon, the coordinator, has not had time to screen and manage new volunteers. Since Kerry Finlayson, the Computer Clubhouse coordinator, joined the organisation, some of the responsibility for volunteers has fallen on her but this has taken time and effort away from her core role. Both she and Anne emphasise that volunteer management is both a complex and time-consuming job, made even more delicate than staff management because of the voluntary nature of the work individuals engage in. As a result, the Network was at that time taking on only volunteers that they already knew, because they did not have time for necessary screening.
To address both of these weaknesses identified by the Network, Veronica Young, a newly-qualified social worker who had worked with the organisation while on placement as a student, was employed in March 2003.

Key tasks

- **Case management** - Veronica has spent about one-quarter to one-third of her time doing specific case-work with clients, depending on the composition of Network classes and the needs of students at varying times. In addition to acting as a source of information and help to a large number of students, Veronica has provided **intensive** casework for six TPV holders, two individuals who have PPVs and three individuals and one family who are asylum seekers. These clients came from Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. The type of assistance Veronica has offered in this case management role includes:

  - Informal counselling;
  - Support letters to UNHCR;
  - Linking children with an appropriate school;
  - Liaising with student welfare officers to provide school books for asylum seekers;
  - Emergency relief, including housing, clothing, Centrelink, emergency dental care and medical care;
  - Liaising with Hotham Mission and setting up other supports in local areas of asylum seekers to provide emergency relief;
  - Negotiating with bank and collection departments about overdraft fees that asylum seekers cannot pay;
  - Liaising with lawyers to give clients information about the progress of their cases, going to information sessions about visas and supporting refugees when being interviewed at the legal centre;
  - Building a relationship with job agencies, such as Gap Co;
  - Assisting with resume writing.

In addition to providing specific assistance to refugees, the establishment of a refugee support worker position at the Network has had a positive impact on the organisation as a whole. For example, a social worker at the North Yarra Health Centre, which has long had a relationship with the Network, reports that staff at the Network are less likely to panic about refugee welfare issues and, with an agreement established so that Veronica can call ahead and ensure that the NYHC is prepared, this results in less stress for the Network’s students. She also reports positive feedback from clients about their ability to gain assistance from Veronica, particularly in relation to medical and other appointments.

In addition, Katherine Marshall, the social worker at the Asylum Seeker Project (ASP) located at Hotham Mission, was very appreciative of the work Veronica is doing. The ASP provides housing and volunteer support to hundreds of asylum seekers ineligible for any financial support from government sources. With only three paid positions, the majority of the ASP’s work is taken up by volunteers. As a paid
social worker to whom the ASP can refer asylum seekers to for help, Veronica thus acts as an important resource for it and other struggling agencies. Unfamiliar with the Network’s role prior to being contacted by Veronica, Katherine also now refers several asylum seekers to the free English classes that the Network provides.

Both new and longer-term students who took part in focus groups emphasised how much they appreciated having a specific person to whom they can turn when they need assistance. One participant noted “Veronica is everything” when talking about the wide range of issues he felt he could now present to Veronica and all students noted that they knew of no other place where they could learn English and get this kind of help all at the same place and in such a friendly, family-like atmosphere. Those students who had been associated with the Network for some time indicated that Veronica’s employment had relieved some of the pressure on Anne. They felt quite happy about seeking help from Veronica rather than Anne because she is regarded as knowledgeable and has more time to assist them.

- **Community development** - Veronica has also been involved in what might best be described as community development work, including:
  
  - Building links with a Neighbourhood House in Blackburn which now assists in providing regular food for asylum seekers;
  - Setting up supports in the suburbs where refugees actually live and incorporating community education talks from asylum seekers into this;
  - Building links with Rural Australians for Refugees;
  - Building on relationships with medical centres, emergency aid centres and other refugee organisations;
  - Establishing a protocol to follow for emergency relief situations (e.g. when a recently released detainee settles in the community);
  - Attending refugee and asylum seeker network meetings to talk over problems arising and current support;
  - Assisting with Network community building activities, including organisation of the play, end-of-term parties, excursions, holidays and public speaking engagements to raise community awareness;
  - Developing strategies to link new people into the community (e.g. football tickets donated, which linked refugees with supporters);

Once again, students indicated that they appreciated the extra activities that Veronica had been able to organise since she started in March because these gave them a ‘chance to forget their problems’, to practice their English and to make new friends.

- **Volunteer coordination** - This has included:
  
  - Developing a better communication process for volunteers, including regular emails;
  - Setting up a screening session for new volunteers;
  - Responding to people offering to be a volunteer;
  - Beginning to develop a volunteer strategy so that current volunteers are clear about their roles and feel valued, with new volunteers matched to position descriptions identifying the specific skills required by the Network.
Key outcomes

The employment of a refugee support worker at the Network from March 2003, has had the following benefits:

- There is an on-site, qualified social worker to deal with case work issues in a professional, consistent manner;
- The social work needs of students are able to be assessed more quickly and accurately, with appropriate support or referral provided more efficiently;
- The Network is able to provide continuity of care for refugees, TPV holders and asylum seekers because they always deal with the same person about social work-related issues and are able to develop an ongoing relationship with her;
- The Network has been able to provide support to TPV holders at a particularly stressful time due to their visas expiring;
- The Network now has the capacity to assist, and is attracting, a new group – asylum seekers – who present even greater needs than TPV holders. New asylum seeker students who took part in a focus group were very appreciative of the support they had found at the Network because they felt that it was not available elsewhere;
- A structure has now been developed so that the Network is better prepared for emergency relief situations. This means not only less stress on staff but less pressure on the Network’s financial resources because support networks have been established to provide much of this relief;
- Other staff and volunteers are less likely to have their work interrupted and are less vulnerable to burnout because they can now pass on refugee support issues to Veronica;
- Other staff, volunteers and students are at less risk because staff and volunteers are less likely to participate in social work activities for which they are not trained;
- Anne and Kerry have been relieved from much of the community development work (especially arranging social activities) they previously did, allowing them to focus on their own respective roles;
- Anne and Kerry have also been relieved from having to deal with the day-to-day coordination of Network volunteers.

Employment of an Administrative Assistant

A second component of the research intervention was the employment of an administrative assistant to maintain the day-to-day administrative systems and deal with the ‘front-of-house’ business of the organisation. With some sessional assistance, Scott Thornton, a retired accountant, has filled this role from 1997, as well as his key function as financial officer. When Scott took responsibility for the Network’s detailed financial reporting at this time, Anne was freed up to focus on the ‘big picture’, including applying for funding to sustain the organisation, such as the Hmong Resettlement Scheme funds granted by DIMIA. However, as the Network’s
services and the reporting and auditing requirements of funding bodies have expanded, so has Scott’s role.

It was anticipated that the employment of Tanaya Roy, a recent Arts/Law graduate, in March 2003 would alleviate Scott, Anne and other staff from a broad range of day-to-day administrative tasks that they had previously had to complete alongside their own, more specialised work.

Key tasks

- Answering the phone and screening calls;
- Writing routine letters;
- Responding to routine phone calls;
- Checking emails;
- Handling the administration (mailouts, enquiries and RVSPs) for fundraising activities;
- Assisting teachers with their assessment paperwork and photocopying;
- Routine errands, including buying stamps and ordering flowers if someone is sick;
- Assisting with the Network’s audit requirements, including producing brochures for specific programmes and doing the basic setting up of audit material;
- Information gathering e.g. finding relevant legislation relating to audit requirements or refugees on the internet;
- Ensuring the stationery cupboard is fully stocked, so that the resources needed by other staff (particularly the teachers) are always available.

In addition to having a positive impact on staff, students who had attended the Network for some time indicated that they felt the office was more organised since Tanaya had been employed. They also appreciated having the same person answer the phone or greet them in the office when they needed information. A volunteer additionally noted how it was useful to be able to ask Tanaya for something without having to disturb either Anne or Scott from their work.

Key outcomes

- There is a full-time, dedicated administrative assistant with the skills, knowledge and time to complete administrative tasks easily and efficiently;
- There is a higher degree of professionalism in contact with phone callers because they are usually greeted by the same person. This has allowed for greater consistency and a more stream-lined message system;
- Flows of information and communication and have improved because Tanaya is a full-time point of contact for staff, volunteers and students and acts as a go-between for all these groups;
The Network’s policies and procedures have now been documented, collated and organised so that they are readily available when needed;

The Network is better able to meet its auditing requirements because Tanaya has been able to provide administrative support to Scott and Lesley;

Other staff have also been relieved from routine administrative tasks and are thus able to spend more time focused on their specific roles;

Recent fundraising ventures have been organised efficiently and relatively easily because Tanaya has been able to take over the time-consuming administrative tasks related to these. Thus, the organisation’s capacity to fundraise has increased;

More effort was able to be put into the Network’s application for PBI status, which has now been successful;

Volunteers feel less guilty about asking questions because they no longer have to rely on an already over-loaded Anne for assistance.

The ‘buying out’ of the Coordinator’s time

One of the main motivations behind employing both a refugee support worker and an administrative assistant was the need to relieve some of the pressure that had built up on Anne, the coordinator, because she was expected to be a ‘jack of all trades’. The expectation that the Network’s coordinator can and should do everything is unsustainable, because it leads to burn out and thus threatens the effective management and leadership of the organisation. In developing the research intervention, the Network recognised that, rather than attempting to be an expert in all fields, the coordinator should have a sound grasp of the day-to-day running of the organisation without actually carrying out routine duties that can be delegated to others. In addition, while the work of the majority of staff and volunteers is very much at the local, service delivery level, the Network identified that the coordinator’s role should be more focused on the community and societal levels where change is as equally important if community development is to take place (see McArdle 1993:4).

As a result, a third component of the research intervention was to ‘buy out’ some of the coordinator’s hours through the employment of both the refugee support worker and the administrative assistant, much of whose work she had been expected to do before the intervention. In this way, the key tasks of the coordinator position were redefined:

**Revised key tasks**

- Liaison with government at all three levels and other agencies, thus maintaining and building the networks that are so important to both an organisation’s success and positive outcomes for the target group;
- Awareness-raising within the local community, including the organisation of events such as the plays, which were an enormously successful means for building community awareness;
Advocacy at all levels, including with service providers and funding bodies as regards modifying procedures or establishing new relationships. Such an advocacy role is becoming increasingly important as local community organisations like the Network call upon the state government to lobby federal government regarding the rights of TPV holders to permanent residency and family reunification.

In being relieved from one-on-one casework with refugees and the organisation of social and fundraising activities, Anne is reported to be less stressed and more able to complete tasks without interruption. This component of the intervention has thus had the following outcomes:

**Key outcomes**

- The Network has benefited from the fact that Anne has had more time to think strategically and thus plan for the future rather than just deal with day-to-day crises. This is demonstrated in the Network’s draft strategic plan, which now reflects the many different arms of the organisation’s work that make up its people-focused model of learning;
- The Network has also been able enhance its advocacy role in the political sphere, with Anne heavily involved in lobbying politicians and working on wider social justice campaigns, such as the ‘Act of Humanity’ and ‘Refugees Say THANKYOU Australia’;
- The Network is now running more efficiently because Anne’s networking and lobbying skills and knowledge are being fully utilised;
- Following nine months of working part-time for health reasons, the intervention has allowed Anne to return as coordinator in a full-time capacity. This in turn has relieved other staff from having to take on a leadership role as well as their specific work areas;
- With the extra support available through the intervention, Anne was recently able to take three weeks holiday in the middle of the teaching term. This suggests that the Network is no longer so dependent on Anne and is thus less likely to be danger of collapsing without her.

**Summary of outcomes from the intervention as a whole**

In addition to the specific benefits that have been gained out of each component of the intervention, the improvements gained from the intervention as a whole include:

- The quality of the Network’s services has improved because all of the different components its people-focused approach to service delivery are now financially supported and staff have not had to spend as much time worrying where the next dollar is going to come from;
- Network staff now represent a more dynamic team with a wider range of professional skills and perspectives;
• There are clearer boundaries between staff roles, allowing staff to focus more on their respective work and to pass on other tasks to the appropriate staff member;
• The Network is a more sustainable organisation because it is less dependent on Anne, the coordinator. There is less expectation that she be a ‘jack of all trades’ because other staff have taken responsibility over much of the organisation’s day-to-day work. The Network is thus less likely to flounder when Anne leaves, either temporarily or permanently;
• Policies, procedures and systems are now in place that will, in the long-term, provide a greater degree of certainty and consistency;
• There is now less ‘fire fighting’ and more time for strategic planning because staff are able to reflect more about what they are doing and how they will do it in the future;
• Stronger links with the community have been developed, through both Veronica’s participation in refugee and asylum seekers networks and Anne’s greater capacity to develop a greater advocacy role at the political level;
• Staff have had more time to pursue and be successful in gaining new funding;
• The atmosphere at the Network is less chaotic, with students noting that staff appeared to be less rushed and less stressed when they ask for assistance now.

Challenges faced in implementing the intervention

The evidence suggests that the intervention employed by the Network has been highly successful. However, given the short space of time since the intervention began, there are some inevitable teething problems that the Network is still negotiating. These include:

• Adapting to further space constraints, due to two new staff and computers having to be housed at the already cramped Network site;
• Adapting to the changes in division of labour that the intervention has involved. For example, some volunteers and staff still use Anne as their first point of contact, when it would be now more appropriate to speak to Tanaya or Veronica. In addition, Anne is still getting used to informing other staff of her schedule and contact with others outside the organisation, so that they are able to effectively book her appointments and avoid overlaps in contacts;
• Establishing an appropriate supervision arrangement for Veronica who, as new social worker and the only such professional in the organisation, requires outside support. Veronica has received some supervision but is currently negotiating a new supervisor;
• Adjusting expectations of the amount of work that Tanaya has been able to relieve from Scott while she is still gaining all of the tacit knowledge that he has about the organisation and its systems. It is expected that, as time passes, Tanaya will need to ask fewer questions of Scott and he will receive greater benefit from this component of the intervention;

The above challenges are all relatively minor and are expected to be overcome as the intervention becomes more established.
### APPENDIX F: AUSTRALIAN STANDARD LITERACY PROFICIENCY RATINGS

#### Figure 6: Meaning of ASPLRs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASLPR</th>
<th>LISTENING</th>
<th>SPEAKING</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>WRITING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good comprehension in most formal and informal conversations with native speakers</td>
<td>Can participate effectively in conversation. Grammar is good. Less hesitation</td>
<td>Able to grasp essential meaning of complicated material, newspaper items, technical material relevant to work situation</td>
<td>Able to write complex sentences with minimal error and discern style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indicates understanding of complicated sequential instructions and understands short news bulletins</td>
<td>Can satisfy routine work and social requirements. Hesitates but has sufficient vocabulary to express self simply. Accent no bar to intelligibility</td>
<td>Able to read simple prose and complicated instructions in familiar context</td>
<td>Able to write a postcard, initiate notes and simple sentences of an accuracy that doesn't impede comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+</td>
<td>Comprehends simple sequential instructions and understands short aural tasks</td>
<td>Satisfies all survival needs and limited social demands. Cannot use long sentences. Uses tenses but with errors</td>
<td>Able to read short texts on subjects related to need. Fluency becoming more pronounced</td>
<td>Satisfies survival needs (banking/bills) and can initiate some social tasks. Still errors in spelling and sentence structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indicates comprehension of elementary instructions involving prepositions of place</td>
<td>Speaks in fragmented form about familiar situations. Satisfies minimum courtesy requirements</td>
<td>Able to understand simple comprehension, read a simple form, street signs, office and shop designations and numbers</td>
<td>Can fill in some forms, take directions from dictation and can write some sentences from own initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Gesture reliance, satisfies immediate needs comprehending elementary questions</td>
<td>Answers with learned utterances at times fragmented and incorrect eg. verb tenses</td>
<td>Reads alphabet, short instructions and simple sentences</td>
<td>Knows alphabet. Writes with reasonable accuracy, words and brief familiar utterances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0+</td>
<td>Very limited aural comprehension indicated by physical response eg. pointing</td>
<td>Pronunciation difficulties. Limited to name, nationality, address, number identification. May needs to have questions repeated.</td>
<td>Can recognize alphabet letters, familiar words and read aloud some suburbs and familiar signs.</td>
<td>Writing limited personal details and familiar words. Spelling problems and sometimes poor letter formation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Unable to function in English</td>
<td>May utter only a few words</td>
<td>May recognize only one or two words</td>
<td>Unable to write in English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 5 is the highest level on the ASPLR scale, representing Native Speaker fluency across all learning modalities.
REFERENCES


