

The Senate

Foreign Affairs, Defence and
Trade References Committee

Issues facing diaspora communities in
Australia

February 2021

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ISBN 978-1-76093-175-9

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Printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra

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List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

- 6.5 The committee recommends the government investigate ways to further recognise the many contributions of diaspora communities to Australia. Multicultural policy statements should reinforce the recognition and celebration of the contribution of diaspora communities to Australia.

Recommendation 2

- 6.7 The committee recommends that the Department of Home Affairs table the whole-of-government review report on the performance of the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy for the period 2016-18 as soon as possible.

Recommendation 3

- 6.13 The committee recommends that government departments running grant processes ensure that they:
- do not inadvertently disadvantage or exclude smaller and new and emerging community organisations;
 - have sufficient flexibility to meet the specific needs of communities;
 - use clear language and make generic advice on common issues and questions available in languages other than English; and
 - provide constructive feedback on unsuccessful applications submitted by community organisations.

Recommendation 4

- 6.15 The committee recommends that the Department of Home Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Social Services, review support available to community organisations wishing to apply for government grants to assist with capacity building to ensure it is appropriately targeted and publicised. This may include translating some resources and publishing some training online so it is more accessible.

Recommendation 5

- 6.22 The committee recommends that the government consider increasing awareness of the National Security Hotline as a means of reporting foreign interference by way of a multilingual media or information campaign and promoting awareness through peak groups.

Recommendation 6

6.26 The committee recommends that the government bring forward Magnitsky-style legislation having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on the use of targeted sanctions to address gross human rights abuses.

Recommendation 7

6.30 The committee recommends that the government consider the appropriateness of resourcing the Race Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission to reinvigorate the existing National Anti-Racism Strategy and Campaign in the immediate term.

Recommendation 8

6.31 The committee recommends that the government consider resourcing the development of a new and comprehensive national anti-racism framework.

Recommendation 9

6.32 The committee recommends that the development of the new national anti-racism framework include a comprehensive consultation process, with a focus on diaspora communities.

Recommendation 10

6.35 The committee recommends that any evaluation of the effectiveness of the Fourth National Action Plan, as well as any policy developed in this area in future, retains a focus on supporting CALD communities.

Recommendation 11

6.39 The committee recommends that the government clarify how it intends to respond to the identified need for some individuals to be able to access settlement services beyond their first five years in Australia.

Recommendation 12

6.44 The committee recommends that the government, in consultation with stakeholder and representative bodies, explore options to improve knowledge and understanding of diaspora communities within the public service and across the broader Australian population.

Recommendation 13

6.47 The committee recommends that the government explore opportunities for closer collaboration with public libraries in the provision of services to diaspora communities, including consideration of how to better articulate

and disseminate positive narratives about diaspora contributions in their local communities.

Recommendation 14

6.55 The committee recommends that the government consider establishing a single point of contact for Australia's diaspora communities.

Recommendation 15

6.56 In the context of better leveraging the unique expertise in Australia's diaspora communities, the committee recommends that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade develop an internal policy on diaspora community consultation, to make such consultation a systematic element in its policy development processes.

Recommendation 16

6.57 Acknowledging the value of diaspora-led development and humanitarianism, the committee recommends that the government support, where appropriate, the attendance and participation of active Australian-based diaspora organisations in intergovernmental dialogue and debate on relevant topics.

Recommendation 17

6.59 The committee recommends the government review its approach to communication with diaspora communities to ensure that essential information is being effectively disseminated, including through engaging with diaspora community organisations in the development and dissemination of information.

Recommendation 18

6.60 The committee recommends that the Department of Home Affairs develop guidance for communications tailored to diaspora groups for dissemination across government. The guidance should cover language, cultural sensitivity and consideration of modes of delivery.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Referral and conduct of the inquiry

1.1 On 14 May 2020, the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 26 November 2020:

Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia, with particular reference to:

support offered to diaspora community associations and similar organisations, including government grants and other funding;

safety concerns among diaspora communities, and means for strengthening the protection and resilience of vulnerable groups;

barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers;

opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities in Australia; and

any related matters.¹

1.2 On 8 October 2020 the reporting date was extended to 4 February 2021.²

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 Details of the inquiry were placed on the committee website at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_fadt. The committee also contacted a number of relevant individuals and organisations to notify them of the inquiry and invite submissions by 31 July 2020. The committee continued to receive submissions after the closing date. Public submissions received are listed at Appendix 1.

1.4 The committee held six public hearings via teleconference on:

- 29 September 2020;
- 9, 14 and 15 October 2020; and
- 2 and 6 November 2020.

1.5 A list of witnesses who gave evidence at the public hearings is available at Appendix 2. Submissions and the Hansard transcripts of evidence may be accessed through the committee website.

¹ *Journals of the Senate* No. 51— 14 May 2020, p. 1716.

² *Journals of the Senate* No. 70—9 November 2020, p. 2479.

- 1.6 The committee thanks the organisations and individuals who provided submissions and participated in the committee's hearings.

Background

Terminology

- 1.7 The committee notes that a number of organisations drew attention to definitions of diaspora.³
- 1.8 The Joint Standing Committee on Migration noted that the term is 'primarily used to refer to a group of people, bound together by a common ethno-linguistic and/or religious identity, who no longer reside in their home country'. It further noted that '[t]hrough once specific to groups of people who had fled their home country due to fear of persecution, the term diaspora has progressively adopted a far broader definition to reflect the contemporary trends of globalisation and transnationalism'.⁴
- 1.9 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has defined diaspora communities as 'those composed of people, including migrants and their descendants, who live outside but maintain active connections to their shared country of origin or ancestry'.⁵
- 1.10 The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) refers to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, encompassing Australian citizens, permanent residents and recently arrived migrants and refugee and humanitarian entrants 'who identify themselves as belonging to different ancestries'.⁶
- 1.11 The Australian Human Rights Commission noted that the broadness of the term can mean that a large proportion of Australian citizens could be considered diaspora communities in Australia.⁷
- 1.12 The committee was not provided with a definition of the term diaspora in the terms of reference and so it took a broad view of the term such as those outlined above.

³ Islamic Council of Victoria, *Submission 13*, p. 2; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 15*, p. 3; Dr Marinella Marmo, Dr Tiziana Torresi and Dr Pam Papadelos, *Submission 31*, p. 3; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, *Submission 56*, p. 3; Ms Denise Goldfinch, Chief Executive Officer, Diaspora Action Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1; Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 60*, p. 2.

⁴ Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Report on Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, March 2013, pp. 131-132.

⁵ DFAT, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, p.109.

⁶ *Submission 78*, p. 3.

⁷ *Submission 15*, p. 3.

Acknowledging the contribution of diaspora communities

1.13 Several organisations emphasised the value of diaspora communities, the contributions they make to Australian society and their potential to positively impact Australia's relationship with their home countries.⁸

1.14 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's CALD communities and their organisations. FECCA highlighted that:

Diaspora communities form a big part of Australia as a successful multicultural nation and Australia has a long tradition of diaspora communities settling in and restarting their lives in this country.⁹

1.15 Diaspora Action Australia (DAA) is a not-for-profit organisation supporting diaspora organisations, communities and groups in Australia. Ms Denise Goldfinch, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DAA, noted their role as 'valuable transnational facilitators and catalysts' capable of positively influencing 'how Australia is perceived internationally.'¹⁰ She added:

Diaspora are valuable knowledge holders of the social, political and economic dynamics of their home country. They're both willing and well placed to transfer this knowledge to relevant ministers, diplomats and DFAT personnel.¹¹

Multiculturalism overview

1.16 To investigate issues facing diaspora communities in Australia, it is important to place these within the context of multiculturalism in Australia.

⁸ See for example Ms Nadine Liddy, National Manager, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 13; Mr Joseph Youhana, *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 8; Mr Alim Osman, Uyghur Association of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 9; Mr Ricardo Piccioni, General Manager Government Relations, Football Federation Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 12; Professor Louise Edwards, Vice-President and International Secretary, Australian Academy of the Humanities, *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, pp. 15-16; Dr Sev Ozdowski, Chair, Australian Multicultural Council, *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 8; Mr Ray Marcelo, Assistant Secretary, Southeast Asia Regional Engagement Branch, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 28; Mr Mark Franklin, Director, Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 2; Mr Jorge Aroche, Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 12; Mr Noel Zihabamwe, Chairman, African Australian Advocacy Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 16; Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, *Submission 82*, p. 7; Responsible Technology Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 1; the Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter), *Submission 27*, p. 5; Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 60*, p. 1.

⁹ *Submission 56*, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1.

¹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1.

- 1.17 As noted in the latest Australian multicultural statement launched in March 2017, Australia is a successful multicultural society with almost half of the current population either born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas.¹²
- 1.18 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as at November 2019, 9.1 per cent of the Australian population aged 15 years or over (1.9 million people) were recent migrants or temporary residents who had arrived in the previous ten years.¹³ According to the United Nations, 30 per cent of Australia's population in 2019 was born overseas, giving it the 36th highest proportion of population born overseas of the 232 countries or areas covered.¹⁴
- 1.19 For a detailed overview of multiculturalism, including a brief history of Australia's cultural diversity, the foundations of Australian multicultural policy and the migration program, see Chapter 2 of the House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee on Migration's report for its inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia.¹⁵ See also Chapter 1 of the final report of the Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism which reported in August 2017.¹⁶

Current federal multicultural framework

- 1.20 Launched in March 2017, the current multicultural policy statement is *Multicultural Australia – united, strong, successful*.¹⁷ It states that 'our cultural diversity is one of our greatest assets – it sparks innovation, creativity and vitality'.¹⁸

¹² Australian Government, *Multicultural Australia United, Strong, Successful - Australia's Multicultural Statement*, March 2017, p. 3.

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Characteristics of recent migrants*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/characteristics-recent-migrants/nov-2019>, 12 June 2020, accessed 18 December 2020.

¹⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migrant Stock 2019*, table 3, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock-2019>, accessed 18 December 2020.

¹⁵ House of Representatives, Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Report on Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, March 2013, Chapter 2.

¹⁶ Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism, *Final report*, 17 August 2017. Note: There appears to have been no government response to the Senate Select Committee.

¹⁷ Home Affairs, Multicultural Affairs, 'Australia's multicultural policy history', <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/our-policy-history>, accessed 18 August 2020.

¹⁸ Australian Government, *Australia's multicultural statement*, 'Joint message from the Minister for Social Services and the Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs' March 2017, p. 13.

Commonwealth government arrangements

1.21 Responsibility for multicultural affairs sits in Home Affairs, which also has responsibility for immigration as well as federal law enforcement, national and transport security, criminal justice, emergency management and border related functions.¹⁹ Home Affairs also manages the Harmony Week initiative.²⁰ The mandate of Home Affairs is framed in terms of social cohesion.²¹ Home Affairs runs a number of programs and initiatives focusing on community safety and encouraging social, economic and civic participation.²² These programs are further outlined in Chapters 2 and 4.

1.22 Home Affairs engagement with diaspora communities is carried out through ministerial advisory bodies, portfolio community liaison networks, multicultural peak bodies, and intergovernmental groups, including:

- Australian Multicultural Council;
- Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory;
- Home Affairs Community Liaison Officers Network;
- Australian Federal Police Community Liaison Teams;
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia;
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network;
- Migration Council Australia;
- Settlement Council of Australia; and
- Senior Officials Outcomes Group.²³

1.23 Further information on the ministerial advisory bodies is provided below.

Australian Multicultural Council

1.24 The Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) was launched in August 2011. The AMC is a ministerially appointed body representing a broad cross-section of Australian interests that provides 'independent and robust advice' to government on multicultural affairs, social cohesion and integration policy and programs.²⁴

1.25 The AMC focuses on:

¹⁹ Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2019-20*, p. 2.

²⁰ See <https://www.harmony.gov.au/>, accessed 25 November 2020.

²¹ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 4.

²² Mr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Social Cohesion Division, Home Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 30.

²³ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, pp. 7-9.

²⁴ Home Affairs, Multicultural Affairs, 'Australian Multicultural Council', <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/amc>>, accessed 18 August 2020.

- strengthening public understanding of a shared 'Australian identity' as a unifying characteristic of Australia
- harnessing the economic and social benefits of our diverse population
- advancing programs and policies aimed at building harmonious and social cohesive communities
- promoting the importance of mutual respect and responsibility, which foster our shared Australian values, identity, and citizenship
- building stronger and more cohesive communities and addressing barriers to participation, including racism and discrimination
- promoting greater intercultural and interfaith understanding and dialogue.²⁵

The Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council

1.26 The Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council (RaMSAC) is a ministerially appointed body tasked with:

- providing advice on policies, programs and services that support positive settlement outcomes;
- identifying priorities relevant to migrants and refugees in order to advise the Minister;
- liaising and consulting with the community, service providers and stakeholders on key areas of focus determined by the Minister; and
- seeking advice from migrants and refugees on their views of proposed program and policy changes.²⁶

1.27 Home Affairs reported that RaMSAC 'works closely with the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services²⁷ to ensure its focus aligns with the Government's priorities for settlement'.²⁸

1.28 There appears to be little information publicly available about the work and activities of these two Councils.

Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services

1.29 A Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services was appointed under Home Affairs in December 2019.²⁹ This followed a recommendation from a government-commissioned independent review into Integration,

²⁵ AMC, *Submission 19*, p. 1.

²⁶ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 7. See also <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settle-in-australia/refugee-and-migrant-services-advisory-council>, accessed 25 November 2020.

²⁷ See below for more detail.

²⁸ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 7.

²⁹ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 16.

Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants, which provided its findings to the Prime Minister in February 2019.³⁰

- 1.30 The Coordinator-General provides national leadership and drives 'better settlement outcomes for refugees and migrants with a focus on employment, English language acquisition and community integration.' In its submission, Home Affairs reported that:

The Coordinator-General and her Office are building relationships and working closely [with] state and territory governments, industry, the community sector and refugees and migrants, and are working collaboratively with other Commonwealth agencies, to develop a more rigorous approach to defining and measuring settlement outcomes for refugees, humanitarian entrants and other migrants with specific settlement assistance needs.³¹

- 1.31 The Khmer Community of NSW provides assistance with resettlement and migration issues and acts as a cultural hub for the Cambodian diaspora community. The Khmer Community of NSW praised the role of the Coordinator-General supporting:

...continuous improvement in the design and delivery of the range of settlement services needed by diaspora communities. It provides a necessary human face and point of contact for regular and meaningful consultation with and feedback from diaspora communities around the co-design and responsive implementation of services, including tendered services.³²

Multicultural Access and Equity Policy

- 1.32 Home Affairs has lead responsibility for the coordination of the *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy*, developed in 1985.³³ It was introduced to ensure government programs and services meet the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The policy contains six commitments essential to the delivery of government programs and services in a multicultural society, including leadership, engagement, performance, capability, responsiveness and openness.³⁴
- 1.33 The policy guide states that agencies must report on their access and equity outcomes annually, which is then presented to the AMC. Further it states:

³⁰ Department of Home Affairs, *Reviews and inquiries*, 'Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia: the findings of a Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia', February 2019.

³¹ *Submission 78*, p. 16.

³² *Submission 59.1*, p. 5.

³³ Australian Government, *Multicultural Access and Equity in Australian Government Services Report 2013-2015*, 2017, Appendix D, p. 53.

³⁴ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 13.

Every three years the Department, in consultation with the AMC, will consolidate the annual reports departments and agencies have provided to prepare a whole-of-government review report on the policy's performance to the Government for tabling in Parliament.

Both the annual snapshot and the triennial report will incorporate feedback from Australia's CALD communities regarding the delivery of Australian Government services received through consultations and research coordinated by the Department.³⁵

- 1.34 The most recent whole-of-government report covering 2013-15, was tabled on 13 June 2017.³⁶

Foundations, Councils and Institutes

- 1.35 DFAT manages seven Foundations, Councils and Institutes (FCIs), covering 'a range of bilateral and regional relationships spanning Southeast and North Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.'³⁷ Discussed further in Chapter 5, the FCIs:

...engage relevant diaspora national bodies, community groups and individuals in pursuing their objectives and administer grants which are open to diaspora groups.³⁸

Building on current federal arrangements

- 1.36 Many witnesses considered that the full potential of diaspora communities to make positive contributions to Australian communities and objectives remained under acknowledged and underutilised.³⁹ Several suggested that this could be best addressed through a dedicated policy. Some also suggested that a new department dedicated to diaspora issues would be appropriate.
- 1.37 Ms Goldfinch noted that '[h]arnessing the unique value of diaspora is impossible to achieve without developing an enabling environment shaped by a comprehensive diaspora policy'.⁴⁰ DAA Diaspora Learning Network Coordinator, Ms Lorenza Lazzati, added that such a policy should be codesigned with diaspora communities, set out clear parameters for diaspora

³⁵ Australian Government, *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Guide*, 2018, p. 7.

³⁶ Australian Government, *Multicultural Access and Equity in Australian Government Services Report 2013-15*, 2017.

³⁷ DFAT, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

³⁸ DFAT, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

³⁹ See for example Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy, FECCA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 1; Mr Mark Franklin, Director, Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 2; Dr Casta Tungaraza, Chair, Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 18; Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, *Submission 82*, p. 7.

⁴⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1.

engagement with government, identification of priority areas for strategic interest and some guidelines for coordinating and ongoing consultation.⁴¹

- 1.38 Dr Christina Parolin, Executive Director of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, stated that there is a need for a 'national strategy to coordinate both diaspora policy and capability development across relevant portfolios and agencies.'⁴²

Acknowledging and celebrating diaspora contribution

- 1.39 Mr Vikramjit Singh Grewal, member representing the National Sikh Council of Australia, Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales (NSW), an organisation representing CALD community groups in NSW, expressed disappointment at the lack of recognition of diaspora contributions and achievements in national monuments and museums. He gave an example of efforts, to date unsuccessful, to have the contribution of Sikh soldiers recognised in existing war memorials.⁴³

- 1.40 Associate Professor Farida Fozdar, Dr Sarah Prout Quicke, Dr David Mickler, Dr Dominic Dagbanja and Dr Muhammad Dan Suleiman commented that the fact that these responsibilities reside under Home Affairs represented 'a far more securitised framing of responsibility towards Australia's migrants' than previously, adding:

Rather than a celebratory and inclusive approach, the tenor of this department is around security.⁴⁴

- 1.41 They suggested that:

A key signal that migrants are not seen as a threat to Australia, nor simply an economic resource, would be the provision of a separate dedicated government department tasked with dealing with the issues raised by this inquiry, and other settlement issues.⁴⁵

- 1.42 Ms Alexandra Raphael, FECCA Director of Policy, praised the *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy* as 'good and strong':

It talks about communities being involved with service design and product design from the beginning rather than at the very end...It talks about the idea of two-way engagement and the idea that there should be back and forth between government agencies and these communities...⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 5.

⁴² *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 15.

⁴³ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Submission 64*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Submission 64*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 3.

1.43 Ms Raphael continued, however, that the policy had over recent years ‘faded from the forefront of people’s minds.’⁴⁷ She described the policy as a ‘tool that’s already there’ that ‘could be strengthened and better used by government agencies and government departments to look at the way they’re working and to change those structures’.⁴⁸ Chapter 5 contains further evidence on ways the government can utilise the knowledge and understanding of diaspora communities to support policies and programs.

State and Territory arrangements

1.44 While the committee did not receive many submissions on support provided to diaspora communities by state and territory governments, all state and territory governments have multicultural policies in place and dedicated offices, councils or commissions responsible for coordinating and supporting those policies.⁴⁹

New South Wales

1.45 Multicultural NSW is the lead agency for implementing the policy and legislative framework to support multicultural principles in New South Wales. The multicultural principles are set out in the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* as amended by the *Multicultural NSW Legislation Amendment Act 2014*.⁵⁰

Victoria

1.46 The Victorian Multicultural Commission was established as an independent body in 1983 and is now constituted under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.⁵¹ The Victorian government’s Multicultural Policy Statement, *Victorian. And proud of it.* was launched in 2017.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Multicultural NSW, <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/about>; Victorian Multicultural Commission, <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/>; South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission, <https://www.dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/multicultural-affairs/south-australian-multicultural-and-ethnic-affairs-commission>; Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council, <https://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/multicultural-affairs/policy-and-governance/multicultural-queensland-advisory-council.html>; Office of Multicultural Interests, Government of Western Australia, <https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/>; Department of Communities Tasmania, https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/for_and_about/migrant_and_multicultural_communities; NT Office of Multicultural Affairs, <https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/policy/multicultural-affairs>; ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs, <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/multicultural>, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵⁰ <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-077>, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵¹ <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/vmc-what-we-do>, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵² <https://www.vic.gov.au/multicultural-policy-statement>, accessed 18 January 2021.

Queensland

1.47 The current Queensland Multicultural Policy, *Our story, our future*, was published in December 2018.⁵³ It is part of a framework set out in the *Multicultural Recognition Act 2016*, along with the Multicultural Queensland Charter, the Queensland Multicultural Action Plan and the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council.

Western Australia

1.48 The Office of Multicultural Interests is a division of the Western Australia (WA) Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. The *Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework*, published in February 2020, translates the principles and objectives of the WA Charter of Multiculturalism from 2004 into policy priorities for WA public sector agencies.⁵⁴

South Australia

1.49 The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the development of multicultural policies and programs and the promotion of cultural diversity in South Australia (SA). The SA Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission is a statutory body established under the *South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1980*. A legislative review of the Act is currently underway.⁵⁵

Tasmania

1.50 The Tasmanian Government released *Our Multicultural Island: Tasmania's Multicultural Policy and Action Plan 2019-2022* in 2019, replacing the 2014 version.⁵⁶

Australian Capital Territory

1.51 The *ACT Multicultural Framework and Action Plan 2015-2020* provides guidance to assist Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government agencies and sets objectives on provision of services, participation and social cohesion, and diversity.⁵⁷ The Office of Multicultural Affairs provides advice to government on issues affecting members of multicultural communities living in the ACT.

⁵³ <https://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/multicultural-affairs/policy-and-governance/multicultural-policy-and-action-plan>, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵⁴ <https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/resources-and-statistics/publications/publication/wa-multicultural-policy-framework>, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵⁵ <https://www.premier.sa.gov.au/news/media-releases/news/legislative-reform-to-better-support-south-australia-s-multicultural-community>, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵⁶ https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/policy/Policy_Work/our-multicultural-island-tasmanias-multicultural-policy-and-action-plan-2019-2022, accessed 18 January 2021.

⁵⁷ https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/826817/ACT-Multicultural-Framework-2015-2020-2.pdf, accessed 18 January 2021.

The ACT Multicultural Advisory Council was established in 2017 and acts as a conduit to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on the views of members of culturally diverse communities.

Northern Territory

1.52 A new *Multicultural Policy for the Northern Territory 2020-25* was recently launched.⁵⁸ The Northern Territory Office of Multicultural Affairs in the Department of the Chief Minister will provide a review of the policy's implementation to the Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs on an annual basis.

Acknowledgement

1.53 The committee thanks the individuals and organisations who provided submissions and gave evidence at hearings. The committee particularly acknowledges those who gave evidence about safety concerns in the areas of foreign interference, racism, discrimination and family violence covered in Chapter 3.

Structure of the report

1.54 The report consists of seven chapters:

- Chapter 1 is the referral, conduct of the inquiry and some background information;
- Chapter 2 covers support available for diaspora communities;
- Chapter 3 details safety concerns;
- Chapter 4 covers barriers to full participation in Australia's democratic and social institutions;
- Chapter 5 examines opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships with government;
- Chapter 6 details the committee's conclusions and recommendations.

⁵⁸ https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/889632/Multicultural-Policy.pdf, accessed 18 January 2021.

Chapter 2

Support offered to diaspora community associations

- 2.1 This chapter covers the importance of community diaspora organisations, how governments provide support to those organisations and barriers and challenges for diaspora organisations seeking government support.
- 2.2 Support offered to diaspora communities is provided through a number of avenues, including Commonwealth, state/territory and local council funding. Funding may also be dispersed to diaspora organisations through larger, intermediary organisations. This chapter does not cover government support provided directly to individuals, which is covered in Chapter 4.

Importance of community organisations

- 2.3 The importance of diaspora community associations and organisations was emphasised to the committee.¹
- 2.4 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) highlighted that ethno-specific community organisations serve essential and diverse roles as support for their communities and act as 'a place to feel a sense of belonging, support and understanding'.² FECCA detailed that these organisations or associations are created out of a need in the community for 'support and representation and are often the first point of contact for many people on arrival in a new country'.³
- 2.5 The Settlement Council of Australia (SCA) is the peak body representing the majority of settlement services across Australia. Ms Sandra Wright, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SCA noted the commitment of settlement organisations to 'supporting migrants and refugees to reach their full potential in Australia'.⁴
- 2.6 The Migration and Refugee Research Network, a network of researchers, service providers, students and community members, also emphasised the

¹ See for example Fairfield City Council, *Submission 40*, p. 5; Ms Sandra Wright, CEO, Settlement Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 12; Ms Denise Goldfinch, CEO, Diaspora Action Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 4; Ms Sarina Greco, President, Afghan Australian Development Organisation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 19; African Think Tank, *Submission 45*, p. 4; New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, *Submission 71*, p. 4.

² *Submission 56*, p. 3.

³ *Submission 56*, p. 3.

⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 12.

crucial role of community associations in supporting diaspora communities, noting that this 'has been further highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic'.⁵

- 2.7 Ms Susan Gibbeson, Manager, Social Planning and Community Development, Fairfield City Council (FCC), noted that Fairfield, which in the period between 1 January 2016 and 30 June 2019 was home to about 70 per cent of all humanitarian entrants to New South Wales (NSW), 'is home to a multitude of locally based, often ethnospecific, organisations who are genuinely community run and who are trusted by and support the community.'⁶ She further noted that:

These organisations have been developed by the people who they serve. They are place-based and community focused. They are organisations in which community members engage and learn the systems and processes of Australia. They are the foundation that has led to the success of many refugees who have made Australia their home and who have established much-loved businesses.⁷

- 2.8 Several witnesses observed that many diaspora organisations are primarily or entirely run by volunteers.⁸ Ms Wright noted that there is 'a lot of volunteer time that goes into the sector' and that there is 'a large number of volunteers as well as employees who regularly go above and beyond their paid work to assist people in the community.'⁹ Some of these organisations, including United Macedonian Diaspora Australia, which represents the interests of the Macedonian diaspora in Australia, are run with only community support.¹⁰
- 2.9 FECCA also noted that diaspora community associations or organisations serve as a bridge between government and community and require 'adequate funding and resources to be able to continue their important job of welcoming, supporting and connecting with new arrivals'.¹¹ FECCA drew the committee's attention to the results of their community consultations, in which they heard

⁵ *Submission 63*, p. 1.

⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 4.

⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 4.

⁸ Mrs Verka Sekulovska, Director, United Macedonian Diaspora Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 13; New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, *Submission 71*, p. 5; Mr Trung Doan, Representative, South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations Council Inc., *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 4; Ms Denise Goldfinch, CEO, Diaspora Action Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 3; Dr Anthony Pun, OAM, Chair, Multicultural Communities Council New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 3.

⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 13.

¹⁰ Mrs Verka Sekulovska, Director, United Macedonian Diaspora Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 13.

¹¹ *Submission 56*, p. 4.

how inadequate finances are a major challenge in diaspora communities' self-representation and advocacy.¹²

Commonwealth funding framework

2.10 The committee predominately received evidence on the support provided by the Commonwealth government, receiving limited evidence on state/territory and local council support. Commonwealth support is administered to both established diaspora communities and recently arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants.

Department of Home Affairs

2.11 Responsibility for multicultural affairs sits with the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) which provides support and funding to multicultural communities. Home Affairs engagement with diaspora communities is carried out through ministerial advisory bodies, portfolio community liaison networks, multicultural peak bodies, and intergovernmental groups, including:

- Australian Multicultural Council;
- Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory;
- Home Affairs Community Liaison Officers Network;
- Australian Federal Police Community Liaison Teams;
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia;
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network;
- Migration Council Australia;
- Settlement Council of Australia; and
- Senior Officials Outcomes Group.¹³

2.12 The Home Affairs mandate places emphasis on social cohesion, community safety, encouraging social, economic and civic participation and strengthening opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities¹⁴ to engage with Australia's democratic and social institutions.¹⁵

2.13 In the 2019-20 Budget, the government funded a \$71 million package of social cohesion initiatives that encourage and support new arrivals to actively contribute to Australia's economic and social development, build interfaith

¹² *Submission 56*, p. 4.

¹³ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁴ For the purpose of this inquiry, the Department of Home Affairs views CALD communities as encompassing Australian citizens, permanent residents and recently arrived migrants and refugee and humanitarian entrants.

¹⁵ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 3.

and intercultural understanding, encourage a diversity of perspectives in the public debate and promote resilience against harmful or divisive messages.¹⁶

2.14 Grant funding is provided to diaspora organisations primarily through the *Fostering Integration Grants* program which:

...helps local community organisations to deliver programs and activities that give migrants the best chance of succeeding – assisting them to integrate into Australian economic, social and civil life, while promoting Australian values.¹⁷

2.15 Mr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Social Cohesion Division, Home Affairs, told the committee that, in the last round of the *Fostering Integration Grants* program, the government funded 42 community organisations working to strengthen integration.¹⁸

2.16 The *Community Languages Multicultural Grants* Program 'provides funding to eligible community languages schools to help students learn and use another language and connect young Australians to languages and cultures of their community.'¹⁹

2.17 Home Affairs also manages the Harmony Week initiative, a public engagement promotional campaign that supports diversity and acceptance. Since 1999, more than 80,000 Harmony Week (formerly Harmony Day) events have been held in 'childcare centres, schools, community groups, sporting organisations, churches, businesses and federal, state and local government agencies across Australia.'²⁰

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

2.18 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) manages annual funding of around \$5.5 million through the *International Relations Grant Program* allocated across seven Foundations, Councils and Institutes (FCIs), further discussed in Chapter 5.²¹ These FCIs engage relevant diaspora national bodies, community groups and individuals and administer grants which are open to diaspora groups.²² DFAT submitted that FCIs have provided regular funding for diaspora cultural events such as:

¹⁶ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 5.

¹⁷ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 15.

¹⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 30.

¹⁹ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 15.

²⁰ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 13.

²¹ The seven FCIs include: Australia-Indonesia Institute, Australia-ASEAN Council, Australia-Japan Foundation, Australia-Korea Foundation, Australia-India Council, Council for Australia-Arab Relations and Council of Australia Latin America Relations. See DFAT, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

²² DFAT, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

the Indonesian Film Festival, supported by the Australia-Indonesia Institute (AII), and the Latin Film Festival, supported by the Council of Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR). Support is also provided for peak meetings and galas, which are important events in community calendars. Examples include the biennial conference of the National Federation of Australia-Japan Societies, supported by the Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF), and the Annual Business Excellence Awards, presented by the Australia-Latin America Business Council with support from COALAR. In 2021, the Australia-Korea Foundation (AKF) will facilitate and support commemorations for the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and the Republic of Korea, including work with the Korean diaspora to highlight and deepen existing people-to-people links.²³

2.19 In addition, through a competitive grants process FCIs have also funded projects based in diaspora communities:

In 2019, the Council for Australia-Arab Relations (CAAR) supported the Islamic Society of South Australia to hold the Al Salam Festival in Adelaide. The AJF has funded a homestay program run by the ACT's Australia Japan Society for youth from tsunami-affected Tohoku. The Australia-ASEAN Council (AAC) provides regular support for the ASEAN Australia Games, a sporting event promoting camaraderie and understanding between members of Southeast Asian diasporas in Australia.²⁴

2.20 DFAT runs the three-year *Australian Aid: Friendship Grants* program, which aims to bring some of the best Australian community organisations, including diaspora groups, into the Australian aid program by providing grants of \$30,000 to \$60,000, allowing them to expand or enhance their existing international development activities.²⁵

2.21 DFAT also manages the *Australia NGO Cooperation* Program, which provides annual grants to accredited Australian NGOs to support their projects in developing countries.²⁶

2.22 At a hearing, Mr Ray Marcelo, Assistant Secretary, Southeast Asia Regional Engagement Branch, DFAT, told the committee that due to COVID-19 a number of grants rounds have been delayed.²⁷

²³ *Submission 20*, p. 1.

²⁴ DFAT, *Submission 20*, p 2.

²⁵ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/friendshipgrants/Pages/default>, accessed 6 January 2021.

²⁶ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/ngos/ancp/Pages/australian-ngo-cooperation-program>, accessed 6 January 2021.

²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 25.

Department of Social Services

2.23 The Department of Social Services (DSS) manages the *Strong and Resilient Communities Activity*, which 'provides grants funding over three and a quarter years to build strong and resilient communities by supporting local community organisations in their efforts to overcome disadvantage and solve complex social problems.'²⁸

State/territory and/or local council funding

2.24 The committee did not receive specific information on the support state and territory governments and local councils provide to diaspora organisations.

2.25 FECCA specified that state government or local council grants for diaspora communities help to strengthen relationships between government and the community. By way of example, FECCA highlighted that multicultural arts grants and funds have proved to be very successful in multicultural hubs such as in the City of Blacktown, New South Wales. These grants have empowered community members to celebrate their cultures and histories through art, while working closely with local government officers and building 'a strong sense of belonging to the area'.²⁹

Settlement services

2.26 The role of settlement services in supporting the successful settlement of diaspora communities was highlighted to the committee. Much government settlement support is provided directly to individuals. This support is covered in Chapter 4. Settlement support available to community organisations is covered below.

Commonwealth programs

2.27 Alongside grant funding, diaspora community associations also receive support from the Commonwealth through programs and services such as settlement services and English language skills programs. Several submitters noted the importance these programs play in supporting the successful settlement of diaspora communities in Australia and their role in fostering social cohesion by improving the English language capabilities of diaspora community members.

2.28 The government spends around \$500 million annually on providing settlement support to refugees, humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants within the first five years of arrival in Australia.³⁰

²⁸ <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities-communities-and-vulnerable-people/strong-and-resilient-communities>, accessed 8 January 2021.

²⁹ *Submission 56*, p. 4.

³⁰ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, pp.15-16.

- 2.29 The *National Settlement Framework*³¹ and the *National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards* identify nine priority areas for migrants and refugees to achieve effective settlement: education; employment; health and wellbeing; housing; language services; transport; civic participation; family and social support; and justice.³²
- 2.30 The *Safer Communities Fund* program aims to boost 'the efforts of identified local councils and community organisations to address crime and anti-social behaviour' and 'protecting community organisations that may be facing security risks associated with racial or religious intolerance'.³³
- 2.31 Under the *Enhanced Community Engagement* program, in May and June 2020, Home Affairs ran the 'CommUNITY' training package. CommUNITY aimed to enhance 'the capacity of a range of ethnic and religious communities across Australia to address hate and online extremism'.³⁴

State/territory funding for settlement services

- 2.32 Ms Wright of SCA told the committee that, although settlement activities are primarily funded by the Commonwealth, diaspora organisations do source funding from state, territory and local governments 'to address [a] range of gaps that appear in settlement needs'.³⁵

Barriers and challenges for organisations seeking government support

- 2.33 Witnesses raised a number of issues and concerns with government funding, which fall into two main categories. The first relates to the current funding model. The second category of issues and concerns relates to the grant application process.

Current model

- 2.34 Concerns relating to the current funding model include the move away from a community based funding model; the lack of coordination; a failure to focus on priority issues and vulnerable communities; and the difficulties faced by small organisations in satisfying grant reporting requirements.

³¹ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 16.

³² SCA, *Submission 23*, p. 2. See also, SCA, June 2015, *National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards*, http://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SCoA-National-Settlement-Services-Outcomes-Standards-2016_.pdf, accessed 25 August 2020.

³³ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 10.

³⁴ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 12.

³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 13.

Move away from a community based funding model

2.35 The turn away from a community based funding model was raised as a priority issue for a number of witnesses.³⁶ It was observed that government had transitioned away from funding community organisations directly and moved towards directing funding to commercial service providers or well established older community organisations.³⁷

2.36 The FCC noted in its submission that Commonwealth and state funding to support the settlement of refugees 'is concentrated in the hands of a small number of large community organisations'.³⁸

2.37 The New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), a non-profit organisation that assists refugee survivors of torture and trauma rebuild their lives in Australia, said that some activities 'are much better run by refugee organisations themselves' rather than the larger organisations that tend to obtain funding. It further added:

While it is understandable that Government needs to be assured that an organisation has the capacity to administer funds, grants being given to large service providers at the expense of smaller refugee community organisations have a potential to undermine self-reliance and self-efficacy among particular communities.³⁹

2.38 The Khmer Community of NSW stated that changes in Commonwealth government community grant funding structures and processes over the last two decades have 'effectively reduced much needed settlement support for diaspora communities'. The Khmer Community of NSW Inc. detailed that in the early 1980s, funding for settlement services was given directly to 'ethno-specific workers speaking the language of the new arrivals to facilitate their resettlement process' but that, since 2013, smaller ethnic organisations have been defunded in favour of larger consortiums or 'broker' organisations. The association stated that this change has had the effect of:

...marginalising consideration of the ethno-specific needs and perspectives of communities in the funding system and reducing understanding of specific cultural issues in the design and implementation of community-based projects'.⁴⁰

³⁶ Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales, *Submission 8*, p. 1; Khmer Community of NSW, *Submission 59*, p. 2.

³⁷ Khmer Community of NSW, *Submission 59*, p. 2; FCC, *Submission 40*, p. 5; Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales, *Submission 8*, p. 1. See also, Chinese Community Council of Australia, *Submission 9*, pp. 1-2.

³⁸ *Submission 40*, p. 5.

³⁹ *Submission 71*, p. 5.

⁴⁰ *Submission 59*, p. 2.

- 2.39 The Khmer Community of NSW emphasised the effects of this model 'preventing direct engagement between government and diaspora organisations' and resulting in 'reduced voice from and funding to smaller diaspora community organisations relating to their specific needs, goals and capabilities'.⁴¹
- 2.40 The Kateb Hazara Association is the largest Hazara association in NSW, representing multiple Hazara social and community groups. It noted that while concentrating funding in the hands of a small number of large organisations may be convenient for government, it has a negative impact on small community organisations which 'never develop capacity to manage our affairs and work directly with the Australian Government.'⁴²
- 2.41 Dr Cao Thang (Peter) Ha, Director of the Multicultural Communities Council (MCC) of NSW, made a similar observation and noted that, in addition to denying funds to smaller community-led organisations, this change in funding model had resulted in a deterioration in service delivery.⁴³
- 2.42 Mr Vikramjit Singh Grewal, member representing the National Sikh Council of Australia, MCC, added that an additional challenge for smaller diaspora communities was the basing of grants on census data.⁴⁴ This means that smaller communities can fail to reach threshold numbers to be eligible for funding or other opportunities.
- 2.43 Dr Anthony Pun, OAM, Chair, MCC, also criticised the lack of transparency in assessing grants:
- Nowadays, we're not sure who sits in the grants committee and who looks at the grants. There's no transparency anymore – that's my beef: a lack of transparency in the giving of the grants.⁴⁵
- 2.44 cohealth, a primary health provider prioritising people who experience social disadvantage, also placed emphasis on the benefit of community led support and projects:
- Community led projects address those [issues] that are most relevant to the community concerned in a culturally sensitive way. They draw on trusted relationships, and in turn can support the development of trust [between] community members, government and other authorities. Trust for authorities is a relationship that needs to be understood, supported and

⁴¹ *Submission 59.1*, p. 2.

⁴² *Submission 72*, p. 3.

⁴³ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 4.

maintained, and can be developed through meaningful engagement and partnerships.⁴⁶

- 2.45 In order to address the issues outlined above with the current funding model, several witnesses suggested to the committee that grant funding should return to the community based model, whereby government allocates grants and funding directly to community organisations.⁴⁷
- 2.46 The MCC, for example, suggested that funding should be provided 'direct to vulnerable communities, not directed through commercial service providers or restricted to older established community organisations'.⁴⁸
- 2.47 Diaspora Action Australia (DAA) CEO, Ms Denise Goldfinch, spoke in favour of the Commonwealth investing in 'testing new diaspora collaboration models and directly resourcing diaspora communities through codesigned funding streams'.⁴⁹ She argued that such investment would be 'cost-effective, impactful, sustainable and mutually beneficial'.⁵⁰

Lack of coordination

- 2.48 The MCC suggested that there is a fragmented approach to funding:

At present funding occurs without coordination and independently at national, state and local community levels and for single issues such as sport, health, legal, environmental – all very disjointed.⁵¹

- 2.49 Mr Grewal further noted that improved monitoring of groups applying for grants, with a view to encouraging coordination among different groups representing the same or overlapping communities, could result in 'better outcomes for the community as well as more efficient use of the resources'.⁵²
- 2.50 The Assyrian Resource Centre, which provides settlement assistance to the community in the Fairfield and Liverpool areas of NSW, also noted that whilst there are many organisations who strive to provide services to migrants and refugees and large amounts of funding flow into this area, the 'lack of oversight and coordination is not generating the best results'.⁵³

⁴⁶ *Submission 30*, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Khmer Community of NSW, *Submission 59*, p. 2; FCC, *Submission 40*, p. 7; DAA, *Submission 67*, p. 6; STARTTS, *Submission 71*, p. 13; MCC, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

⁴⁸ *Submission 8*, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 2.

⁵¹ *Submission 8*, p. 1.

⁵² *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 5.

⁵³ *Submission 2*, p. 1.

Lack of tailoring to address priority issues and smaller, vulnerable communities

- 2.51 Diaspora organisations identified that existing grants and funding often do not address priority issues facing diaspora communities, placing particular emphasis on the need to improve funding accessibility for smaller or 'micro' associations.⁵⁴
- 2.52 The MCC submitted that current funding models are not focused on priority issues and vulnerable communities. The MCC raised that truly vulnerable diaspora communities 'hardly get to experience the benefits of funding, especially as size, volunteer basis and lack of broader community support limits their opportunities'.⁵⁵
- 2.53 Mr Mark Franklin, Director of the MCC, suggested that it would be more effective if government grants were not organised thematically but targeted at priority communities and 'how the grant is used is developed in dialogue between the community and the government or the grant-making body', thereby focusing on 'a community in need as opposed to a focus on one particular issue or problem'.⁵⁶
- 2.54 In this context, the MCC recommended that there should be an independent inquiry into current migrant and diaspora community funding.⁵⁷
- 2.55 The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people aged 12-24 from refugee and migrant backgrounds. MYAN also supported improved tailoring of federal government funding, specifically with regard to mental health strategies 'to respond to the needs of diaspora youth'.⁵⁸
- 2.56 The Ma'di Community Council of Australia (MCCA), a not-for-profit community organisation representing Australians of Ma'di heritage, echoed this notion, highlighting that both state and federal grants 'are often made available for specific purposes that do not necessarily cover' the issues specifically facing its community'. The MCAA expressed readiness to partner with the government to design policy initiatives addressing those problems.⁵⁹
- 2.57 The FCC noted it was 'difficult for diaspora organisations with large numbers of newly arrived humanitarian entrants to secure settlement funds'.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ MCC, *Submission 8*, p. 1; South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations' Council, *Submission 14*, p. 1; FECCA, *Submission 56*, p. 4; FCC, *Submission 40*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Submission 8*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 3.

⁵⁷ *Submission 8*, p. 1.

⁵⁸ *Submission 17*, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Submission 6*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Submission 40*, p. 5.

Ms Susan Gibbeson, Manager, Social Planning and Community Development, FCC, further noted that the FCC did not receive any additional support in response to an influx of humanitarian entrants from 2016 to 2019, resulting in 'a lot of stress at the community level'.⁶¹ Ms Gibbeson told the committee that:

The Commonwealth brings in migrants and refugees and provides settlement services to the individual, but really it takes a whole community.⁶²

2.58 Through consultations with diaspora communities, FECCA identified that the limitations in criteria for funding opportunities often 'preclude new and emerging communities or activities' which these communities prioritise.⁶³

2.59 Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy, FECCA, welcomed increased government interest in engaging with it and its members, particularly in relation to new and emerging communities. Ms Raphael, however, noted that this increased engagement had not been accompanied by an increase in resources, stating that if 'community engagement is of value then it needs to be invested in, because it takes a lot of work.'⁶⁴

2.60 Ms Raphael suggested that grant programs should be targeted at small diaspora groups and that the groups should receive support to assist them to access such grants.⁶⁵

2.61 South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations Council Inc. (SEMVAC), a council promoting the interests of its member associations in Melbourne, made a similar recommendation that the government create grant programs that 'specifically target micro associations, where the amounts are micro but the administrative burdens are also micro'. SEMVAC also recommended that grant programs targeting micro associations should 'provide incentives to encourage growth, and help with costs such as public liability insurance'.⁶⁶

2.62 In suggesting that there be specific grant programs targeting micro associations, SEMVAC suggested incentives for applications with a track record or growth potential:

A lower grant limit may apply for first-time applicants, a medium limit for those who have been given grants in prior years thus showing that they are a going concern, a high limit for those which have passed audits thus

⁶¹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 4.

⁶² *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 4.

⁶³ *Submission 56*, p. 4.

⁶⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Submission 14*, p. 1.

proving their authenticity, and the highest limit for audited ones which show that they are growing.⁶⁷

Lack of grants management capacity

- 2.63 Through FECCA consultations, diaspora community organisations expressed concerns that their 'limited organisational structure and physical infrastructure is a disadvantage in major grant applications and therefore either do not apply or search for smaller one-off grants'.⁶⁸
- 2.64 Dr Pun OAM, MCC Chair, observed that many small organisations do not see pursuing government grants as a good use of resources given that even relatively small grants come with burdensome and costly reporting requirements.⁶⁹
- 2.65 Ms Goldfinch, DAA, made a similar observation in relation to the *Australia Aid: Friendship Grants Program*, noting that the concern of many small volunteer-run diaspora organisations about their 'ability to meet all the reporting requirements' acted as a deterrent to applying.⁷⁰
- 2.66 The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national umbrella body for refugees, people seeking asylum and the organisations and individuals who work with them. Mr Sayed Rahmatullah Hussainizada, Member, RCOA Steering Committee, said that small diaspora organisations are challenged by the 'mandatory and often strenuous reporting, regulatory and compliance requirements' accompanying government funding.⁷¹ To address such barriers, Mr Rahmatullah Hussainizada called for government to look at 'innovative approaches, including providing further resources such as advice, expertise, ongoing mentoring, upskilling and capacity building'.⁷²
- 2.67 Ms Apajok Biar, Representative, MYAN, recommended that DFAT 'provide training packages to simplify accreditation and reporting processes for smaller diaspora-led organisations and charitable organisations'.⁷³

Digital literacy

- 2.68 The FCC identified digital literacy as a 'barrier for diaspora organisations during the pandemic'.⁷⁴ It observed that many community organisations had

⁶⁷ *Submission 14*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Submission 56*, p. 5.

⁶⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 3.

⁷¹ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 7.

⁷² *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 7.

⁷³ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 14.

⁷⁴ *Submission 40*, p. 6-7.

lacked capacity to shift to online working arrangements to adapt to social distancing requirements.

Funding application processes

2.69 The second area of concern relates to application processes, including: lack of knowledge of grants processes; language issues; lack of resources; complexity; processes not including new and emerging communities; and organisational structures. These were viewed as making applying for grants more difficult for those from CALD/diaspora communities, with these issues being particularly acute for smaller community organisations which have limited resources and experience.

Awareness

2.70 A few witnesses noted that some diaspora organisations, particularly smaller ones, remain unaware of government funding opportunities.⁷⁵ MCCA recommended the government establish 'a central portal to which Australians can subscribe and receive notifications as announcements are made'.⁷⁶

Lack of grant application capacity

2.71 Witnesses consistently identified barriers to small, community-led organisations accessing government funding due to the resources required to achieve eligibility, generate applications and follow through on reporting requirements. A common view was that grant programs were geared toward larger organisations and as such not suitable for the types of organisations typically serving and led by diaspora community members.

2.72 Ms Raphael, FECCA, observed that many small organisations do not apply for grants because they 'don't have the infrastructure and the experience of applying for grants' and it is 'a huge amount of work'.⁷⁷

2.73 In applying for large grants, FECCA submitted that smaller and newer diaspora communities are at a disadvantage compared to more established CALD communities or when competing with mainstream organisations due to a lack of resources.⁷⁸ FECCA emphasised that 'this aspect of competition is a concern for many communities and the perception of competition is often considered a deterrent to writing applications'.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ SEMVAC, *Submission 14*, p. 2; South Asian Youth Community, *Submission 48*, p. 2, MCCA, *Submission 6*, p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Submission 6*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 4.

⁷⁸ *Submission 56*, p. 5.

⁷⁹ *Submission 56*, p. 5.

- 2.74 Mr Trung Doan, Representative, SEMVAC, stated that, in his experience, many community organisations 'are reluctant to apply for funding because putting in grant applications, even though it seems easy to people who have done it many times...seems to be a bit hard for people who have not done it before.'⁸⁰
- 2.75 In relation to the *Australia Aid: Friendships Grant Program*, Ms Goldfinch, DAA, noted that 'very few diaspora community organisations were able to access funding' due to the complexity of the application process.⁸¹ Ms Goldfinch further noted that the program's exclusion of countries with travel restrictions effectively excluded many diaspora organisations in Australia.⁸²
- 2.76 Mr Arif Hazara, Representative, MYAN, further noted the difficulty small diaspora groups experience to reach the expenditure thresholds required for DFAT accreditation for the purposes of its *Australia NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)*.⁸³ Ms Sarina Greco, President, Afghan Australian Development Organisation (AADO), a non-profit organisation that implements projects assisting in the reconstruction and sustainable development of communities in Afghanistan, described AADO's experience, stating that its board decided against seeking ANCP accreditation, 'which is really geared to the large NGOs with significant resources'.⁸⁴
- 2.77 Due to the competitive nature of grant funding applications, the MCC noted that some organisations engage specialists to lodge applications but that those specialists may lack adequate cultural awareness and empathy.⁸⁵
- 2.78 Witnesses raised the use of the English language in the grant process noting that some applicants are from a non-English speaking background. STARTTS said that smaller refugee organisations have 'good implementation skills' but not necessarily the 'specific type of English language used for funding applications.' In contrast, larger organisations have expertise in writing funding submissions and can pay external consultants where necessary.⁸⁶
- 2.79 SEMVAC suggested that the application processes should use easy English and in relation to reporting, there should be some understanding that 'some micro associations' report writers do not have advanced English'.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 3.

⁸² *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 2. See also Ms Sarina Greco, President, AADO, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 21.

⁸³ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 17.

⁸⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 22.

⁸⁵ *Submission 8*, p. 1. See also, Chinese Community Council of Australia, *Submission 9*, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁶ *Submission 71*, p. 5.

⁸⁷ *Submission 14*, p. 2.

2.80 cohealth also focussed on language and pointed to:

...wordy processes that use complex terminology and jargon, requiring high levels of English language skills...⁸⁸

Governance and accreditation of community organisations

2.81 Ms Wesa Chau explained that an additional barrier for small organisations to access grant funding is the necessary governance structures to ensure reporting measures are in place in order to meet government grant requirements.⁸⁹

2.82 MCC noted concerns regarding the governance of some diaspora community organisations, and suggested that government intervention 'either through a new body or the empowerment of existing bodies such as the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission would ensure proper conduct within community organisations.'⁹⁰

2.83 Several diaspora organisations provided testimony on difficulties encountered among or within organisations purporting to represent certain diaspora communities.⁹¹ This included allegations of foreign governments backing rival diaspora groups. This is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Capacity building

2.84 Many organisations expressed the need for collaboration and assistance from government to achieve better outcomes in relation to key issues facing diaspora communities in Australia. Discussion of possible avenues for improving communication between governments and diaspora organisations and communities is contained in Chapter 5.

2.85 The Committee heard from a number of organisations that diaspora organisations could benefit from capacity building addressing some of the issues outlined in this chapter.

2.86 FECCA suggested that there is a need for the development and support of mechanisms or training opportunities for writing grant applications and grant administration.⁹²

⁸⁸ *Submission 30*, p. 6.

⁸⁹ *Submission 44*, p. 5.

⁹⁰ *Submission 8*, pp. 4-5.

⁹¹ Mr Vikramjit Singh Grewal, Member (representing the National Sikh Council of Australia), MCC, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 5; Ms Srey Kang, President, Khmer Community of NSW, *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 20; Mr Ring Mayar, President, South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 25; Mr Alim Osman, President, Uyghur Association of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 14.

⁹² *Submission 56*, p. 2.

2.87 The FCC drew attention to the 'ongoing need for capacity building programs that strengthen and empower' diaspora community organisations. It added:

...increasing their capacity to work on a broad platform of issues with government and the community can only lead to a positive outcome for the broader society.⁹³

2.88 According to the Khmer Community of NSW Inc., 'the immigration department's role [has] changed towards compliance monitoring rather than community capacity building support for community development'. The Khmer Community of NSW stressed that this change has 'effectively resulted in withdrawal of support that has left diaspora communities without ongoing advice and guidance'.⁹⁴

2.89 Ms Chau recommended that in order to assist community organisations to access government grants and funding:

...there needs an earlier step, which is to provide governance training in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner to assist them to meet important grant requirements.⁹⁵

2.90 The African Think Tank (ATT), an umbrella non-profit organisation for African Australians, stated that many multicultural community organisations 'lack the capacity to strategically evaluate the value of their work', which can hamper their growth and sustainability. To remedy this, ATT recommended that community organisations' research and evaluation skills be developed.⁹⁶

2.91 STARTTS called for refugee organisations to 'receive capacity development to implement and acquit projects', the latter depending on good record keeping and a certain level of English language ability.⁹⁷

2.92 Khmer Community of NSW underscored the need for '[c]ommunity leadership development courses' encompassing 'communication skills and cultural, institutional and civic understandings', underpinned by 'a national strategy, funding and recognition'.⁹⁸

Existing government support

2.93 Home Affairs advised that the *Settlement Engagement and Transition Support* (SETS) program provides support to a range of eligible migrants and refugees, including those in diaspora communities. SETS includes a community capacity building component which:

⁹³ *Submission 40*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Submission 59*, p. 2.

⁹⁵ *Submission 44*, p. 5.

⁹⁶ *Submission 45*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ *Submission 71*, p. 5.

⁹⁸ *Submission 59*, p. 6.

Helps new community groups and organisations support their communities towards collectively increasing their economic and social participation to ensure that positive settlement outcomes are sustained in the long-term. It targets new and emerging ethno-specific communities, community leaders and emerging community representatives and organisations with limited corporate capacity.⁹⁹

- 2.94 Home Affairs added that the SETS community capacity building program includes support for new and emerging community groups and organisations in applying for and managing government funding.¹⁰⁰
- 2.95 The DSS Community Grants Hub, which administers Home Affairs' grants application process on its behalf, provides 'information to support the development and submission of grant applications'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *Submission 78*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ Home Affairs, answer to written question on notice, 1 December 2020 (received 7 January 2021), p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Home Affairs, answer to written question on notice, 1 December 2020 (received 7 January 2021), p. 2.

Chapter 3

Safety concerns

- 3.1 This chapter covers a range of safety concerns including foreign interference, media influence and other safety concerns in Australia and overseas as well as racism, discrimination and domestic violence.

Foreign interference with diaspora communities

- 3.2 As a starting point, Mr Mike Burgess, Director-General, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), made the distinction between foreign influence, which is conducted openly, and foreign interference:

Foreign interference, from ASIO's perspective, is activities that relate to Australia and are carried out on behalf of a foreign power, and where those activities are clandestine or deceptive. That can be done for intelligence purposes, it can be done to interfere in our political system or system of government and it can also be anything that is detrimental to Australia's national interest and, of course, where it's clandestine and deceptive and is a threat to a person's safety or security. That's the foreign interference threat that we focus on in this country.¹

- 3.3 ASIO is aware of numerous individuals from a range of diaspora communities who have reported being subject to threats against themselves and family members due to 'their voicing of opinions on political and ideological issues which a foreign country deemed to be a threat to their government'. ASIO submitted that these threats came directly from foreign government representatives and 'other members of the diaspora communities themselves, acting at the direction of the foreign government'. These activities against the diaspora communities have related to issues including:

...overseas electoral events, pro-democracy movements, and human rights, as well as issues associated with protecting the image of the foreign country.²

- 3.4 Mr Burgess added that diaspora communities are vulnerable to being instrumentalised for foreign interference purposes:

Yes, elements of some communities can be used to do a foreign government's bidding, and that is an issue we will focus on. But for the most part, they are vulnerable to it and actually find themselves on the receiving end of some form of threatening action or coercive direction that will have them under pressure to do things which are counter to our national interest. All of that concerns us and is very much a focus for us.³

¹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 17.

² *Submission 12*, p. 5.

³ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 17.

- 3.5 Mr Burgess elaborated that foreign governments focus on diaspora communities in Australia because:

There are things that Australian diaspora communities will say which they believe are counter to their national interests—dissidents for example. They do not like that and they will seek to understand who is saying that. In some cases, they will attempt to take coercive or threatening action to try and quell that. That happens across more than one diaspora community in this country. They can use the diaspora community in our country to acquire information they might need to meet their national interest...⁴

- 3.6 Human Rights Watch (HRW), a non-governmental organisation that investigates and reports on abuses around the world, told the committee that '[i]n recent years, we have become aware of increasing instances of surveillance, harassment, and intimidation within certain diaspora communities in Australia'.⁵

- 3.7 The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) submitted that types of foreign interference:

...range from foreign government surveillance, harassment, intimidation and extortion, through to the use of threats and/or violence against family or friends in other countries as a mechanism for silencing, controlling or extorting money from members of a diaspora community. Cases of foreign interference RCOA is aware of or have heard reported include: foreign governments detaining or threatening family members in other countries when a member of the diaspora in Australia speaks out about human rights abuses; harassment, intimidation and defamation of community members (particularly leaders or spokespersons) publicly through media and/or within diaspora networks; foreign governments reporting or accusing diaspora associations of being affiliated with terrorist groups as a way of discrediting diaspora voices and stifling dissent, and; human traffickers extorting money from members of diaspora communities to secure the release and safety of a family member.⁶

- 3.8 RCOA reported that '[t]hreats to safety can thus be experienced by both individuals in Australia and people in other countries who have connections to diaspora communities in Australia'.⁷

- 3.9 RCOA also pointed out that:

lack of safety can also be an issue for individuals when tensions within diaspora communities are exacerbated, such as when conflict overseas between different groups plays out in the Australia-based diaspora. Examples of safety concerns raised in community consultations include: members of a diaspora experiencing bullying, harassment and threats from

⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 18.

⁵ *Submission 83*, p. 1.

⁶ *Submission 60*, p. 4.

⁷ *Submission 60*, p. 4.

people within the diaspora community in Australia; services being withheld or denied by people working in government-funded services based on a person's perceived diasporic affiliations, and; members of diaspora communities feeling unsafe because services in Australia do not recognise their experiences of persecution overseas and the importance of providing culturally-safe services that are attentive to languages and faith that were denied to people in their homeland and in displacement contexts.⁸

3.10 HRW said it is aware of 'several cases of Chinese students in Australia who were monitored or 'reported on' by fellow classmates for comments that were critical of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in class or online whilst studying in Australia'.⁹ It urged the adoption by Australian universities of a code of conduct to protect from 'Chinese government threats to the academic freedom of students, scholars, and educational institutions'.¹⁰

3.11 Ms Yun Jiang noted that many members of the Chinese diaspora welcome the current focus on foreign interference as they are often the targets:

Groups vulnerable to PRC [People's Republic of China] coercion include ethnic minorities and dissidents who vocally speak out against the Chinese government. There are documented cases of PRC authorities going after families of dissidents in China, with the aim to silence these dissidents who live in Australia.

This form of foreign interference severely impedes the freedom of speech of people with close connections to the PRC. The Australian Government, working with people at-risk from PRC coercion, should look for more effective ways to protect these individuals' freedom of speech, which is one of the central tenets of democracy in Australia.¹¹

3.12 The Falun Dafa Association of Australia pointed to analysis conducted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), for example in the report *The Party Speaks for You: Foreign Interference and the Chinese Communist Party's united front system* by Mr Alex Joske, which states:

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is strengthening its influence by co-opting representatives of ethnic minority groups, religious movements, and business, science and political groups. It claims the right to speak on behalf of those groups and uses them to claim legitimacy.

These efforts are carried out by the united front system, which is a network of party and state agencies responsible for influencing groups outside the party, particularly those claiming to represent civil society...¹²

⁸ *Submission 60*, p. 4.

⁹ *Submission 83*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Submission 83*, pp. 8-9.

¹¹ *Submission 7*, p. 2.

¹² *Submission 68*, p. 9; Mr Alex Joske, *The party speaks for you, Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist party's united front system*, ASPI, Policy Brief, Report No. 32/2020, p. 3.

- 3.13 The Falun Dafa Association of Australia outlined CCP influence in Australia noting that 'Falun Dafa practitioners, Tibetans and Uyghurs are victims of vilification and hatred among the Chinese community here in Australia':

This occurs through the Chinese Communist Party's use of Chinese groups they control and the efforts of the Chinese embassy and consulates. Hong Kong students at Australian universities expressing support for freedom and human rights for Hong Kong people have been attacked by pro-Beijing students who see any protests as 'anti-China separatist activities'.¹³

- 3.14 Ms Denise Goldfinch, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Diaspora Action Australia (DAA), reported that many Chinese community members had 'concerns for their own safety here as individuals, if they were to speak out against government practices occurring back in their home country.' She added that:

It's very important that government be quite conscious of the risks for many communities if they're seen to be speaking against governments, regimes and practices in their home countries. We need to find some good ways to be able to engage diaspora community members in conversations safely to be able to hear about their experiences and to be able to hear their views and their perspectives of what's really happening.¹⁴

- 3.15 Responsible Technology Australia (RTA), which raises awareness and advocates for solutions to address the digital threats to democracy, pointed to the manipulation of diaspora communities by CCP 'efforts to stoke division within Chinese-Australian communities'. RTA also referred the committee to the ASPI report *The Party Speaks for You: Foreign Interference and the Chinese Communist Party's united front system* by Mr Alex Joske.¹⁵

- 3.16 The Australia Tibet Council (ATC), a national advocacy organisation promoting human rights and freedoms of Tibetans, and the Australian Tibetan Community Association (ATCA), a national association of nine local Tibetan community associations, reported that the most significant threat facing Australia's Tibetan community comes from the Chinese government, 'in particular through the United Front Work that has been reinvigorated in recent years'. They explained:

The United Front Work primarily involves co-opting and influencing key targets at home and overseas and helps the Chinese Communist Party to win legitimacy and mobilise supporters outside of its traditional constituencies. To this day, it has played a central role in shaping policy on issues such as Tibet, Xinjiang and ethnic affairs. Today its overseas activities, many of which are covert, include increasing the Chinese Government's influence, interfering in the Chinese and Tibetan diaspora

¹³ *Submission 68*, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 6.

¹⁵ *Submission 57*, p. 4.

community and undermining dissident movements, among others. Tibetans believe this is undermining their voice, dignity and safety.¹⁶

- 3.17 ATC and ATCA recommended that the government undertake a detailed investigation of China's United Front Work 'across the country, including how it is impacting Australia's Tibetan community, and ensure existing legislation and policies on espionage and foreign influence are fully enforced'.¹⁷
- 3.18 ATC and ATCA pointed to the Australian Tibetan Friendship Association which 'is designed to create disunity in the local Tibetan community and support the Chinese government's narrative on Tibet'.¹⁸ It also reported that '[a]lthough the extent of China's espionage in the Tibetan community is unclear, Tibetan-Australians fear the Chinese Embassy monitors their political activities'.¹⁹ It also detailed cyberattacks:

...the Tibetan community and the Australia Tibet Council have been targeted by other espionage operations that use malware to attempt to infiltrate their online communications and monitor their activities. Twice in 2017, the Member of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile representing Australia received emails which contained repurposed legitimate information with the aim of enticing recipients to open malicious documents containing malware viruses. Research by the Citizen Lab on the attempt to infiltrate the communication of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile validates long-held concerns of Australia Tibet Council and other Tibet support groups around the world, for whom cyberattacks are a regular occurrence.²⁰

- 3.19 Mrs Kyinzom Dhongdue, Member representing Australasia, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, said that, over the past few years, the Chinese government has been exporting 'censorship and dictatorship far beyond Tibet's borders.' She continued:

China's surveillance and influence operations are undermining the freedoms, the liberty and the security of people living in Australia, and that includes members of the Tibet community who are Australian citizens now.²¹

- 3.20 HRW reported that '[m]embers of Australia's ethnic Uyghur community have also documented fears that their political activities in Australia are being

¹⁶ *Submission 75*, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Submission 75*, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Submission 75*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹ *Submission 75*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Submission 75*, p. 5.

²¹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 16.

monitored by the CCP and that their relatives in China have been singled out for detention and harsh treatment as a result of their activism in Australia'.²²

- 3.21 The Uyghur Association of Victoria (UAV), which promotes the interests of the Uyghur community in Victoria, reported intimidation and harassment of Uyghurs in Australia by authorities in China:

This typically takes the form of WeChat calls from family members back in China (often in the presence of local law enforcement personnel) warning Uyghurs in Australia not to say anything unfavourable to the Chinese government lest something happen to these family members.²³

- 3.22 In addition:

It is apparent to us that some Uyghur and Chinese folk have been offered inducements to disseminate Chinese government propaganda in the Uyghur community and/or keep tabs on the activities of Uyghur people in Australia. United Front organisations are also used to influence Uyghur Australians to either to[e] the Chinese Communist Party line or keep their heads down and their mouths shut.²⁴

- 3.23 UAV also noted that the CCP has established proxy Uyghur groups. These groups are designed to 'create disunity in the local community and support the Chinese Communist Party's narrative' on Uyghurs.' Mr Alim Osman, President, UAV, added:

These proxy groups remain active with the assistance of the Chinese embassy in Canberra. We strongly recommend our government use foreign interference legislation to inquire into these proxy groups, register them as foreign government representatives in Australia and cut all taxpayer funded grants to these proxy groups immediately.²⁵

- 3.24 The Khmer Community of NSW provided the committee with examples of intimidation and interference by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The Khmer Community of NSW stated that 'New South Wales is on the front line of a long-term strategy of political interference and influence'. Ms Srey Kang, President of the Khmer Community of NSW, further spoke of the Cambodian government's 'long-term, systematic political strategy, establishing a network of Cambodian People's Party branches and organisations in Australia to counter opposition here as well as in Cambodia.'²⁶ The establishment of the CPP network in New South Wales has fostered 'anger, fear, insecurity, mistrust and division among the Cambodian diaspora in NSW'.²⁷ The Khmer

²² *Submission 83*, p. 3.

²³ *Submission 53*, p. 1.

²⁴ *Submission 53*, p. 1.

²⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 14.

²⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 20.

²⁷ *Submission 59*, p. 5.

Community of NSW indicated that many Australian Cambodians are afraid to speak out publicly or freely for fear of 'possible recrimination for themselves personally or for their relatives in Cambodia'.²⁸

- 3.25 In the face of a 'concerted and systematic campaign of political interference by the Cambodian Government', the Khmer Community of NSW recommended that the government take active measures to protect the political rights and freedoms of diaspora communities in Australia, including:

...communicating clear expectations to ambassadors, refusing visas to political agents of foreign governments, strengthening the democratic governance of community associations and conducting ongoing communication and dialogue with community organisations on these issues.²⁹

- 3.26 The Khmer Community of NSW felt that:

the occasional single incident reporting to police or via the national security hotline is an inadequate mechanism for reporting on foreign surveillance, interference and intimidation in diaspora communities and does little to engender confidence among diaspora communities in police or government follow up and response to these issues.³⁰

- 3.27 Mrs Khim Chy, Association Member, Advisory Group Member, Khmer Community of NSW, further recommended that the government assist the Cambodian diaspora community in Australia by placing sanctions on those responsible for the interference.³¹

- 3.28 The Cambodian Australian Federation (CAF), a national body consolidating state organisations providing services to Cambodian settlers in Australia, and the Cambodian Association of Victoria (CAV), a CAF member organisation, also spoke of their concerns in relation to the CPP providing examples of threats which 'form part of a concerted effort to surveil and intimidate members of the Cambodian community in Australia that are critical of Hun Sen and the Cambodian government'.³²

- 3.29 CAF and CAV pointed to examples of threatening behaviour highlighted on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's (ABC) *The World* program on 25 October 2018:

The program depicted Cambodian community members being accosted on the street in Melbourne by high ranking members of the regime, death

²⁸ *Submission 59*, p. 5.

²⁹ *Submission 59*, p. 5.

³⁰ *Submission 59.1*, p. 2.

³¹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 22.

³² *Submission 73*, p. 3.

threats to community members in person and by phone, as well as death threats to family members and friends still residing in Cambodia.³³

- 3.30 At a hearing, Mr Hong Lim, President, CAF, also drew attention to its concerns regarding intimidation of Cambodian students in Australia:

The major concern in practical terms is that we used to have a very close relationship with the students that came under Australian scholarships. We had a very close relationship with them in the past, but now they're so fearful of the threat by the Hun Sen government, that when they go back they'll have no job if they are interacting with us. So they isolate themselves.³⁴

- 3.31 The Kampuchea Krom Cultural Centre of NSW spoke about 'an authoritarian network [which has] successfully divided and infiltrated our community' and 'put surveillance on members and associations'. It suggested imposing visa sanctions or cancelling visas for officials where evidence is provided to the government by the community. In addition to surveillance, the Centre spoke about some being blacklisted in Cambodia and having family members approached by authorities.³⁵

- 3.32 CAF and CAV suggested an independent review of Australia Awards scholarships awarded to Cambodian students and better oversight of the program, increased monitoring of activities of the Cambodian government and its embassy in Australia, refusing visas for political agents of the Cambodian government and better engagement with Cambodian community organisations.³⁶

- 3.33 HRW also provided examples of Cambodian students in Australia receiving threats after criticising the Cambodian government.³⁷

- 3.34 The committee also received evidence regarding Vietnam's Communist Party, alleging interference in Australia aiming to neutralise criticism by Vietnamese diaspora communities. The South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations' Council (SEMVAC) reported:

Some members of our Vietnamese community have been interrogated by Vietnamese police while visiting family in Vietnam then gently invited to spy on fellow Vietnamese activists after returning to Australia. We therefore think the scope of Australia's Counter Foreign Interference Strategy should include acts done outside Australia with potential consequences for Australia.³⁸

³³ *Submission 73*, p. 3.

³⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 28.

³⁵ *Submission 76*, pp. 4-5.

³⁶ *Submission 73*, p. 4.

³⁷ *Submission 83*, p. 4.

³⁸ *Submission 14*, p. 4.

3.35 SEMVAC indicated that the Vietnamese Communist Party uses a wide range of tools 'including police in Vietnam, hackers, and its Fatherland Front'.³⁹ Mr Trung Doan, SEMVAC Representative, further noted that interference activities 'are a lot wider than just lobbying' and that the relevant law should be broadened to reflect that.⁴⁰

3.36 Mr Paul Huy Nguyen, President of the NSW chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, a non-profit organisation representing Vietnamese immigrants and Vietnamese Australians, stated that '[t]here is always a potential trap if you speak out' and that 'there is always some perceived pressure that, if your relative from abroad is saying something against the government, there will be some repercussions for the family members.' He elaborated:

The state police can come and visit them and ask questions about their connection with an individual abroad who is saying something very bad about the government. They exert some coercion, some pressure, to intimidate the members. The state police in Vietnam are very powerful and very forceful.⁴¹

3.37 The Vietnamese Overseas Initiative for Conscience Empowerment (VOICE), a non-profit organisation with a mission to improve the human rights situation in Vietnam, cautioned that Australian universities are so reliant on international students that they have 'become acquiescent to some foreign government's demand and allowed the government from those countries to influence its internal decision making and censoring of students' activities'. It further explained:

Universities in Australia have hosted Confucius Institutes, Chinese government-run bodies which offer language and cultural programmes overseas. Such programmes permit China to decide the teaching at the facilities. Students at university have found themselves being silence[d] by universities to please the foreign government, in the case of an Australian student, Drew Pavlou, who was critical of the University of Queensland ties with the Chinese government and its Confucius Institute. The university suspended him for two years after organising a rally which turned violent when the students supporting the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and mainland Chinese students defending their government clashes.⁴²

3.38 VOICE concluded that '[i]t is despicable that we allow foreign governments to interfere with the freedom and democracy of Australians in our jurisdiction'.⁴³

³⁹ *Submission 14*, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 12.

⁴² *Submission 26*, p. 2.

⁴³ *Submission 26*, p. 2.

- 3.39 HRW pointed to the case of Mr Van Kham Chau, arrested in January 2019, who is a member of Viet Tan, a pro-democracy advocacy group labelled as a terrorist organisation by the Vietnamese government.⁴⁴ Mr Nguyen also drew attention to this case, noting that his organisation took information about the case to parliamentarians and DFAT and that DFAT 'has not done enough to clear his release.'⁴⁵ He further noted that a lot of his community's members 'have felt that the Australian government has not done enough in order to raise their voice and at least front up to the Vietnamese government on this issue.'⁴⁶
- 3.40 The Yazidi Australian Association (YAA), which represents the needs and issues of newly arrived Yazidi community members in Australia, drew attention to the concerns of many of its community members about the safety of their friends and families who remain enslaved and are often 'requested huge sums of money to secure their release'. In addition, it highlighted that:
- There have been threats made against Yazidis in Australia and their families overseas. We need direct contact with the Australian Federal Police and prompt response to any of our concerns reported. We are also concerned about potential human rights abusers from Iraq and Syria obtaining Australian visas and settling in Australia.⁴⁷
- 3.41 HRW provided evidence about attempts by other governments to influence diaspora communities in Australia. HRW detailed information from a 2019 ABC report on 'Rwandans in Australia living in fear due to consistent monitoring and threats.'⁴⁸ HRW observed that Ethiopian officials arrested relatives of participants of a protest against the visit of a regional Ethiopian government delegation in Melbourne in 2016.⁴⁹ It noted a 2019 ABC report of Saudi men living in Australia, at least one of which worked for the Saudi Ministry of Interior, harassing and intimidating female Saudi asylum seekers.⁵⁰ HRW further cited reports from Australia's Eritrean community of being 'forced to pay a two percent "diaspora" income tax to the Eritrean consulate in Melbourne'.⁵¹
- 3.42 Mr Paul Power, CEO of RCOA, said the Council was aware of instances of foreign interference 'just in the last few weeks' involving 'people originally from Iran, Iraq and the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq, as well as

⁴⁴ *Submission 83*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 10.

⁴⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 11.

⁴⁷ *Submission 70*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ *Submission 83*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Submission 83*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Submission 83*, p. 4.

⁵¹ *Submission 83*, p. 4.

Burundi, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Eritrea, China, Vietnam and Myanmar.⁵²

Issues reporting interference

3.43 HRW acknowledged that the government had taken some significant steps to address foreign interference. However it cautioned that:

[d]espite these efforts, many communities are still not aware of these efforts, and therefore still do not know who to turn to when such incidents occur. For these actions to be truly successful, the rights and safety of those affected need to be at the centre of the government's efforts to counter foreign interference. Relevant government departments working in this area also should acknowledge the lack of trust many vulnerable diaspora communities have towards law enforcement and other government agencies'.⁵³

3.44 Dr Sev Ozdowski, Chair of the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC), considered that 'quite often people do not know where to go or with whom to speak' in the early years of their stay in Australia if subject to attacks by agents of foreign governments. He further noted that refugees 'possibly need more systemic governmental support' to lessen any consequences from speaking against the governments of the countries they have escaped.⁵⁴

3.45 Mr Power echoed this view:

...at the moment people who are experiencing intimidation and threats don't know necessarily where to take them. In some cases, they are taken to the police, but I'm not really aware of too many examples where people have had satisfactory responses...We're hoping that there could be further dialogue about what communities should do now that the issue of foreign interference in communities is on the agenda.⁵⁵

3.46 The RCOA indicated that for refugee diaspora communities it can be challenging to raise concerns about foreign interference and lack of safety with the government. It added:

It is RCOA's experience that even when it is Australian citizens or permanent residents whose safety is threatened, including being threatened or detained overseas, the responsiveness of Australian government departments can vary significantly. For individuals seeking asylum or on temporary visas, mechanisms for raising safety concerns and experiences of foreign interference are even more limited.⁵⁶

⁵² *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 10.

⁵³ *Submission 83*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 10.

⁵⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 10.

⁵⁶ *Submission 60*, p. 5.

3.47 RCOA recommended that the government establish clear mechanisms for members of diaspora communities in Australia to safely report on foreign surveillance and intimidation through the establishment of a diaspora liaison unit within DFAT.⁵⁷ Further discussion of calls for a diaspora liaison unit is contained in Chapter five.

Improving data and research on foreign interference

3.48 HRW recommended the government ensure that those tasked with investigating foreign interference 'document and investigate the scale of harassment, intimidation, and surveillance of diaspora communities and release annual reports disclosing the extent and type of intimidation that diaspora groups have faced'.⁵⁸ It further recommended the government:

[i]nitiate an interagency Diaspora Communities taskforce, working across the AFP, Home Affairs, and the Human Rights Commission that would also include community leaders from diaspora communities targeted by foreign governments. This taskforce should meet regularly to discuss patterns of intimidation and harassment, and hold public meetings to identify concerns, responses, and steps that are being taken to protect members of the community.⁵⁹

3.49 The Khmer Community of NSW called for the creation a 'national monitor to receive and investigate complaints from diaspora communities and provide valuable data to inform any supplementary annual dialogue on human rights with diaspora communities'.⁶⁰

Magnitsky-style legislation

3.50 Several submitters supported Australia adopting Magnitsky-style legislation as a strategy for discouraging individual agents of foreign governments engaging in interference. Magnitsky-style legislation refers to legislation that 'enables jurisdictions to impose sanctions on an individual who has committed human rights abuses or is guilty of significant corruption'.⁶¹

3.51 YAA informed the committee that it was:

aware that Australian Government will be considering Magnitsky-style legislation that could result in sanctions against such individuals and their families. We are supportive of this legislation and we would like civil

⁵⁷ Submission 60, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Submission 83, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Submission 83, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Submission 59.1, p. 2.

⁶¹ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Criminality, corruption and impunity: should Australia join the Global Magnitsky movement?*, December 2020, p. 3.

society to have a clear pathway to request sanctions against individuals or their families.⁶²

3.52 HRW called for government to:

[e]nact legislation to allow targeted sanctions against serious human rights violators abroad. Such a law should be similar to Magnitsky-style legislation enacted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. It would authorize targeted sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes, against people implicated in serious human rights violations.⁶³

3.53 Mrs Chy of Khmer Community of NSW underscored the view that the Australian government 'should help us by placing sanctions on them for interfering in our elections and our peaceful life out here.'⁶⁴

3.54 The Khmer Community of NSW suggested that the government communicate 'clear expectations to ambassadors, refusing visas to political agents for foreign governments, strengthening the democratic governance of community associations and conducting ongoing communication and dialogue with community organisations on these issues'.⁶⁵

3.55 CAF President, Mr Lim, also supported the notion of a Magnitsky-style act:

I'm just saying that some sanctions should be put on them. Their visas should be squeezed—and their whole family, not just them.⁶⁶

3.56 Mrs Kyinzom Dhongdue, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, called for Australia to ban Chinese officials who have oversight over Tibet policy from entering Australia.⁶⁷

3.57 Mr Daniel Teng, Sydney Representative of the Epoch Times, a Chinese and English language newspaper associated with Falun Gong,⁶⁸ could 'see the benefits' of Magnitsky-style legislation, which could be a 'good deterrence' against human rights violations for Chinese officials hoping to immigrate to Australia.⁶⁹

⁶² *Submission 70*, p. 5.

⁶³ *Submission 83*, p. 8.

⁶⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 20.

⁶⁵ *Submission 59.1*, p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 30.

⁶⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 17.

⁶⁸ In its submission, the Epoch Times outlined that it was established in 2000 by John Tang, 'sparked by the persecution of Falun Gong in China in 1999.' (*Submission 74*, p. 2).

⁶⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 21.

- 3.58 Ms Janice Le, Director of Advocacy, VOICE, also viewed the introduction of Magnitsky-style legislation as important to 'support the interests of Australians.'⁷⁰
- 3.59 Mr Nguyen, NSW Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, said that his organisation attended the bilateral Australia-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue annually, but that it 'hasn't been working at all...that it's just like a pop festival.' He suggested that including human rights conditions in the trade relationship with Vietnam may be more effective.⁷¹
- 3.60 The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade – Human Rights Sub-committee recently tabled its report on the use of targeted sanctions to address gross human rights abuses.⁷² The Sub-committee noted that it received evidence from a large number of diaspora groups, including 'Australians who experienced human rights abuse and corruption in their homeland before migrating to Australia, and also people who have been subjected to abuse, or threatened while living in Australia.'⁷³

Media influence

- 3.61 The importance of ethnic media was emphasised to the committee. The Epoch Times, however, submitted that the important role played by Chinese language publications has been 'hijacked and distorted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) via its widespread overseas influence operations'. It added that '[t]he CCP also expends considerable resources attempting to shape the views of the Chinese diaspora in Australia so it is receptive and supportive of Beijing'. Influence strategies include:
- incentivising local Chinese-language publications to 'to[e] the Party line;' taking advantage of Australia's free press laws and establishing local pro-Beijing publications; and undermining and intimidating independent Chinese-language press.⁷⁴
- 3.62 The Epoch Times reported that it has experienced 'a wide range of intimidatory actions' over the years, identifying two broad categories of CCP influence:

⁷⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 2.

⁷¹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 11.

⁷² Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Criminality, corruption and impunity: should Australia join the Global Magnitsky movement?*, 7 December 2020, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/MagnitskyAct/Report

⁷³ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Criminality, corruption and impunity: should Australia join the Global Magnitsky movement?*, December 2020, p. 31.

⁷⁴ *Submission 74*, p. 1.

- the CCP and its affiliates directly discouraging businesses, organisations, and political leaders from engaging with The Epoch Times; and
- the powerful and wide-ranging influence of “fear.” Businesses, organisations, and politicians will avoid associating with The Epoch Times and other independent press, due to concerns over potentially offending Beijing.⁷⁵

3.63 As an illustration, Mr Teng, noted that one Epoch Times staff member had been 'afraid of attending this hearing, because her partner in China faces almost immediate threats or retribution for any of her actions locally.'⁷⁶

3.64 The Epoch Times suggested establishing a framework around the ethnic press to protect its integrity but cautioned against introducing onerous regulation for what are mostly small businesses. Other suggestions included a declaration for ethnic media publishers to sign indicating that their publications will seek to uphold Australian values, greater scrutiny over how government advertising is allocated and establishing a formal register for ethnic newspaper publications.⁷⁷

3.65 Mr Teng affirmed that The Epoch Times was in contact with Australian intelligence and law enforcement authorities about the alleged interference, but noted that it was difficult for authorities to respond to so-called 'grey zone activities' such as advertisers pulling out or stacks of free newspapers going missing.⁷⁸

Digital platforms

3.66 RTA drew the committee's attention to how 'the attention economy propped up by the digital platforms has facilitated specific and unique harms to diaspora communities in Australia'.⁷⁹

3.67 Mr Matthew Nguyen, Director of Policy, RTA, described to the committee how digital platforms can be used to harm communities in a variety of ways. These include:

...the proliferation of hate speech, misinformation and disinformation. A report published by the eSafety Commissioner last year said that one in five culturally and linguistically diverse Australians experienced online hate speech within the last year.

...

⁷⁵ *Submission 74*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 21.

⁷⁷ *Submission 74*, p. 5; Mr Daniel Teng, Sydney Representative, The Epoch Times, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 20.

⁷⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 21.

⁷⁹ *Submission 57*, p. 1.

through these platforms diaspora communities are at risk of foreign interference, the clearest example being WeChat, which is regularly used as a channel for disinformation within Chinese communities

...

the potential for these platforms to contribute to radicalisation, which disproportionately affects diaspora communities.⁸⁰

- 3.68 RTA drew attention to the dangers of unregulated data collection and the difficulty of accessing that data. Mr Chris Cooper, Executive Director, RTA, contrasted the more open API⁸¹ access for researchers and government on Twitter with other platforms such as Facebook and called for greater transparency 'around the way that they promote content and the way that content is being amplified to the platforms'.⁸²

Government initiatives to counter foreign interference with diaspora communities

- 3.69 The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) is responsible for countering foreign interference and indicated to the committee that '[f]oreign interference activity against Australian interests is occurring at an unprecedented scale'. It cautioned that:

Left unchecked, it can adversely affect social cohesion and amplify fracture lines in our community. For example, hateful, inauthentic and divisive disinformation may be promulgated or amplified by foreign actors seeking to sow discord and confusion in the community. Foreign actors may also seek to silence, monitor, harass, coopt or coerce community members to advance their own economic or political interests. Such activity could undermine social cohesion and Australia's free and open society if it is targeted towards CALD groups.⁸³

- 3.70 Home Affairs submitted that:

Australians, including members of our diverse ethnic and religious communities, have reported being victims of foreign interference. Threats of foreign interference are not constrained to one section of the Australian community nor perpetrated by a single nation-state. Building a strong and trustful relationship between government and CALD communities, complemented by a shared community awareness of the threat of foreign interference, will strengthen the resilience of our society and deter false narratives and disinformation used by foreign actors to exploit or exaggerate divisions within the Australian community.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 24.

⁸¹ Application Programming Interface is a software interface that allows applications to work with each other and deliver information or functionality.

⁸² *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 25.

⁸³ *Submission 78*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ *Submission 78*, p. 12.

3.71 Home Affairs reported that, in April 2018, the government established the Office of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator which 'coordinates Australia's whole-of-government efforts to respond to acts of foreign interference'. In addition, in 2019, the government established the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce 'to disrupt and deter any foreign actor attempting to undermine Australia's national interests'. Home Affairs has also adapted the National Security hotline⁸⁵ 'to provide an avenue for the public to report potential acts of foreign interference'. Additionally Home Affairs stated that:

The Government has invested \$126.6 million since 2018-19 to bolster our response to foreign interference, including the introduction of legislative measures to make it more difficult for foreign actors to interfere. These legislative measures are aimed at keeping all Australians safe from foreign actors who seek to target and divide us. This includes:

- The introduction of new foreign interference offences under the Criminal Code through the National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018.
- The Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018 to increase visibility of foreign influence in Australia's government and political processes.
- The Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018 to strengthen visibility of the ownership and control of critical infrastructure, establish an information-gathering power, and provide a Ministerial directions power.
- The Electoral Funding Act 2018 which restricted foreign political donations.
- The Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2017, which established security and notification obligations on regulation entities to protect networks and facilities from unauthorised interference.⁸⁶

3.72 ASIO maintains a longstanding program of engagement with leaders and representatives of diaspora communities. ASIO emphasised that diaspora groups are often the victims of foreign interference and the organisation actively works with diaspora communities to help protect them from these attempts.⁸⁷

3.73 ASIO submitted that it 'currently has contact with over 100 different ethnic and religious groups', adding:

For ASIO, our engagement is a critical component of scanning for future threats, both locally and within the communities' countries of origin. Our engagement supports advice on threat assessments, strategic analysis,

⁸⁵ Established in 2002, the National Security Hotline is 1800 123 400.

⁸⁶ *Submission 78*, p. 13.

⁸⁷ *Submission 12*, p. 5.

border integrity, special events, counter-espionage and foreign interference and counter-terrorism matters, as well as providing community-based situational awareness.⁸⁸

3.74 Mr Burgess of ASIO told the committee that all Australians have a role to play in identifying and reporting inappropriate behaviour:

...the obligation on any Australian, wherever you come from—that your role, when you see something that is inappropriate, is to call it out. You challenge it. You can go to the police. You can call the National Security Hotline. You can engage in your community groups. You can engage your local member, your local member of parliament or council, or federal or state members. It's really important that we do that.⁸⁹

3.75 Mr Burgess felt that raising awareness of available resources is an ongoing task:

...I think that is a constant message to raise awareness so they can recognise what it is and who to speak to when they see it. I think the settings there are adequate at this point in time, but the thing we could continue to do—and I know that our Home Affairs colleagues take this seriously with the work they are doing—is the constant narrative that reminding people about this actually does help.⁹⁰

3.76 Speaking to the issue of trusting the authorities, Mr Burgess discussed developing relationships with communities. While understanding the reticence of some groups, given their background, he encouraged people to 'remind themselves that they're in Australia' and '[i]t is safe to [report these issues]'.⁹¹

3.77 In relation to media and apps used to promote propaganda to diaspora communities, Mr Burgess noted the importance of a counternarrative:

A counternarrative in an open and free society really does help and does matter, yes. Of course, propaganda itself is not actually foreign interference...

...

Of course, as I said, if there are narrower paths which are not as open to all of us then, yes, I get interested in that. But the best way to counter that is actually the counternarrative, which happens as a matter of recourse in our great society.⁹²

⁸⁸ *Submission 12*, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 18.

⁹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 21.

⁹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 21.

⁹² *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 23.

Capacity

3.78 When asked about the state of language capability and cultural understanding in government agencies in order to take effective action, Mr Burgess replied:

From an ASIO perspective, obviously we need a range of capabilities and understanding, and people who are proficient in foreign languages is an important capability for us. I'm satisfied that we're managing that well. There is more than one country...that actually engages in acts of foreign interference in Australia. So we have to have a range of languages. We are well served—remember, you are talking to a security service. Finding people with the right language skills who can pass a security clearance will always be a problem for us, but that's a fact of life that we deal with. We have training mechanisms in place to take people through—it's not just the language that we need; it's also the cultural understanding. As you would appreciate, it's not just the ability to read text or what's in the media; cultural understanding is critically important.⁹³

Racism and discrimination

3.79 A number of organisations noted the issue of racism for members of diaspora communities in Australia.⁹⁴ The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) reported that:

The Commission is aware of multiple safety concerns impacting diaspora communities in Australia, including the fear of threats and acts of violence based on race and religious hate. The Commission has been consistently advocating for the strengthening of race and religious hate protections for vulnerable groups.⁹⁵

3.80 The Commission pointed to surveys and findings involving Muslims as well as highlighting the ASIO's Annual Threat Assessment Address 'which found that far right violence represents a serious, increasing and evolving threat to security'.⁹⁶

3.81 Ms Catherine Duff, Director, Race Discrimination, AHRC, noted 'the serious problem of online hate, including online race hate' and that 'cyber-racism was also specifically identified as a serious concern during community consultation...especially as it related to children and young people in diaspora communities'.⁹⁷

3.82 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) submitted that racism experienced in Australian society today is different to that experienced after World War II, stating that:

⁹³ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁴ FECCA, *Submission 56*, p. 5; MYAN, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Uniting Church in Australia, *Submission 54*, p. 6.

⁹⁵ *Submission 15*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁶ *Submission 15*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 6.

The racism faced by our new and emerging communities from Africa, West Asia and South Asia is not the same as that experienced by those coming from Europe after WWII. Today's racism has been described as being premised more around religion than country of origin.⁹⁸

- 3.83 cohealth noted that racism reduces access to employment, housing and education, resulting in low social-economic status. cohealth emphasised that as socio-economic status declines, so does mental and physical health.⁹⁹
- 3.84 Ms Duff did however note that data on racism in Australia was lacking detail and inconsistent, given that it comes from various sources such as the Commission itself, the eSafety Commissioner, state and territory human rights organisations, state and territory police and various independent bodies.¹⁰⁰
- 3.85 The Commission also recommended that 'further research be undertaken to develop nationally consistent legislative protections against race and religious hate' and that 'the definitions from this work be used to develop either a centralised, or a nationally consistent, reporting framework for race and religious hate incidents'.¹⁰¹
- 3.86 The AHRC reported that vulnerable communities have advised the Commission that political and media narratives are a key concern threatening their safety.¹⁰² It recommended that the government develop Special Standards for Reporting on Multicultural Communities, like the Special Standards of Reporting on Domestic Violence'. The Commission further recommended that the government 'consider strengthening legislative protections against online race and religious hate and fund programs to counter the online organisation of far-right extremism'.¹⁰³
- 3.87 The Multicultural Communities Council (MCC) of NSW raised racism as a key issue that needed to be addressed particularly for 'people of faith and colour'.¹⁰⁴ MCC submitted that racism often goes unreported 'as victims are fearful of complaining so it does not jeopardise their visa situation and gaining permanent residency'.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ *Submission 56*, p. 6.

⁹⁹ *Submission 30*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ *Submission 15*, p. 4.

¹⁰² *Submission 15*, p. 8.

¹⁰³ *Submission 15*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Submission 8*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Submission 8*, p. 2.

- 3.88 The Migration and Refugee Research Network reported research indicating that 'experiences of discrimination affects social inclusion and can be damaging to well-being':

Our research with over 400 people from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds found more than 1 in 5 had experienced discrimination, with further interviews indicating this is likely an underestimate. Participants had experienced discrimination in a range of aspects of their lives including in local neighbourhoods, transport and employment. Experiencing discrimination was significantly associated with lower levels of trust, belonging, control and hope. Another study of refugees resettled in a regional town likewise revealed experiences of discrimination within employment, housing, education and in public spaces.¹⁰⁶

- 3.89 Pointing to racial discrimination rates in Australia, FECCA noted the Scanlon Foundation's annual survey on social cohesion showing that in 2019, 19 per cent of respondents reported experiencing discrimination in the past year on the basis of their 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion'.¹⁰⁷

- 3.90 The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) noted an 'increase in racial abuse and violence towards Asian-Australians has been well documented by organisations including the Asian Australian Alliance'.¹⁰⁸ MYAN also noted that this increasing racism is concerning for young people because:

...we are still developing our identities and negotiating our connections to our communities. It creates hostile environments that disrupt our ability to feel connected to our families and ancestral cultures. It also makes it unsafe for us to fully embrace or accept our dual cultural heritages in our workplaces, schools and in public domains, compounding the existing barriers to career development and political representation that young people already experience. This is leading to significant mental health impacts, social isolation, adverse employment outcomes, and a limited sense of belonging.¹⁰⁹

- 3.91 Mr Nguyen of RTA also noted the 'proliferation of hate speech, misinformation and disinformation' online:

A report published by the eSafety Commissioner last year said that one in five culturally and linguistically diverse Australians experienced online hate speech within the last year. These communities are also prone to the harmful spread of false information, either within the community, such as when a Melbourne Albanian Muslim community refused COVID-19 testing due to circulating misinformation, or at the expense of their

¹⁰⁶ *Submission 63*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Submission 56*, pp. 5-6. See also, Andrew Markus, 'Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2019', Caulfield East: Monash University, 2019, p. 83, <https://scanlonfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Mapping-Social-Cohesion-2019-FINAL-3.pdf>, accessed 21 August 2020.

¹⁰⁸ *Submission 17*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Submission 17*, pp. 5-6.

community, such as when a network of Facebook pages out of the Balkans profited by driving engagement through stoking Islamophobic sentiments.¹¹⁰

Impact of COVID-19

3.92 Ms Duff of the AHRC told the committee that:

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how racism and xenophobia can threaten community harmony and social cohesion and cause disunity. Racial tensions are likely to remain an issue of concern moving into the post-pandemic recovery phase and as the global and local economies remain weak.

...

Even absent consistent national data, there is consensus that there has been an increase in racism against some communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has occurred in both the physical and online worlds and is an issue for some Australian diaspora communities.¹¹¹

3.93 Ms Duff further cited a study conducted by the Australian National University which indicated that 'almost 85 per cent of Australians of Asian descent experienced at least one incident of racism between January and October of this year [2020]'. She added that around one third of racial discrimination complaints accepted under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* from February to June 2020 related to COVID-19.¹¹²

3.94 Professor Wanning Sun identified that anti-Chinese sentiment has been on the rise for several years, particularly 'since the gradual ascendancy of the discourse of Chinese influence in the mainstream media', and it has been brought to forefront by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹³

3.95 Professor Sun pointed to growing levels of racism since the pandemic:

Since its outbreak, members of the Chinese community have been subject to growing levels of racism and have experienced increased fear for their physical safety and mental wellbeing.¹¹⁴

3.96 Ms Wesa Chau also noted that '[s]ince the COVID pandemic impacted Australia, anyone who appears to look Chinese has been blamed for the pandemic'.¹¹⁵

3.97 Referred to above, the Asian Australian Alliance provided the COVID-19 Racism Incident Report covering the period 2 April to 2 June 2020. It submitted

¹¹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 24.

¹¹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 6.

¹¹² *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 6.

¹¹³ *Submission 4*, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ *Submission 4*, p. 5. See also, Chinese Community Council of Australia Inc., *Submission 9*, pp. 4-6.

¹¹⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 4.

that the data collected 'has cumulatively shown that there has been a clear pattern of racist attacks against Asians and Asian Australians as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that they are not isolated incidents'.¹¹⁶

- 3.98 Mr Chin Tan, Race Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC, raised this at Budget Estimates hearings in October 2020 and spoke about the work being undertaken to respond:

COVID-19 has seen some concerns, in terms of the substantial rise in race activities, more in terms of being focused at some communities, particularly the Asian communities. In terms of the work that we are doing, and have done, it's a continuation and reinforcement of the strategy that we have in place, which is the It Stops With Me campaign as well. What we have done is to refresh, very much, and update all the activities and information and build a different level of connection with our allies and partners and reinforce the capacity to deal with racism, particularly at a time like this.

...

In the times of COVID-19, the activities that we have engaged in have been largely about supporting governments, both the federal and state governments, and reinforcing capacities to deal with racism. For instance, we're able to work with the federal government in ensuring that there are support mechanisms, tools and devices, within the government framework of tackling COVID-19, that respond to the needs of the multicultural communities.¹¹⁷

- 3.99 In response to increased reports of abuse and discrimination against Asian Australians during the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government launched an information campaign to support and inform multicultural communities affected by COVID-19-related racism.¹¹⁸ Mr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Social Cohesion Division, Home Affairs, informed the committee that the campaign encouraged people to speak up if they experienced or witnessed racism.¹¹⁹

Experience of particular diaspora communities

- 3.100 Professor Sun submitted to the committee that in recent years, those in the Chinese diaspora have:

...been placed under growing pressure to declare their political allegiance to Australia, and their loyalty to their adopted country has publicly been called into question.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Submission 28*, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, *Estimates Hansard*, 22 October 2020, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁸ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 5.

¹¹⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 30.

¹²⁰ *Submission 4*, p. 4.

...

In recent months, the mere mention of PRC [People's Republic of China] students and migrants has conjured up the popular narrative about their overriding patriotism towards China at best and their role as agents of Chinese influence on the other.¹²¹

3.101 Professor Sun suggested that members of the Chinese diaspora in Australia are 'becoming more concerned about the political distrust in them that has been displayed extensively'.¹²²

3.102 MYAN also pointed to family, cultural or business ties of Chinese in Australia saying 'these attachments are increasingly unfairly misconstrued as political ties or as support for the Chinese government, regardless of individuals' personal views on China as a political entity'. MYAN noted the role of the media in this regard saying the media is 'often exaggerating and stoking unfounded fears about Chinese people in Australia as "CCP agents" or sympathetic to the "Chinese regime"'.¹²³

3.103 The role of the media was also emphasised by Ms Yun Jiang who pointed out to the committee that media reporting in recent years:

...has portrayed some Chinese-Australians as possible agents or perpetrators of foreign interference, due mostly to alleged associations and links between them and the CCP's United Front system or even simply due to their political views. The focus on these, rather than actual improper or illegal actions, is concerning — especially as the implications of these alleged associations and links are often misrepresented or not properly contextualised. In the absence of direct evidence of wrongdoing, allegations of guilt based only on associations and links should be treated with a high degree of caution.¹²⁴

3.104 Ms Jiang emphasised that some members of the Chinese diaspora:

...may have joined an organisation "linked" to the CCP's United Front efforts, such as one of the hometown associations, business associations or dance troupes for social and economic reasons, rather than out of political conviction. But they are now seen as part of CCP's foreign interference effort in Australia. Their loyalties to Australia are being questioned simply for embracing the "Chinese" part of their identity.¹²⁵

¹²¹ *Submission 4*, p. 5.

¹²² *Submission 4*, p. 5.

¹²³ *Submission 17*, p. 5.

¹²⁴ *Submission 7*, p. 2.

¹²⁵ *Submission 7*, p. 2.

- 3.105 Ms Jiang further told the committee that it is not fair that Chinese-Australians have their loyalty questioned and are forced to take positions, 'such as critiquing Beijing, when similar requests are not made to other Australians.'¹²⁶
- 3.106 Ms Chau also pointed out that Chinese Australians who are 'putting their hand up for public office or speaking out publicly...are required to make that allegiance and declare loyalty' and that 'this is unfair on the community.'¹²⁷
- 3.107 Professor Mobo Gao reiterated this growing concern for treating associations and organisations formed by the Chinese diaspora community with 'automatic suspicion'.¹²⁸
- 3.108 MYAN noted that '[m]any members of the Chinese diaspora in Australia have been direct victims of [racial abuse and violence] or have limited or changed their activities in public spaces due to the threat, whether perceived or actual, of being victimised'.¹²⁹
- 3.109 Professor Sun drew the committee's attention to the results of a survey conducted by Per Capita in conjunction with the Asian Australian Alliance. Since April 2020 there have been more than 400 responses which indicate that 'almost 90% of those who experienced anti-Asian racism did not report it to the police'. Professor Sun also pointed to a 2019 survey conducted by the Australian National University's Centre for Social Research, which found that '82% of Asian-Australians reported they had experienced discrimination'.¹³⁰
- 3.110 Professor Sun concluded that 'there is currently a profound and prevalent sense of alienation in the Chinese diaspora' with a 'widely shared view among the Chinese diaspora community in Australia that Chinese Australians have increasingly become collateral damage in the escalating diplomatic tension between China and Australia'. He suggested that the government should make it a priority to 'attack racism head on by introducing a new national anti-racism campaign and implementing a more effective and ongoing mechanism and framework to combat racism'.¹³¹
- 3.111 Dr Casta Tungaraza, Chair, Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, provided evidence that racial profiling, especially in media reports, was a key safety concern for African diaspora communities in Australia.¹³²

¹²⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 6.

¹²⁸ *Submission 5*, p. 2.

¹²⁹ *Submission 17*, p. 5.

¹³⁰ *Submission 4*, p. 5. See also, Biddle, N, Gray, M, Herz, D & Lo, J., ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, 'Asian-Australian experiences of discrimination', *ANUPoll*, 30, 2019, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Submission 4*, p. 7. See also Chinese Community Council, *Submission 9*, pp. 4-5.

¹³² *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 18.

- 3.112 Expressing concern about far right extremism in Australia, Ms Duff of the AHRC told the committee that '[s]ome diaspora communities are targets of far-Right extremist groups, including Asian Australian communities, Australian Muslim communities and Jewish Australians'.¹³³
- 3.113 Mr Dau Atem of the Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas NSW, which represents the needs and issues of the South Sudanese community in New South Wales, discussed how 'the South Sudanese community and its young people have been put out as criminals and as gangs – that people in Melbourne can't come out because they're afraid of the South Sudanese community.'¹³⁴
- 3.114 Reverend Paul Aleu Dau called for action to address 'racial stereotypes' relating to 'so-called African gangs', which has been impacting the South Sudanese community.¹³⁵
- 3.115 The South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria (SSCAV) represents the voices of South Sudanese Australians in Melbourne. SSCAV President, Mr Ring Mayar, said that:
- ...over the last few years diverse media reporting has seriously damaged the reputation and image of South Sudanese Australians. That has destroyed the ability and the sense of belonging of young people who were born in Australia and has left them confused and distressed and not feeling accepted at the schools. It's impacted employability and pathways and opportunities for our young people, including university graduates. They are in despair. Their mental health is at risk.¹³⁶
- 3.116 Ms Duff informed the committee that the AHRC's role was not focused on direct assistance to recently arrived communities, but that it does 'address complaints with are brought to it' and provides 'education and advocacy for communities'.¹³⁷

National strategy

- 3.117 A national anti-racism strategy was launched in 2012 for an initial period of three years. In 2015 it was extended until 2018. The strategy 'focused on public awareness, education resources and youth engagement underpinned by research, consultation and evaluation'.¹³⁸ In August 2018, the Race Discrimination Commissioner released the *Anti-Racism in 2018 and Beyond: A*

¹³³ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 6.

¹³⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 20.

¹³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 7.

¹³⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, pp. 25-26.

¹³⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 7.

¹³⁸ See <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/projects/national-anti-racism-strategy-and-racism-it-stops-me-campaign>, accessed 25 September 2020.

report on the Activities of the National Anti-racism Strategy (2015-18) report. It noted an 'urgent need to continue and extend efforts in anti-racism, in light of current public debates and the global rise of far-right national populism'.¹³⁹

3.118 In its July 2020 submission, the AHRC recommended that the 'Australian Government adequately fund a National Anti-Racism Strategy and associated action items that prioritise community owned and led social cohesion initiatives'.¹⁴⁰

3.119 Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy, said FECCA had been working with other groups, both from the community and private sectors, to push for an antiracism strategy:

One thing that such a strategy needs to address is not just incidents of racial abuse—obviously, they need to be addressed and it's important to look at people being racist in the streets; those sorts of things that are really shocking, and not the Australia that we want to live in. But beyond that and, more importantly, at the crux of everything, is looking at the hidden racism that happens in Australia and the more systemic nature of racism—how that is perpetuated by the structures of our society and also how that then impacts on people's everyday lives. We do hear a lot from our members and from our community members around things they face in Australia, their difficulty with discrimination that is not overt. For example, difficulty in getting a job because you have an accent; no-one will say anything, but it's clear that people's demeanour changes when you have an accent. So I think that an antiracism strategy needs to be very well considered and constructed in a way that is alongside these communities as well as mainstream Australia. We don't want a strategy that is targeted at either group but rather one that sees this as a complex issue that affects all Australians. Also, I think an important element within that is to promote the benefits of a country that isn't racist, a country that celebrates diversity and that sees how much we have to gain from diversity, not just the challenges that diversity presents.¹⁴¹

3.120 She also suggested that for the strategy to be effective it needs to be 'very long term':

...it's almost like looking at an anti-smoking campaign or something; we know those take decades to really have any impact. So it needs to be funded for a long time and it needs to be done alongside communities in a way that really addresses the reality that people are facing.¹⁴²

3.121 This call for a national anti-racism strategy that recognises the systemic nature of racism was supported by Ms Jane Chen of MYAN:

¹³⁹ *Anti-Racism in 2018 and Beyond: A report on the activities of the National Anti-Racism Strategy (2015-18)*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ *Submission 15*, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 5.

¹⁴² *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 6.

...an antiracism strategy would have to acknowledge and really understand racism as broader than how we currently understand racial discrimination, which focuses on very interpersonal manifestations of racism – so violence, abuse and harassment – but there is less of a focus on how racism is also a lack of representation in decision-making, in the media and in other spaces. It can manifest as stereotypes and as a lack of culturally appropriate services. I think a really narrow understanding of racism is hurting our ability to respond to it. It's understanding racism is not just a phenomenon that a small minority might demonstrate in their behavioural actions but really embedded in the system.¹⁴³

3.122 Ms Wesa Chau also agreed that Australia needs a national antiracism strategy.¹⁴⁴ The Kateb Hazara Association also expressed support for a national anti-racism strategy.¹⁴⁵ The Chinese Australian Forum, a community association providing a voice for the Chinese Australian community,¹⁴⁶ supported the development of a new national anti-racism strategy 'including the funding of targeted media advertisements and other community service announcements on anti-racism'.¹⁴⁷

3.123 Ms Janice Le, Director of Advocacy of VOICE, supported the notion of an anti-racism strategy. She also called for amendments to the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and more education and community outreach.¹⁴⁸

3.124 MCC suggested government agencies become 'more proactive in speaking out against racism/discrimination of diaspora communities'.¹⁴⁹

3.125 At the 2 November 2020 hearing, Mr Darren Dick, Senior Policy Executive, AHRC, made a distinction between the existing national anti-racism strategy and public awareness campaign and a national anti-racism framework. He indicated they are in the very early days of starting discussions with government on developing a national framework.¹⁵⁰ Ms Duff elaborated on a national anti-racism framework saying it could outline a 'coordinated shared vision to tackle racism in Australia.' She further detailed that such a framework could:

¹⁴³ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 15.

¹⁴⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ *Submission 72*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ In its submission, the Chinese Australian Forum explained that it was 'established in 1985 in response to racism directed towards Chinese Australians' and that its core purpose is 'to provide a voice for the Chinese Australia community, to enable its greater participation in Australian society and to promote Australian multiculturalism.' (*Submission 65*, p. 1.)

¹⁴⁷ *Submission 65*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ *Submission 8*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, pp. 9-10.

...outline guiding principles and serve as a long-term central reference point for actions on anti-racism and social cohesion. It would contemplate action from across different parts of government as well as actively foster community business partnerships and build the capacity of communities to respond to racism. A national anti-racism framework would contribute to the aims of this inquiry as set out in its terms of reference – namely, by strengthening the protection and resilience of vulnerable diaspora groups, addressing barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, and by identifying and leveraging opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities.¹⁵¹

3.126 Ms Duff informed the committee that the Commission considered that a first step for the development of an anti-racism framework would be mapping available data sources on racism in Australia, identifying gaps and proposing how to address those gaps. The Commission is conducting preliminary work in this area.¹⁵² Mr Dick further detailed:

We think a national framework should exist that can identify the extent of racism, cyber-racism and discrimination in Australia; who suffers it and the nature of what they suffer, and identify the intersectional discrimination that people experience based on a combination of different attributes that they might have, so we understand the experience as experienced by women, for example, as distinct from men from different ethnic groups. We would be able to have this data in a form that it could provide us with the evidence base to assist in priority-setting across governments, potentially to then establish national benchmarks that could be reported on and we could then start to have data that could tell us change over time et cetera.¹⁵³

3.127 Considering that previous process had 'been a little too ad hoc' and lacking 'clarity about who's responsible for what and what the scope of existing services and supports are', Mr Dick hoped a new anti-racism framework would instead take the form of a 'national agreement between all governments of Australia that can set out clear priorities' and 'be very ambitious'.¹⁵⁴

3.128 At October 2020 estimates hearings, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, Mr Chin Tan, explained that the current Anti-Racism strategy was only funded until 2015 but has been ongoing due to self-funding from the Commission. Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher, President of the AHRC, and Mr Tan spoke about discussions underway with Attorney-General's Department and

¹⁵¹ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 7.

¹⁵² *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 9.

¹⁵³ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 9. FECCA also thought the lack of research and data collection on racial discrimination needed attention (Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy, FECCA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 2).

¹⁵⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 10.

Home Affairs about the development of a national anti-racism framework which would be:

more than a three or four year strategy, that will give us the capacity to play a significant role by outlining a coordinated shared vision to combat racism.

...it is my view that it is an important element for this country to have an overarching framework to deal with racism so that when it's asked, 'What is Australia doing?' and, 'How is its outlook in terms of tackling racism?' we have a framework that cuts across all sectors of communities, from government to the corporate sector community, about how we approach racism in this country.¹⁵⁵

Domestic violence

3.129 Family and domestic violence was raised in a number of submissions. FECCA pointed out that:

Women from CALD backgrounds are made even more vulnerable based on a range of factors including: a greater likelihood of not being a permanent resident, having limited or no access to social services; lower levels of English proficiency that can impact employment, education and the ability to form connections with the larger community; being overrepresented in casualised sectors which leads to financial instability and dependency. These vulnerabilities can be amplified for older women, women with disabilities, and those who identify as LGBTIQ+.¹⁵⁶

3.130 Through community consultations, FECCA stated it was informed about problems in accessing appropriate family and domestic violence support services. FECCA advised the committee that currently, 'there are very limited multicultural service providers that cater to CALD women and their children', noting that existing service providers often deliver numerous other services including legal representation, resettlement and employment services without sufficient funding.¹⁵⁷

3.131 Ms Claire Cantrall, Family Law Committee, NSW Bar Association, a voluntary professional association, reported that Women's Legal Services Australia is 'having to turn away one in every two vulnerable women seeking their help.' It further raised concern that '[w]ithout access to 'culturally safe information and support, many culturally and linguistically diverse survivors of family violence will not report that violence.'¹⁵⁸ Ms Suzanne Christie, SC, Family Law Committee, NSW Bar Association, added:

¹⁵⁵ Mr Tan, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, *Estimates Hansard*, 22 October 2020, p. 42.

¹⁵⁶ *Submission 56*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ *Submission 56*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 2.

These barriers and disadvantages have compounded impact, placing culturally and linguistically diverse women and children in a high-risk group for family violence.¹⁵⁹

3.132 The Kateb Hazara Association identified a need in its community for domestic and family violence programs.¹⁶⁰

3.133 The Assyrian Resource Centre noted that Assyrian women are exposed to domestic and family violence:

This is a complex issue associated with multiple causative factors. However, it is essential to support women attempting to leave dangerous situations and provide them with all essential trauma informed and culturally safe services; but also work with Assyrian men, provide them with support and educate them about different and new approaches to family relationships.¹⁶¹

3.134 Members of the South Asian youth community identified family violence as a challenge, emphasising the additional complexities facing women from migrant backgrounds that experience family and domestic violence, such as cultural values and immigration status. They also noted that women from these groups are less likely than other groups of women to report family violence:

Like other communities in Australia, ours is also dealing with high rates of family violence. However, unlike other communities, we have seen little investment to address these issues. Oftentimes for women from migrant backgrounds, cultural values and immigration status can enhance the complexities of family violence. Women from these groups are also less likely than other groups of women to report family violence (Bartels, 2010). This may be due to a number of factors such as being unaware of where to access support, the lack of culturally sensitive services available, being ineligible for certain services due to VISA status, language barriers, as well as threats of deportation due to a temporary visa status.

Many women from our community are here on temporary visas which often mean they are ineligible for Centrelink support, housing services, lowcost psychology and medical services, and even access to refuges at times (InTouch, 2020) These barriers can offer deter women from seeking help, or even from leaving an abusive relationship. Furthermore, the number of Victorian Family Violence services offering a specific culturally sensitive response is limited. The intersections of being a migrant, culture, and of family violence, cannot be overstated, and requires a different approach to that often offered at mainstream services. There are also specific forms of family violence that are specific to, or more prevalent in South Asian communities, such as dowry abuse, and forced marriage, thus requiring a more culturally nuanced approach. Family violence is sadly still a stigmatised issue within our communities, and it is critical for

¹⁵⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p.1.

¹⁶⁰ *Submission 72*, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ *Submission 2.1*, p. 4.

women to be offered spaces where their experience is heard, understood and valued.¹⁶²

3.135 A complicating factor raised by the MCC is the relationship with police stating that it is 'well recognised, even within our legal systems, that many diaspora communities, based on overseas and local experiences, do not trust the police'. MCC expanded upon this, submitting:

They are very fearful of authority and don't know who they can trust and seek support from. At best they turn to friends or local community services. Yet often they have no alternatives but dealing with the police. Police need greater cultural awareness and options for understanding and dealing with the differences between diaspora communities.¹⁶³

3.136 The MCC provided the following two examples of the complexities between domestic violence in diaspora communities and the involvement of government institutions:

For example, an Indian student couple may well be individuals with separate visas but in effect are not independent identities, they are governed by their families. Serious violence often goes unreported. Alternatively, intervention by police may leave the victim isolated and without financial support from either their partner or their own family – the victim is then even more vulnerable.

A further example is women arriving on a spouse visas are not eligible for support like other visa categories, and particularly if they leave their partners. They tend to keep the abuse hidden and suffer in silence. This places enormous strain on their physical and mental health. Local agencies including police have limited success in being able to support these women as they are fearful of authority and they have nowhere to go. Service agencies lack of capacity in their organisations to support these women due to funding, lack of ability to access free interpreters and clients not meeting the residency criteria.¹⁶⁴

3.137 Home Affairs reported that individuals from CALD communities 'can seek protection from family violence via the Family Violence Provisions in the Migration Regulations 1994' which 'allow Partner applicants in Australia to be granted permanent residence if their relationship has broken down and they have suffered DFV perpetrated by the sponsor'. Home Affairs added that it 'ensures visa holders have access to information about support services through its 'family violence and your visa' webpage'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² *Submission 48*, p. 10.

¹⁶³ *Submission 8*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Submission 8*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ *Submission 78*, p. 11.

National Action Plan

- 3.138 In August 2019 the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the Fourth Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, which recognises the diversity of needs of women including those from CALD communities. The plan's priority areas are: primary prevention; supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children; respecting and responding to the diverse lived experience and knowledge of women and their children affected by violence (which includes taking into account the needs and experiences of different cultures); responding to sexual violence and sexual harassment; and improving support and service system responses.¹⁶⁶
- 3.139 In March 2019, the government announced a \$328 million package as part of its contribution to the Fourth National Action Plan.¹⁶⁷ In addition to this, two further measures were provided in the 2019-20 Budget to support people affected by violence, bringing the government investment in the Fourth Action Plan to \$340 million over three years.¹⁶⁸
- 3.140 FECCA recommended that the next iteration of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children is more inclusive of CALD women, their experience and needs, investment in CALD-specific family violence services and upskilling of current services to ensure they are culturally competent as well as reviewing the eligibility criteria for those accessing family violence provisions.¹⁶⁹

COVID-19

- 3.141 Reporting indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have resulted in an increase in domestic violence reporting and those seeking support.¹⁷⁰ The African Australian Advocacy Centre, which represents the

¹⁶⁶ *Fourth Action Plan, National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁶⁷ The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, 'Record funding to reduce domestic violence', *Media release*, 5 March 2019.

¹⁶⁸ See <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence-the-fourth-action-plan-2019-2022/fourth-action-plan-endorsed-by-coag>, accessed 27 November 2020.

¹⁶⁹ *Submission 56*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁰ Hayley Boxall, Anthony Morgan and Rick Brown, Australian Institute of Criminology, *Statistical Bulletin 28, The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic*, July 2020; Jennifer Neil, 'Domestic violence and COVID-19, Our hidden epidemic', *Australian Journal of General Practice*, June 2020; Naomi Pfitzner, Kate Fitz-Gibbon, and Jacqui True (2020), *Responding to the 'shadow pandemic': practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women in Victoria, Australia during the COVID-19 restrictions*, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University; Else Kennedy, 'The worst year: domestic violence soars in Australia during Covid-19', *The Guardian*, 1 December 2020.

interests of African Australian communities through advocacy, research and policy, undertook a survey of members in June and July 2020, which found 'increased levels of domestic and family violence due to confinement in proximity to large numbers of people and significant increased alcohol consumption'.¹⁷¹

3.142 The committee notes that in March 2020, the government announced funding of \$150 million to support those experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence due to COVID-19, which would boost programs under the National Plan to reduce Violence against Women and their children.¹⁷²

3.143 A new public communication campaign was also rolled out in May 2020. The 'Help is here' campaign directs victims of domestic and family violence to the counselling helpline 1800RESPECT. The campaign included 'advertising across television, digital, social media, radio, magazines and newspapers as well as in shopping centres, hospitals and GP surgeries'.¹⁷³

3.144 Home Affairs noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, its Community Liaison Officer Network held domestic and family violence (DFV) sessions in partnership with other relevant agencies and that this included:

...disseminating information about options for visa holders experiencing DFV and improving access to support services. For example, on 23 July 2020, the Home Affairs' South Australian Community Engagement Team facilitated a program of online DFV workshops with an aim to build the capacity of community leaders to connect to appropriate DFV services and find support for their own community initiatives. This meeting was chaired by the SA Regional Director and attended by Our Watch and the Australian nominees to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ *Submission 25*, p. 4.

¹⁷² The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, '\$1.1 billion to support more mental health, Medicare and domestic violence services, *Media release*, 29 March 2020.

¹⁷³ Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services, 'Campaign to combat domestic violence during COVID-19 crisis' *Media release*, 3 May 2020.

¹⁷⁴ *Submission 78*, p. 11.

Chapter 4

Barriers to full participation

- 4.1 This chapter outlines government assistance designed to assist new arrivals to settle and fully participate in Australian life. It examines how diaspora communities are held back from fully participating in Australian society, the underlying causes of this exclusion, and possible strategies for addressing the barriers identified.

Government support to new migrants

Settlement services

- 4.2 Chapter 2 provided an overview of Commonwealth government settlement support available to diaspora organisations, while this chapter focuses on government support for individuals, whether directly or through intermediary service providers.
- 4.3 The Commonwealth government has a range of programs in place to support refugees, humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants within their first five years of arrival in Australia. These programs are administered by the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) and are outlined below.
- 4.4 The *Australian Cultural Orientation* (AUSCO) program is offered to refugee humanitarian entrants prior to their departure for Australia. It provides advice about the journey to Australia and what to expect post-arrival, encourages participants to learn English and equips them with tools to deal with initial settlement concerns. It also provides a realistic picture of life in Australia and information on Australian laws and norms.¹
- 4.5 The *Humanitarian Settlement Program* (HSP):

provides support to humanitarian entrants to build the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of the Australian community. HSP Service Providers work with clients following their arrival in Australia to develop an individualised case management plan and deliver a package of services tailored to their identified needs. Services include early practical support and assistance to connect with the local community through groups and activities.

...

The HSP also includes an orientation program to assist clients aged 15 years and over to understand Australian society, laws, values, and rights and responsibilities.²

¹ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 16.

² Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 16.

- 4.6 *Specialised and Intensive Services* (SIS) is a component of the HSP available to humanitarian entrants and other eligible visa holders who have complex needs. It offers 'short-term needs-based support to help them access appropriate mainstream services and develop the necessary skills to manage their needs independently.'³
- 4.7 The *Settlement Engagement and Transition Support* (SETS) program (first discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to community organisations) has a client services component, which '[p]rovides clients with settlement-related information, advice, advocacy, and assistance to access mainstream and other relevant services.'⁴
- 4.8 *Youth Transition Support* (YTS) services 'help to build capacity and resilience amongst young humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants aged 15 to 25 years...so they stay engaged in education and make successful transitions to employment.'⁵
- 4.9 Home Affairs also informed the committee of the *Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma*, administered by the Department of Health, which 'provides specialised support services to permanently settled humanitarian entrants and those on temporary substantive visas living in the community who are experiencing psychological or psychosocial difficulties associated with surviving torture and trauma.'⁶
- 4.10 The *Skills for Education and Employment* (SEE) Program, run by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, helps eligible job seekers to learn the skills they need to get the job they want by improving their language, reading, writing and maths skills. It provides up to 650 hours of training and caters to a variety of groups, including job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.⁷

Limitations of settlement support

- 4.11 With respect to SETS, Ms Sandra Wright, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Settlement Council of Australia (SCA), observed that there is 'far more demand for this program than there is capacity'.⁸ Ms Wright further described SETS as having 'limited capacity to provide intensive support to those who need it',

³ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 17.

⁴ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 17.

⁵ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 17.

⁶ *Submission 78*, p. 17.

⁷ <https://www.dese.gov.au/skills-education-and-employment>, accessed 15 January 2021.

⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 12.

noting that many clients need 'much more substantive support' than 'just information, advice and referrals.'⁹

4.12 Ms Wright also noted limitations on SETS support according to visa type and period of time since entering Australia.¹⁰ She informed the committee that these limitations did not adequately account for different personal circumstances.¹¹ SCA also highlighted that many people on temporary visas eventually become Australian citizens but are unable to access settlement support in the early years after their arrival due to their initial status as temporary migrants.¹²

4.13 SCA noted that most of its members offer additional support to bridge these gaps, usually relying on smaller grants, ad-hoc funding, philanthropic support, or volunteer efforts.¹³ SCA observed that:

This means access to settlement support is not universal for a large proportion of diaspora communities, and there are many individuals who fall through the gaps.

Our members have described to us countless situations where members of diaspora communities find themselves in urgent need of assistance, however they are ineligible for assistance due to the rigid eligibility criteria for SETS-client services, and the absence of other suitable settlement services.¹⁴

4.14 Diaspora Action Australia (DAA) observed that during the critical initial three to five years of settlement, individuals seek support from both funded settlement services and their own community, focusing on initial settlement needs such as housing, employment, English language acquisition, education, and health. DAA noted that during its consultations, concerns about the lack of multilingual services available in these areas, as well as the absence of settlement support for those not eligible, such as spouses, were consistently raised.¹⁵

4.15 The Khmer Community of New South Wales (NSW) stated that the five-year limit on settlement support was based on the rationale that five years was sufficient time for effective resettlement of recently arrived migrants. It, however, viewed that this time period 'ignores the varying amounts of time which different subgroups (eg. aged, mothers with young children, people

⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 12.

¹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 12.

¹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 13.

¹² *Submission 23*, p. 4.

¹³ *Submission 23*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Submission 23*, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Submission 67*, p. 5.

with low educational attainment, refugee youth) need in order to successfully resettle in Australia'.¹⁶

- 4.16 The African Australian Advocacy Centre advised the committee that its members feel they could not fully participate in Australian society because of a number of barriers, including the level of information available:

African Australian communities must be increasingly engaged by all spheres of government and service providers to ensure that adequate and appropriate information is available to African Australians regarding social, legal and cultural practices in a new environment.¹⁷

Language barriers

- 4.17 The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) submitted that there has been an increase in the number of Australians who speak English 'not well' or 'not at all'.¹⁸ SBS drew attention to the *Community Driven English Language Program: Strengths and Challenges*¹⁹ (Community English Report) published by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) in 2019, stating that:

...new migrants in Australia, including those from a refugee background, come from a diverse range of countries, cultures and ethnic backgrounds. They also arrive at different stages of their life, with different levels of English language ability, education, literacy in their own language and possible experiences of trauma...²⁰

- 4.18 The FECCA Community English Report outlines the important aspects of life which are affected by language skills, including areas such as transport, housing, employment and education, and the health and justice system. The report emphasised that:

[a] lack of English language skills is often reported to be a barrier to successful settlement, particularly in accessing the labour market, finding adequate skilled employment and accessing government services. English

¹⁶ *Submission 59*, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Submission 25*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Submission 21*, p. 10. In the 2016 census, the number of those who speak English 'not at all' or 'not well' was 819,922 or 3.5 per cent of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics data http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_C16_T08_SA, accessed 25 January 2021). In 2011, the figure was 655,379 or 3 per cent of the census population. http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_CENSUS2011_B11, accessed 25 January 2021).

¹⁹ FECCA, *Community Driven English Language Program: Strengths and Challenges report*, http://fecca.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/FECCA-Community-Driven-English_WEB.pdf, p. 9.

²⁰ *Submission 21*, p. 10.

language skills are also important for a person's sense of belonging and developing a sense of home in a new community.²¹

4.19 DAA CEO, Ms Denise Goldfinch, affirmed the importance of English acquisition for newly arrived migrants and refugees as a 'very clear connector for people to be able to fully participate in all aspects of life in Australia.' Ms Goldfinch said DAA had observed that communities are not able to fully engage with Australia's democratic system because their English has 'not been developed to an extent that enables that to happen.'²²

4.20 The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) also commented on the importance of information being made available in languages other than English:

The assumption, particularly in complex contexts like we are facing, that particular diaspora communities are capable of communicating in, and receiving all the information they need in English is not a wise assumption.²³

4.21 The Uyghur Association of Victoria (UAV) noted the loss of distinctive Uyghur social, physical and literary culture as a result of oppression in their homeland. This submission called for support for the Uyghur language and translation between Uyghur and English, noting that the older cohort of this community continue to have poor to average English.²⁴ The Australian Uyghur Tangritah Women's Association, an organisation representing Uyghur and Turkic women and youth in Australia, also noted the need for more government information to be available in the Uyghur language, particularly for older members of the community.²⁵

4.22 Dr John Vallance, State Librarian and CEO, State Library of New South Wales, informed the committee that libraries serve as a space where people with and without English language abilities can interact. Libraries allow diaspora communities to maintain contact with their own cultures but also support English language teaching.²⁶

English language support from the government

4.23 The *Adult Migrant English Program* (AMEP) provides eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants with 510 hours of free English language tuition. It offers extra hours to assist students with additional needs.

²¹ FECCA, Community Driven English Language Program: Strengths and Challenges report http://fecca.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/FECCA-Community-Driven-English_WEB.pdf, p. 8.

²² *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 6.

²³ *Submission 54*, p. 5.

²⁴ *Submission 53*, pp. 1-2.

²⁵ *Submission 80*, p. 2.

²⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 9.

- 4.24 On 28 August 2020, after the submission closing date for the Inquiry, the government announced a package of reforms to the AMEP. Key changes include removing the existing 510 hour cap on free English language tuition and the time limit on enrolling, commencing and completing AMEP tuition.²⁷ These changes were facilitated through the Immigration (Education) Amendment (Expanding Access to English Tuition) Bill 2020 which was passed in December 2020.²⁸
- 4.25 Home Affairs told the committee about how the AMEP adapted to the challenges of COVID-19, maintaining continuity of support by focusing on the better use of technology and flexibility. It was noted that in the future, building on the reforms as a result of responding to COVID-19, the AMEP will include a greater use of technology, including online platforms that will enable study from home to supplement classroom-based learning.²⁹
- 4.26 Through the *Free Interpreting Service*, the government provides a free and non time-limited interpreting service to assist approved groups to communicate with eligible non-English speakers. The government also provides a *Free Translating Service* to people settling permanently in Australia, supporting participation in employment, education and community engagement. Within the first two years of the eligible visa grant date, clients can access up to ten free translations of personal documents.³⁰

Limitations of government English language support

- 4.27 Community organisations acknowledged that English language programs such as AMEP provide key support for recently arrived and more settled migrants.³¹ Ms Wright of the SCA welcomed the recent government announcement to expand access to AMEP.³² Ms Wright further praised the ability of the AMEP to employ digital delivery in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, but expressed caution regarding access to requisite technology.³³

²⁷ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 14.

²⁸ See https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bid=r6615, accessed 21 January 2021.

²⁹ Home Affairs, response to questions on notice from the 15 October public hearing, (received 13 November 2020).

³⁰ Home Affairs, *Submission 78*, p. 14.

³¹ Khmer Community of NSW Inc., *Submission 59*, p. 6; MCC, *Submission 8*, p. 5; Mr Dau Atem, Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas, *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 21.

³² *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 12.

³³ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 15.

- 4.28 However, the Khmer Community of NSW drew attention to the change in continuity and quality of programs such as AMEP over the last decade, observing that these programs have been 'eroded through serial outsourcing, multiple and changing providers, and the casualisation and employment of unqualified specialist teachers'.³⁴
- 4.29 Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy, FECCA, stated that there were 'clearly a lot of gaps' in how AMEP and other English language programs are run.³⁵ For example:
- The way they're run [doesn't] really work for people who have caring responsibilities, who, of course, are usually women. They're not set up for, and they do not work properly for, people who do not have adequate literacy in their own language.³⁶
- 4.30 FECCA detailed that the 510 hours of English tuition provided under AMEP was inadequate for many in its community, who do not have the foundational elements from a formal educational setting. FECCA further submitted that the program was not adequately resourced to cater for the differences that exist in the educational levels of newly arrived immigrants. As a result, this group 'was not adequately assisted to gain and transition into sustainable employment'.³⁷
- 4.31 In response to the changes to the AMEP announced in August 2020, Mr Dau Atem from the Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas (CSSOMA) commented that:
- It's great to hear the Australian government announcing that the AMEP is going to be provided to people who need it, regardless of how long they have been in Australia. So that is really something great.³⁸
- 4.32 Ms Wright also welcomed the announced reforms.³⁹ She noted, however, that there were other specific issues that could be addressed in future, including 'the availability of English language tuition in regional areas and the availability of child care'.⁴⁰
- 4.33 The Khmer Community of NSW noted that the announced reforms would directly benefit diaspora communities.⁴¹

³⁴ *Submission 59*, p. 6.

³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 3.

³⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 3.

³⁷ *Submission 11*, p. 2.

³⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 21.

³⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 13.

⁴⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 14.

⁴¹ *Submission 59.1*, p. 5.

4.34 Some submissions raised the need for equity in accessing translated and interpreting services. The Multicultural Communities Council (MCC) of NSW called for the provision of fee-free interpreters 'to improve access to health, environmental, community and legal services for people from multicultural communities.'⁴² The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) recommended that all levels of governments should 'allocate funding across all government departments for accessible translated and interpreted communications of essential information.'⁴³

Other support

Libraries

4.35 The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. ALIA drew the committee's attention to the success of public libraries, as government entities on the frontline of service delivery for diaspora communities. In June 2019, ALIA and its Australian Public Library Alliance group published a report detailing how libraries are working to support new arrivals to Australia:

It describes how public libraries collaborate with their local communities to develop culturally appropriate programs; to provide books, magazines, newspapers and other resources in languages other than English; to celebrate diversity; to facilitate a greater sense of connection and build mutual understanding; to make physical spaces into culturally safe places; to support skills development for example with digital literacy and English as a second language.⁴⁴

4.36 The report contains examples of 'festivals, conversation classes, health information provision, assistance with citizenship tests, obtaining drivers' licences, enrolling for study, and other ways that libraries help people settle into their new home'.⁴⁵

4.37 ALIA explained that 'libraries are community hubs and make ideal locations for lifelong learning and building community engagement'⁴⁶ and encouraged federal government agencies to explore opportunities for closer collaboration with public libraries.⁴⁷

⁴² *Submission 8*, p. 2.

⁴³ *Submission 15*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Submission 1*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Submission 1*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Submission 1*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *Submission 1*, p. 2.

Special Broadcasting Service

4.38 Ms Clare O'Neil, Director Corporates Services, SBS, provided information on how SBS delivers on its mission of helping diaspora communities 'to participate in Australian cultural, economic and civic life and foster a sense of belonging in Australia.' She noted that:

SBS radio has services in 63 languages. Nearly two-thirds of the content on SBS's broadcast television channels is culturally and linguistically diverse. Over half of all our dramas on SBS On Demand are in languages other than English, and more than 6,000 hours of SBS programming is subtitled every year.⁴⁸

4.39 Ms O'Neil informed the committee of its work to keep diaspora communities informed during the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the launch in March 2020 of a 'coronavirus multilingual portal, which is available in over 60 languages, providing up-to-date health, news and information.' SBS also worked with the Department of Health to produce videos in various languages to inform communities about how to stay safe during the pandemic.⁴⁹

Football Federation of Australia

4.40 Mr Ricardo Piccioni, General Manager Government Relations, Football Federation of Australia (FFA), the national governing body for football, recognised that many people in diaspora communities, including new arrivals and especially those with English language limitations, can find it easier to make friends and build confidence through football than other means.⁵⁰ Mr Piccioni provided information on various initiatives under its auspices, in partnership with Commonwealth and state and territory governments, to 'provide football products tailored to CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse] communities and new arrivals.'⁵¹ The FFA provided the following examples:

An example is the MiniRoos Multicultural Settlement Program, which, with Commonwealth support through the Department of Social Services and the Strong And Resilient Communities (SARC) grant program, provides football to new arrivals aged 4-11 years old in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

The program has been successful in assisting the settlement of newly arrived communities including those from Iraq, Syria and South Sudan by connecting participants and their families with existing grassroots football clubs, and offering opportunities for integration.

...

⁴⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 8.

⁴⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 12.

⁵¹ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 11.

In partnership with Sport Australia, through the 'Move it Aus – Participation' grant, FFA has developed a football program for women and girls within CaLD communities. The program format, delivery and marketing is designed to eliminate the unique barriers that these communities (particularly women and girls) experience when participating in physical activity.⁵²

Barriers experienced by diaspora communities in Australia

4.41 Respondents provided evidence on the difficulties that many members of diaspora communities face in seeking to participate fully in Australian civic, political and economic life. Some barriers involve a lack of diversity for example in the areas of politics, business and the public service. Others are specific to particular aspects of the settlement process, such as employment, education, housing, justice, political engagement and health. Barriers are experienced across different areas and at different times of a new arrivals' journey. Some stem from the nature of the migration system.

4.42 Ms Nadine Liddy, National Manager, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), said that barriers to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds fully participating as active citizens in Australia included 'experiences of racism and discrimination, access and equity in the service system – culture and language can present as barriers to essential services and supports or there can be a lack of culturally responsive service delivery in mainstream systems – mental health and the impact of immigration policy.'⁵³

4.43 FECCA highlighted a number of barriers to full participation for diaspora communities, including:

barriers accessing government services, accessing information, English language proficiency, securing employment, education, and housing especially during the settlement period. Beyond settlement, diaspora communities want their needs and aspirations to be recognised in Australia's economic policies; civic participation and the political process; and social policies (for example related to racism and multiculturalism).⁵⁴

Political engagement and representation

4.44 Eleven percent of the members of the 46th Australian Parliament were born overseas, with 12 of 76 senators born overseas and 13 of 151 Members of Parliament born overseas.⁵⁵

4.45 Ms Lorenza Lazzati, DAA Diaspora Learning Network Coordinator, noted that 'a much more consistent representation at the political level of the various

⁵² *Submission 77*, pp. 1-3.

⁵³ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Submission 56*, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Parliamentary Library, *Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia 2020*, p. 276.

diaspora communities would be for them a way to perhaps talk and discuss about their community issues, which sometimes go underrepresented.⁵⁶

- 4.46 Ms Raphael of FECCA characterised the lack of diversity within parliament, the business leadership community and the public service as a 'huge issue'.⁵⁷
- 4.47 Dr Sev Ozdowski, Chair of the Australian Multicultural Council, considered it important for migrants to join civic organisations outside their diaspora communities such as parliament, trade unions and cultural organisations, so that 'they grow empowered, they feel that they belong and they make a very good contribution'.⁵⁸
- 4.48 Professor Louise Edwards, Vice-President and International Secretary of the Australian Academy of Humanities (AAH), the national body for the humanities, observed that many of her students, who are largely from Asian diaspora communities, are 'seeking clearer pathways to positions of leadership in both the public and private sectors'.⁵⁹
- 4.49 Mr Osmond Chiu, a research fellow at the Per Capita think tank, explained that Australia 'is lagging behind comparable countries when it comes to the representation of our cultural diversity in our democratic institutions'. His research found that '[w]hile around 21 per cent of Australians have non-European ancestry, only four per cent of Australian federal MPs do'.⁶⁰
- 4.50 Mr Chiu observed that the full extent of underrepresentation is unknown due to the lack of measurable data on the cultural diversity of Australian political parties. Mr Chiu highlighted that:
- Without data, it is difficult to measure or even set goals to improve Asian-Australian (and Chinese-Australian) representation.⁶¹
- 4.51 Mr Chiu further submitted that unlike reporting on other forms of representation such as gender, the major political parties do not collect and publish nationally consistent data on their cultural diversity.⁶²
- 4.52 Mr Chui said the lack of diversity in Australian politics 'leads to more disconnected, myopic and polarised debates about race and national identity'.⁶³ He expressed the view that that:

⁵⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 6.

⁵⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 9.

⁵⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 15.

⁶⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Submission 3*, p. 1.

⁶² *Submission 3*, p. 1.

⁶³ *Submission 3*, p. 1.

A truly representative parliament is necessary if we want Australia to successfully navigate big foreign and domestic policy challenges, and to reflect the values of equality which Australia stands for.⁶⁴

4.53 Mr Chiu attributed the low representation rate of Asian-Australians in domestic politics to: the 'small pool of candidates' because parties do not attract or promote culturally diverse members; political parties not viewing preselecting Asian-Australians as electorally advantageous; and the 'culturally diverse candidates who do get preselected tend to be chosen for unwinnable seats.'⁶⁵

4.54 Mr Chiu also highlighted that the Chinese-Australians face particular challenges when trying to enter politics because of:

...a growing perception that those with strong Chinese community connections could have links with individuals and organisations associated with the Communist Party of China.⁶⁶

4.55 Mr Chiu advocated for 'parties...to invest in culturally diverse talent' through 'training and mentoring programs to create a pipeline of talent so a lack of culturally diverse candidates is no longer an excuse.'⁶⁷ He also thought the possibility of targets should be considered.

4.56 Ms Wesa Chau echoed these sentiments, saying it was 'disconcerting that any time a Chinese Australian seeks to run for public office, they're bullied online and accused of having links to the Chinese Communist Party.' She underlined that she was not aware of any other candidates facing similar questions over their loyalty to Australia.⁶⁸

4.57 Ms Chau also observed that a 'toxic atmosphere' regarding Australia-China bilateral relations 'prevents citizens from participating in public debate.' She called for the creation of space for the Chinese diaspora in Australia to share their views without judgement.⁶⁹

4.58 Ms Yun Jiang drew attention to the general suspicion towards people with Chinese heritage in political activities, stating:

Whenever a Chinese-Australian is engaging in politics or advocating policies, questions will be raised about their association with the CCP, especially if they are advocating a pro-engagement position...It can also

⁶⁴ *Submission 3*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ *Submission 3*, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁶ *Submission 3*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 3.

⁶⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 4.

increase the feeling of alienation and contribute to cynicism towards Australian politics among Chinese-Australians.⁷⁰

- 4.59 Ms Jiang drew the committee's attention to a recent case in which a member of the ACT Legislative Assembly, Elizabeth Lee, who is Korean-Australian, was told to '[g]o back to your country: you are a Chinese spy.'⁷¹
- 4.60 Ms Jiang stated that organisations may prefer to mitigate risks by preferring someone who is not of Chinese background, highlighting that this will:
- ...worsen the under-representation of Chinese-Australians in politics, as they need to overcome a higher standard of proof of innocence - by proving their "non-association" with something that is not clearly defined and little understood.⁷²
- 4.61 The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) is the peak Muslim body in Victoria. It also raised the issue of underrepresentation, stating that Muslim communities in Australia lack effective presence and influence in higher levels of state and federal politics, policymaking, universities, large corporations and peak industry bodies.⁷³
- 4.62 The ICV said that circumstances in Muslim migrants' home countries can impact their participation in the political process in Australia, with those who had lived in Australia a long time or come from more robust democratic culture 'more ready to participate than recent arrivals or those who had come from situations of oppression.'⁷⁴ In order to 'restore the confidence of the Muslim community in government and political processes', the ICV recommended support for existing and proven successful leadership programs with an extra component relating to 'political participation civics, the Australian system of government, the workings of the public service, and strategies to influence policy development.'⁷⁵
- 4.63 The ICV also recommended that consultations aimed at increasing political participation include a diversity of voices – in terms of gender, ethnicity, generation and geography. It advocated for gathering opinions of local Islamic scholars on issues such as voting and political obligations, targeted educational strategies tailored to CALD groups in localities which have high levels of informal voting and facilitating opportunities for qualified individuals from

⁷⁰ *Submission 7*, p. 3.

⁷¹ *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 2.

⁷² *Submission 7*, p. 3.

⁷³ *Submission 13*, p. 6.

⁷⁴ *Submission 13*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ *Submission 13*, p. 7. See also, African Australian Advocacy Centre, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

CALD backgrounds to be appointed to boards, authorities and government advisory committees.⁷⁶

- 4.64 The ICV stated that both federal and state government funded ICV projects have enabled young Muslims to develop their advocacy skills, their understanding of and interest in media and political systems, and provided them with the skills and tools to advocate for their concerns and grievances through democratic means. The ICV highlighted that their experience has been that Muslim-specific programs were much more likely to succeed when they were seen as community-driven, rather than government-initiated:

Muslim-specific programs run by government, even when intended to benefit Muslim communities, can contribute to a sense of alienation, and the feeling that government regards Muslims as particularly prone to deficits or in need of surveillance.⁷⁷

- 4.65 Professor Wanning Sun emphasised the interest in political participation from diaspora communities:

At the same time, my own research—which supports existing international research— indicates that these new migrants have an exceptionally high level of interest in participating in Australian politics. As new citizens in a democracy, many are keen to access political information and learn about democratic values, as well as democratic procedures.⁷⁸

- 4.66 Professor Sun reported a lack of easily accessible information and civic education aimed at improving the level of political interest, political knowledge and civic awareness among diasporas as a major problem:

The best way to ensure that this high level of enthusiasm [among first-generation migrants] is sustained is to promote social inclusion and encourage fair representation, so that this community develops a sense of political belonging. There needs to be a comprehensive, concerted effort at both national and state levels to provide resources for civic education for adult members of the diaspora who are not part of Australia's secondary and tertiary education systems.⁷⁹

- 4.67 Noting that Chinese migrants do not have a 'shared history, system of government or political values' with Australia, the Chinese Australian Forum also called for strengthening of the citizenship process to provide an educational opportunity for new citizens to become more familiar about the Australian way of life.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *Submission 13*, p. 7.

⁷⁷ *Submission 13*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ *Submission 4*, p. 7.

⁷⁹ *Submission 4*, p. 7. See also, African Australian Advocacy Centre, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

⁸⁰ *Submission 65*, pp. 2-3.

- 4.68 Ms Jane Chen, Representative of MYAN, considered that one way to improve civic engagement would be to address 'barriers to understanding how to participate', noting it can be difficult, especially for people who speak English as a second language, to understand issues informing electoral choices.⁸¹ Ms Chau similarly called for the government to consider encouraging civic education to help all Australians understand how Australian democracy works.⁸²
- 4.69 The Yazidi Australian Association (YAA) called for engagement between the government and the Yazidi community, including training and support in relation to advocacy and civics education.⁸³
- 4.70 However, MCC cautioned that it is important 'to recognise the impact on families back in certain home countries if their family member here participates in politics in Australia', as explored in Chapter 3.⁸⁴

Employment

- 4.71 FECCA detailed that 47 per cent of highly skilled migrants are underemployed in Australia, compared to 23 per cent of similarly skilled Australian-born workers. After five years in Australia, 40 per cent of skilled migrants still work in lower skilled jobs.⁸⁵ FECCA submitted that barriers in recruitment are a reason for these figures.⁸⁶
- 4.72 MCC underlined that many highly skilled members of diaspora communities withdraw from their skilled career employment area and work for themselves in unskilled roles.⁸⁷
- 4.73 Mr Atem of CSSOMA said that 'unemployment is a huge problem' and a huge and puzzling issue given Australia's ageing population.⁸⁸
- 4.74 An example of unemployment among diaspora communities was provided by the South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria (SCCAV), which drew attention to a study completed in 2016 by the University of Canberra. The study found that the unemployment rate in the South Sudanese community in

⁸¹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 13.

⁸² *Committee Hansard*, 14 October 2020, p. 4.

⁸³ *Submission 70*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ *Submission 8*, p. 7.

⁸⁵ *Submission 56*, p. 12, referring to Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria, Centre for Ethical Leadership, University of Melbourne, *Recruit Smarter: Report of Findings*, p. 18, accessed 18 August 2020.

⁸⁶ *Submission 56*, p. 12.

⁸⁷ *Submission 8*, p. 6.

⁸⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 9.

2016 was 28.6 per cent, five times the national unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent.⁸⁹ SCCAV submitted that many South Sudanese university graduates felt discriminated against in the workplace or when job searching.⁹⁰

4.75 The Federation of Equatoria Community Association in Australia (FECAA) is a not-for-profit community organisation and the peak national body that represents the interests of the Equatorian community in Australia.⁹¹ FECAA said that high unemployment, mainly among those aged 40 and above, is a significant concern among Equatorians. These groups arrived in Australia as adults and with 'less or non-functional proficiency in English language'. FECAA submitted:

Unfortunately, the early days of settlement in Australia did not have adequate training programs that could be tailored to the needs of this group.⁹²

4.76 Women were also identified by the FECAA as a category 'hard hit by high unemployment', stating that their disadvantage is 'compounded by historical cultural practices that discouraged the education of young girls. As a result, a significant proportion of women in Equatoria community cannot write or read'.⁹³

4.77 The Ma'di Community Council of Australia (MCCA) raised high unemployment among the 50 to 60 age demographic as a key issue. The MCCA submitted that upon arrival this demographic, who were previously self-employed or skilled professionals, were not adequately supported to transition into sustainable employment through formal training, retraining or other long term skills development programs. As a result:

Most members of this group are now renters, and have not accumulated retirement savings. A large number of them are not coping well without the dignity of work and self-sufficiency, particularly given most had worked all their lives, and in some cases were highly respected community leaders through their professions. We fear this group is at a real risk [of] old age poverty, including homelessness and mental illness. The women in this group are at a particularly higher risk.⁹⁴

4.78 Through community consultation, FECCA advised that there are numerous barriers faced by people from CALD backgrounds in accessing employment. These barriers include a lack of skills recognition, lack of local referees and

⁸⁹ *Submission 43*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ *Submission 43*, p. 8.

⁹¹ Equatoria is one of three regions in the Republic of South Sudan and home to 34 of the 64 tribes of South Sudan.

⁹² *Submission 11*, p. 2.

⁹³ *Submission 11*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Submission 6*, p. 1.

Australian work experience, conscious and unconscious bias, unfamiliarity with the 'Australian way' of writing resumes, limited connections to the community and limited computer literacy or access to the digital tools required to apply for jobs.⁹⁵

- 4.79 The Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS), which provides free legal advice, assistance and representation for financially disadvantaged and vulnerable people seeking asylum in Australia, pointed to 2019 research showing that 21.3 per cent of refugees come from professional backgrounds, but only 6.2 per cent find professional roles in Australia within two years. RACS attributes this to temporary visas and confusion surrounding refugees' legal situations. RACS told the committee:

This underemployment and underutilisation of skills damages the productivity of the Australian workforce and inflicts unnecessary hardship upon temporary protection visa holders who are unable to work in the fields they are qualified for.⁹⁶

- 4.80 Expressing the view that there is a need for greater collaboration between the settlement sector and the employment services sector, the SCA stated that the 'inadequacy of existing JobActive services in achieving employment outcomes for migrants and refugees has been well documented. So too has a need for more tailored services that can address the specific needs of migrants and refugees.' SCA considered that the settlement sector had proven its ability to achieve positive employment outcomes, but that 'maximum value is not currently being extracted from the settlement sector in the pursuit of employment outcomes'.⁹⁷ Ms Wright, SCA CEO, noted that the successful, small-scale employment programs run by the settlement sector do not generally receive federal government funding.⁹⁸
- 4.81 To address this issue, FECAA and the MCCA recommended the consideration of 'specific, targeted employment pathways to socially connect this group and give them meaning, dignity of work and opportunities to earn and save for retirement.'⁹⁹
- 4.82 As a long-term solution, both FECAA and the MCCA suggested the need for professional apprenticeship programs to 'support those with poor educational outcomes to transition into employment' and professional mentorship

⁹⁵ *Submission 56*, p. 12.

⁹⁶ *Submission 47*, p. 11.

⁹⁷ SCA, answer to question on notice, 15 October 2020 (received 4 November 2020).

⁹⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 15.

⁹⁹ MCCA, *Submission 6*, p. 2; FECAA, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

programs with industry-specific leaders to 'aid bright, young professionals and university graduates in moving into leadership positions in the future'.¹⁰⁰

- 4.83 As part of its work providing advice on improving settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants, the Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council (RaMSAC) determined that engaging with Australian businesses is key to improving refugee employment outcomes. Identifying that there is a significant untapped appetite in the private sector for employing refugees, RaMSAC produced 'An employer's guide to working with refugees: Unlocking new sectors of Australia's workforce talent'.¹⁰¹

Public sector employment

- 4.84 Several submissions raised the issue of the under-representation of diaspora communities in the public sector and policy making roles. The evidence suggested that greater diversity in these roles would create a stronger relationship with these communities and have multiple beneficial outcomes: better policy for all Australians and more targeted services for diaspora communities, while generating greater social cohesion. The need for more understanding of, and training in, cultural diversity in public sector organisations was also raised as an issue; as was the need for better data collection on diaspora communities.

- 4.85 DAA referred to a recent study from the Australian Human Rights Commission on the level cultural diversity represented in senior leadership positions of Australian organisations and institutions, where it was noted that:

There is a significant underrepresentation of people with non- European and Indigenous background. Out of the 2490 senior leaders background examined, only 5% have a non-European and Indigenous background. The study shows how cultural diversity is particularly low within the senior leadership of Australian government departments and Australian universities...¹⁰²

- 4.86 Ms Yun Jiang submitted that many Australian businesses have recognised that Chinese-Australians bring valuable language and cultural skills. However despite the importance of China to public policy in Australia, the Australian Public Service is not 'in a rush to take advantage of these valuable skills'. Ms Jiang advocated that Chinese-Australians are under-represented in policy advising roles in Canberra and 'the result is worse in defence and national security portfolios - portfolios most in need of greater understanding of China'.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ FECAA, *Submission 11*, p. 4; MCCA, *Submission 6*, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settle-in-australia/refugee-and-migrant-services-advisory-council>, accessed 18 December 2020.

¹⁰² *Submission 67*, p. 55.

¹⁰³ *Submission 7*, p. 3.

4.87 Ms Jiang pointed to the requirement for many government positions to have a security clearance and the difficulty in obtaining this when applicants have connections to China as one reason for their under representation:

The policy areas that benefit the most from the skills that Chinese-Australian bring – foreign policy and national security – are also the areas that require the highest level of security clearance. Obtaining this is much more difficult for those born outside Australia or with family connections to foreign countries, especially China.¹⁰⁴

4.88 CSSOMA also raised representation of the South Sudan diaspora in government agencies that work to support them as an issue to the community's full participation in Australia society and a barrier to engagement and building trust with public institutions. CSSOMA advised that 'South Sudanese often feel misunderstood by the government agencies and social institutions.'¹⁰⁵ CSSOMA recommended that:

Public institutions employ more South Sudanese community members. This will enable South Sudanese [to] see themselves represented in public institution[s]. This will generate a sense of ownership and pride in Australian institutions.¹⁰⁶

4.89 Dr Marinella Marmo, Dr Tiziana Torresi and Dr Pam Papadelos saw diaspora communities as an under-utilised resource for the government, and also noted the need for greater diversity within the public sector:

Defence, police and more governmental bodies should be more inclusive of diversity (and within diversity, more diversity: age, gender, temporary migration status, rural v urban). Leveraging multiculturalism is a key asset in many ways which are still little understood and therefore embraced.¹⁰⁷

4.90 AAH suggested that all sectors of society, including governments, have not fully harnessed the full range of skills, knowledge and networks of diaspora communities, and recommended that:

Given the importance of the Asia-Pacific region to Australia's future, the under-representation of these diasporas communities in public office, industry councils, business associations and in trade discussions and delegations must be addressed as a national priority.¹⁰⁸

4.91 The Australian Public Service (APS) Commissioner, Mr Peter Woolcott AO, stated in his review in the *State of the Service Report 2019-20* that 'diversity and

¹⁰⁴ Submission 7, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Submission 69, p. 3

¹⁰⁶ Submission 69, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Submission 31, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Submission 52, pp. 1-2.

inclusion strategies and actions remain integral to...ensure our differences make a positive impact on the work of the APS.¹⁰⁹ This report advised that:

For the APS, a diverse workforce is one way to remain strongly connected to the people of Australia.

A commitment under the APS reform agenda, the APS aims to increase diversity 'so the APS itself reflects and understands the people and communities it serves...

Demonstrating diversity is also one way of earning a social license to operate, and building public trust in the APS.¹¹⁰

- 4.92 The report further notes that '[o]rganisations with culturally and linguistically diverse workforces benefit from increased levels of cultural competency, innovation and creativity.'¹¹¹
- 4.93 In the *State of the Service Report 2019-20*, as at 30 June 2020, 22.1 per cent of employees were born overseas and 15.9 per cent were born in a non-English speaking country. The report noted that 'since 2000, there has been an increase in the proportion of APS employees born overseas, especially those coming from non-English speaking countries'.¹¹² It also highlighted that 'in 2010, the number of APS employees born in Asia outnumbered those born in Europe for the first time. This year, of those born overseas, most employees were born in either Asia (46.3%) or Europe (28.8%)'.¹¹³

Qualifications recognition

- 4.94 Recognition of overseas qualifications was highlighted as a barrier for diaspora communities with a number of organisations suggesting the need to reassess overseas qualification and recognition systems.¹¹⁴ The Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) emphasised that while it is important that universities uphold rigorous standards, it is frequently 'not a level playing field with re-qualification exams often being viewed as, at best, overly onerous and at worst, not structurally sound'.¹¹⁵
- 4.95 Dr Sev Ozdowski, Chair of the AMC, also noted the lack of consistency in qualifications recognition, which varies across states and territories and

¹⁰⁹ Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), *State of the Service Report 2019-20*, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ APSC, *State of the Service Report 2019-20*, p. 114.

¹¹¹ APSC, *State of the Service Report 2019-20*, p. 144.

¹¹² APSC, *State of the Service Report 2019-20*, p. 144.

¹¹³ APSC, *State of the Service Report 2019-20*, p. 145.

¹¹⁴ *Submission 19*, p. 2; MCC, *Submission 8*, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ AMC, *Submission 19*, p. 2.

professions. He suggested one remedy could be the establishment of bridging courses providing local context for the given profession.¹¹⁶

- 4.96 Mr Jorge Aroche, CEO of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), also addressed the issue of qualifications recognition, noting that individuals 'often have lost a lot in the process of becoming refugees and coming to Australia' and:

[t]he longer they take to have their qualifications recognised, the more that is likely to affect their sense of who they are and their self-esteem. Also, in many occupations, being away from that area or that profession actually means that skills begin to downgrade and be lost, and that is a great loss to Australia.¹¹⁷

Digital literacy

- 4.97 FECCA raised that limited computer literacy or limited access to digital tools act as a barrier for people from CALD backgrounds in accessing employment. FECCA stated that during consultations they heard how limited computer literacy or lack of tools such as smart phones and computers for some women is a challenge to finding a job or accessing general information.¹¹⁸
- 4.98 The African Australian Advocacy Centre (AAAC) represents the interests of more than 15 African Australian communities. It submitted that its national survey highlighted a disparity relating to access to information technology and IT literacy across the African communities in Australia, particularly among the older and more recently arrived members.¹¹⁹
- 4.99 ALIA indicated that some libraries across Australia provide digital literacy courses and facilities to the general public.¹²⁰

Cultural awareness and understanding

- 4.100 The AAAC advised that its communities feel they cannot fully participate in Australian society due to a number of barriers, and that to overcome these and for members to have increased participation, the general population needs to have a better understanding of the various African cultures and languages that are represented within African Australian communities.¹²¹
- 4.101 Members of the South Asian youth community advised the committee that there was minimal and inaccurate representation of the South Asian diaspora

¹¹⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 14.

¹¹⁸ *Submission 56*, p. 13.

¹¹⁹ *Submission 25*, p. 5.

¹²⁰ *Submission 1*, p. 9.

¹²¹ *Submission 25*, p. 5.

in the wider social fabric of Australia, such as in the media, politics, education, economics, and philanthropy; and where there is representation, it does not reflect the regional, cultural and intergenerational diversity within the South Asian diaspora.¹²²

4.102 Dr Marinella Marmo, Dr Tiziana Torresi and Dr Pam Papadelos in their submission called for with positive narratives from diverse groups

Greater effort is required to counter the negative narratives of migrant groups with strong, positive and real narratives from different Australian diaspora (ie beyond food festivals). Official Federal and State channels, including social media, ought to put great emphasis on this and the message needs to be more uniform than it has been in the past.¹²³

4.103 The MCC drew the committee's attention to cultural awareness and cultural competency in Australia, stating 'the capacity of Australia's skilled migrant intake is seriously undermined by the lack of cultural awareness and cultural competency within employers and the community'. The MCC advocated for mechanisms to be established that ensure:

(a) the teaching of cultural awareness is compulsory throughout all years of Primary School, including exposure to cultural diversity; and

(b) the implementation [of] accredited cultural competence training within the workforce, to the extent that cultural competency is given similar employer status to that now granted to Occupational Health and Safety.¹²⁴

4.104 To prevent loss of traditions, help young people with identity and languages, and to increase their cultural awareness and cultural competency, the MCC suggested the development of creative programs through organisations such as youth centres, community centres, neighbouring centres and multicultural community councils.¹²⁵

4.105 The UAV advised of their need to preserve, develop and pass on elements of culture, not only for the Uyghur community, but as a contribution to the world community. The Association called for support for maintaining Uyghur as a spoken and literary language, as well as traditional arts including music and dance, religious and cultural festivals. It was also proposed that a Uyghur community centre would serve as a focal point that would help build identity and resilience.¹²⁶

¹²² *Submission 48*, p. 6.

¹²³ *Submission 31*, pp. 5-6.

¹²⁴ *Submission 8*, p. 6.

¹²⁵ *Submission 8*, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *Submission 53*, p. 2.

4.106 MYAN recommended that the development of educational programs and resources to help Hazara and other diaspora youth, and their peers, learn more about their respective cultures.¹²⁷

4.107 Professor Helen Lee provided an overview of the Pacific Islanders in Regional Victoria Final Project Report which explored the socio-economic status and well-being of Pacific Islander migrants in rural northwest Victoria. In relation to the needs of youth, the report recommended the need for improved social cohesion in the region to increase Pacific young people's sense of belonging and inclusion, and noted that '[s]ocial inclusion needs to go beyond multicultural festivals to genuine and full participation.'¹²⁸

4.108 The AAAC advised that its members felt that in order to fully participate in Australian society there needed to be a better understanding of African language and cultures in the African Australian community, and that there must be more engagement of its members by all spheres of government and services providers, and recommended the following:

African cultural diversity awareness training to be held for public servants, policy makers and decision makers, especially those coming into contact with Community from Africa.

...

The public service and government departments to increase the participation of people from Australian African communities in their workforces, so that they reflect their proportionate presence in the Australian population.¹²⁹

Education

4.109 A range of community organisations raised the issue of education among their community members. This included the need for targeted education and training programs as well as addressing poor educational outcomes and career stagnation among specific diaspora communities. While community organisations such as FECAA and the MCCA offer tutoring and mentoring programs to assist with these issues, the Khmer Community of NSW called for more government assistance in education and training for diaspora communities.¹³⁰

4.110 Poor educational outcomes were a significant concern raised by FECAA. FECAA considers that the 'school placement system at the time of settlement of this group in Australia did not match with the capability this group came

¹²⁷ *Submission 17*, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Submission 41*, p. 3.

¹²⁹ *Submission 25*, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁰ *Submission 59*, pp 6-7.

with'.¹³¹ To address these problems, FECAA has been working with Equatorian communities at the state and territory level to offer tutoring programs to students and mentorship programs for those who are struggling to find jobs. FECAA raised that 'getting venues for such programs has been a challenge' however they are engaging with 'other bodies including governments in the states to lease or offer properties...to allow the community [to] run their programs from'.¹³²

4.111 Poor education and training outcomes were also highlighted as an issue by MCCA. MCCA suspected that its community's results 'reflect a significant failure of refugee settlement policy around the time of our community's settlement in Australia'.¹³³ For the past five years MCCA has held an annual youth conference to discuss the issues affecting this group, however stated that 'its outcomes have not found ways into public policy development'.¹³⁴

4.112 Mr Atem of CSSOMA considered that, 'at school, there's a lot of discrimination. There is a lot of racism'.¹³⁵ He added:

Young people feel excluded. Young people feel desperate. They want to feel included. They want to really feel that they are Australian but everything tells them they are not.¹³⁶

4.113 The MCC specified that strong and consistent Commonwealth leadership and commitment to education that recognises the need for customised programs for diaspora communities is required:

Appropriate, specific and customised Education and Training pathways and programs are the best strategies for positive outcomes for diaspora communities including Department of Home Affairs Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and DESE's Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program.¹³⁷

4.114 A lack of formal multicultural education was raised by the MCC as a barrier to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions. The MCC submitted that specific multicultural programs and specialist staff roles have been significantly decreased, marginalised or rationalised within government departments and agencies, such as TAFE, over the past decade.¹³⁸

¹³¹ *Submission 11*, p. 3.

¹³² *Submission 11*, p. 3.

¹³³ *Submission 6*, p. 2.

¹³⁴ *Submission 6*, p. 3.

¹³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 21.

¹³⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 22.

¹³⁷ *Submission 8*, p. 5.

¹³⁸ *Submission 8*, p. 5.

4.115 The MCC provided an example of the Catholic school education system in the ACT in providing highly successful program where:

...parents and students with English as their first language provide after school homework assistance to Sudanese students whose parents have no or poor English. Success is not just with student educational results but also in Sudanese families being warmly welcomed into mainstream sporting and cultural Canberra life.¹³⁹

4.116 The Khmer Community of NSW noted that in order to have the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, systematic design and delivery of targeted education and training programs is required. These education and training programs would 'address the specific needs of community subgroups' and would be 'informed by ongoing community consultation and co-design'.¹⁴⁰ In the absence of this approach, the Khmer Community of NSW submitted that groups within diaspora communities will continue to experience disadvantage in accessing 'relevant mainstream education and training and face barriers to productive participation in Australian life, work and society'.¹⁴¹ The Khmer Community of NSW concluded that the complex and shifting nature of federal and state government education and training, in addition to changes in funding, outsourcing, availability and delivery of courses, make it difficult for smaller communities to keep informed of developments, make appropriate referrals and provide informed client feedback and evaluation.¹⁴²

Informal education

4.117 The MCC drew the committee's attention to the need for education about the management of waste and efficient use of utilities, such as energy and water, to 'ensure that diaspora communities introduction to life in Australia is not started with debt to utility providers or local government and community reprimands'. Further, the MCC suggested that an understanding of the effects of climate change unique to Australia will assist them to understand the broader concerns of the Australian community.¹⁴³

4.118 The AAAC advised the committee that its members feel they could not fully participate in Australian society because of a number of barriers, including the level of information available:

African Australian communities must be increasingly engaged by all spheres of government and service providers to ensure that adequate and

¹³⁹ *Submission 8*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Submission 59*, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ *Submission 59*, p. 6.

¹⁴² *Submission 59*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴³ *Submission 8*, p. 3.

appropriate information is available to African Australians regarding social, legal and cultural practices in a new environment.¹⁴⁴

4.119 MCCA advised that a large number of its members are often not aware of government initiatives designed to support them, as this information is not reaching members, noting that its members do not ordinarily visit government websites. To address this problem, the Council recommended that:

...the government give consideration to funnelling policy announcements through a central portal to which Australians can subscribe and receive notifications as announcements are made – similar to the function on the Government's *GrantConnect* websites.¹⁴⁵

4.120 A consolidated central online entry point was also raised by the MCC as a way to provide information more effectively to diaspora communities. The MCC proposed the establishment of an online multicultural business directory to promote a 'wide range of culturally diverse experiences, services, entertainment and products available from business, government and community sectors.'¹⁴⁶

4.121 Ms O'Neil told the committee that SBS maintains a settlement guide that 'helps address the language barriers faced by diaspora communities in navigating everyday life in Australia' by for example covering topics such as lodging tax returns, regional migration for skilled works and dementia care.¹⁴⁷

Housing

4.122 According to the National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards, housing is listed as one of the nine areas required to achieve effective settlement for migrants and refugees in Australia.¹⁴⁸

4.123 FECCA and the UCA singled out housing as a key issue facing newcomers to Australia, particularly during the settlement period.¹⁴⁹ Housing availability and affordability are major issues for diaspora communities with the UCA submitting that these issues are frequently exacerbated by discriminatory attitudes from landlords and agents.¹⁵⁰

4.124 The Assyrian Resource Centre (ARC) highlighted that affordable housing for refugees is an issue on the rise throughout the Fairfield region in New South Wales. Due to an increase in the number of refugees settling within Fairfield,

¹⁴⁴ *Submission 25*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ *Submission 6*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Submission 8*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 8.

¹⁴⁸ SCA, *Submission 23*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Submission 56*, p. 10; *Submission 54*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵⁰ *Submission 54*, p. 7.

the ARC suggested that the government should provide assistance and incentives to allow refugees to reside in other suburbs. The ARC has advocated for Housing NSW to provide affordable housing, however the ARC reported that assistance has not been forthcoming. The ARC also noted that Housing NSW has over 5,000 families and individuals awaiting housing to be granted.¹⁵¹

Justice

4.125 Ms Suzanne Christie, SC, Family Law Committee, NSW Bar Association, noted that people from diaspora communities require legal assistance in areas such as 'family violence, exploitation at work, assistance with housing matters, assistance with visa cancellation and discrimination.' However, it reported that 'many people in diaspora communities, whether they be Australian citizens, permanent or temporary residents, or visitors, are not necessarily afforded the full protection of the law in their time of need:

Diaspora communities face significant challenges with access to justice. This makes enforcing their rights in civil, criminal and family law matters complex and difficult.

...

Where they arise, these challenges include language barriers; unfamiliarity with or mistrust of Australia's legal system, legal services and conventions; and a continuing lack of properly funded, culturally appropriate services.¹⁵²

Health / COVID-19

4.126 cohealth submitted that vital health information has not been as available to people with low literacy and from non-English speaking backgrounds compared to the wider community. cohealth also observed that 'health systems may not provide the same level of care to particular groups due to inappropriate assumptions made about their health and behaviour'.¹⁵³

4.127 In relation to people seeking asylum with bridging visas, RACS observed that while temporary protection visa holders are eligible for Medicare, under federal government policy, people with bridging visas are not able to access preventative public health measures such as GP advice and COVID-19 testing, nor are they able to access acute COVID-19 related healthcare such as hospital admission and ambulance fees.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ *Submission 2*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵² *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 1.

¹⁵³ *Submission 30*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁴ *Submission 47*, p. 15.

4.128 Ms Nadine Liddy, National Manager of the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), noted that recent government investment in youth mental health is not necessarily reaching young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds because this would require 'a different service delivery model and one that is much more culturally responsive to the needs and contexts of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.'¹⁵⁵

4.129 The ARC observed that many of the services provided to migrants and refugees do not factor in 'the lack of awareness about mental illness and cultural sensitivities around mental health'.¹⁵⁶ The ARC raised past experience of torture and trauma as a key issue facing the Assyrian community, stating:

Many people arrive without support and assistance, have experienced torture or trauma of some kind and need specialised and sustainable support. The current system of services is not meeting these needs, and regularly in my daily work I see the effects.¹⁵⁷

4.130 The ARC also expressed that the torture and trauma faced by many families, in addition to not being able to gain employment, is leading to domestic violence within households.¹⁵⁸

4.131 Reverend Paul Aleu Dau said there were a range of challenges for South Sudanese communities in accessing appropriate mental health services.¹⁵⁹

4.132 Mr Aroche of STARTTS drew the committee's attention to additional challenges faced by LGBTIQ members of diaspora communities:

What many of our clients from these groups experience is that, even within the minority that they may be part of in their country of origin, they could have been ostracised, alienated and subjected to prejudice. That can continue when they come to Australia. Those things don't evaporate just because the community has found refuge elsewhere. The same level of prejudice may be exhibited by the community here, and so the circle of support may be even more constrained. At the same time, what we have often found with the LGBTIQ community is that the larger community sometimes doesn't quite understand the issues that refugees have lived through and some of the cultural issues that may be very important to them.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 16.

¹⁵⁶ *Submission 2*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ *Submission 2*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ *Submission 2*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p.7.

¹⁶⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, pp. 13-14.

Other barriers

Migration system

4.133 Ms Shukufa Tahiri, Deputy Chair, National Refugee Led Advisory Group, a refugee led entity that aims to inform policy, service delivery and research affecting its constituents, observed that:

[r]efugee diaspora communities continue to feel excluded due to delays and a lack of access to Australian citizenship, which is a hallmark of belonging and building a new home for refugee diasporas. Thousands of our community members continue to linger in limbo and remain separated from their families for close to a decade due to specific, prohibitive policies to reunite with their families and the temporary measure of the protection visas, if and when they are recognised as refugees under our domestic laws.¹⁶¹

4.134 Mr Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia drew attention to 'the discrimination faced by people who have arrived by boat' with respect to subsequent family reunion or partner visa applications and recommended that the government should issue a new direction 'to remove any distinction based on a refugee's mode of arrival when assessing their family reunion application.'¹⁶²

4.135 Ms Raphael of FECCA emphasised that the current migration system is 'incredibly arduous for a lot of people – probably the vast majority of people – who arrive in Australia.' The long wait time for people eligible for permanent residency is 'one really tangible way that makes it very difficult for people to then feel like they are genuinely welcomed'.¹⁶³

4.136 Mr Ring Mayar, President of the SSCAV, drew the committee's attention to the problem of young people with a South Sudanese background losing residency after being involved in the youth justice system. This is extremely stressful for family and leads to financial duress due to the need for parents to send remittances to support their deported child.¹⁶⁴

Financial literacy

4.137 Ms Laura Simpson Reeves raised financial literacy as a key issue amongst communities from Samoan and Tongan backgrounds. Ms Reeves provided a case study on the positive impact financial literacy programs can have on assisting the financial stability of families within the Samoan and Tongan diaspora. Ms Reeves emphasised that access to financial literacy training can assist those with low levels of financial literacy who are susceptible to taking

¹⁶¹ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, pp. 7, 10.

¹⁶² *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 11.

¹⁶³ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 25.

high interest rate payday loans and accruing high levels of household debt.¹⁶⁵ Ms Reeves concluded:

Financial literacy training that is culturally appropriate and recognises the cultural and familial commitments required by the Samoan and Tongan diaspora would go a long way towards this community are able to become financially secure and thus able to participate fully in Australian society.¹⁶⁶

Issues specific to Tibetan Australians

4.138 The Australia Tibet Council and the Australian Tibetan Community Association reported that incorrect date of birth records is a significant issue for many Tibetan elders:

Tibetan refugees arrive in Australia through India with incorrect dates of birth recorded on their documents issued by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. This problem has arisen because, before 2003, the Indian Government would issue a Registration Certificate (RC) only to Tibetans who were born in India. Without an RC, they had no access to education and could potentially be deported to Tibet. So many had to lower their dates of birth.

These incorrect details were then transferred to the Tibetan Green Book, and subsequently to their Australian visas. The result is that many older Tibetan-Australians are forced to become job seekers when they should be retired and have difficulty accessing age-appropriate medical services.¹⁶⁷

4.139 It was submitted that correcting the date of birth details has proven difficult as 'the Department of Home Affairs requires original documentation from Tibet, such as birth or household registration certificates. This evidence has either never existed or has been lost or forgotten during the refugees' escape. A person can rarely access any existing records left in Tibet without putting family or friends at risk'.¹⁶⁸

4.140 The lack of recognition of Tibet as a Country of Origin was also raised as an issue:

Tibetan-Australians undergo a distressing experience while filling various Australian Government forms that require selecting a Country of Origin. As Tibet is not listed as a country of origin, Tibetans have to choose either India or China. It is not only inaccurate but also leads to inconsistency between government records and those held by the individual Tibetans as the documents that they brought with them at the time of migrating to Australia, such as RC or Tibetan Green Book, would identify Tibet as the country of birth.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ *Submission 32*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Submission 32*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Submission 75*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ *Submission 75*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ *Submission 75*, p. 6.

Chapter 5

Opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships

- 5.1 The committee was informed of the importance of engagement between the government and diaspora communities in Australia. A number of submitters noted the value of strong communication channels and partnerships for informing government policy, determining service priorities and building social cohesion and an inclusive multicultural society.
- 5.2 While the committee was presented with examples of positive engagement across wide-ranging policy and service delivery areas, it was also advised of areas where there is potential for the Australian government to strengthen communication and partnerships with diaspora communities for mutually beneficial outcomes.

Existing links between government and diaspora communities

- 5.3 The committee welcomed evidence from a number of submitters about processes and initiatives currently in place which facilitate communication and partnerships between the government and diaspora communities in Australia.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- 5.4 The *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* sets out the government's commitment to working with diaspora communities to promote Australia abroad and to support its foreign policy objectives:

These communities often have the connections, language skills and cultural understanding to assist Australia to deepen ties with other countries. They help to facilitate trade and investment, including by sharing information on overseas markets and customs. Diaspora communities can also influence how Australia is perceived internationally.¹

- 5.5 The White Paper also notes the important role that diaspora communities play in supporting the government's development assistance program:

Our diaspora communities often contribute to developing countries through remittances. They also have the knowledge and networks to help improve our understanding of development and humanitarian issues in other countries.²

¹ Australian Government, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, p. 109.

² Australian Government, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, p. 109. See also *Submission 20*, p. 1.

5.6 As noted in Chapter 1, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) manages the following seven Foundations, Councils and Institutes (FCIs), covering a range of bilateral and regional relationships:

- Australia-Indonesia Institute (AII)
- Australia-ASEAN Council (AAC)
- Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF)
- Australia-Korea Foundation (AKF)
- Australia-India Council (AIC)
- Council for Australia-Arab Relations (CAAR)
- Council of Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR)³

5.7 The committee was advised that the above bodies provide DFAT with ongoing opportunities to strengthen communication between DFAT and diaspora communities:

The membership of the majority of FCI boards includes prominent members of the relevant diaspora community, bringing important perspectives to the boards and, through *ex officio* membership of the boards, to DFAT. Conversely, members of the FCIs Boards engage with diaspora communities as part of their representative roles.⁴

5.8 DFAT provided some examples of the activities conducted by these bodies to strengthen communication and engagement with diaspora communities, including:

- an annual program for the ASEAN Heads of Mission based in Canberra to engage with the Australian community, supported by the AAC;
- the commissioning of research of the social and economic contribution of Southeast Asian diaspora to Australian society and its engagement with the region by the AAC and AII; and
- AIC work to elevate the profile of Australians of Indian origin and their achievements.⁵

5.9 Mr Ray Marcelo, Assistant Secretary, Southeast Asia Regional Engagement Branch, DFAT, informed the committee that, in 2020, the AAC and AAI 'will run a project looking at expanding engagement with diaspora communities'. In addition, 'DFAT and the Australia-India Council have engaged members of the Indian diaspora through the Australia India Business Council and the Australia India Chamber of Commerce'.⁶

5.10 DFAT also noted in particular the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations, which has subsequently been established, as 'a unique national

³ *Submission 20*, p. 3.

⁴ *Submission 20*, p. 2.

⁵ *Submission 20*, p. 2.

⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 25.

platform dedicated to strengthening engagement between Australia and China:

The Advisory Board of the Foundation includes strong representation from the Chinese Australian diaspora. Part of the Foundation's mandate is to engage across government at all levels, industry, academia, think tanks and community sectors, including working with diverse Chinese Australian communities. Through grants and program activities, it will enhance the ability of key stakeholders to engage confidently with China and help support social cohesion in Australia.⁷

- 5.11 The new Foundation will build on the work of the now decommissioned Australia-China Council, established in 1978, and which the Minister for Foreign Affairs noted had been at the 'forefront of strengthening the Australia-China bilateral relationship'.⁸
- 5.12 In addition to the FCIs, DFAT noted the work of the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, established in 2015, which was the originator of the idea for an Australia-Africa week, which takes place annually in Perth and involves universities, business groups and diaspora communities.⁹
- 5.13 Additionally, DFAT outlined the efforts of its Office of the Pacific to engage with members of Pacific diaspora communities in a number of areas, including policy development. DFAT valued the input of members of Pacific diaspora communities into consultations that informed Australia's new development strategy, *Partnerships for Recovery*, and into the design and implementation of a number of *Pacific Step-Up* projects. DFAT further explained:

A new social media initiative, *Stay Strong Pacific*, under the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) sees high profile members of the Pacific community involved in videos which help build resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under another program, *PacificAus Sports*, the Office of the Pacific supported a special ticket deal for Samoan diaspora to attend a rugby test match between Australia and Samoa in 2019. Future activities under this program will seek to ensure Pacific diaspora communities are engaged with all Australian-based activities.¹⁰

Department of Home Affairs

- 5.14 The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) informed the committee of its extensive engagement with diaspora communities, which enables it to build 'trust with a broad range of stakeholders through a focus on communication and partnerships'.¹¹ This engagement informs policy development, determines

⁷ *Submission 20*, p. 2.

⁸ Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'Strengthening the Future of the Australia-China Relationship', *Media Release*, 29 March 2019.

⁹ *Submission 20*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Submission 20*, p. 3.

¹¹ *Submission 78*, p. 7.

service priorities, promotes social cohesion, keeps communities safe and encourages participation in social, economic and civic life. It is carried out through the ministerial advisory bodies outlined in Chapter 1, portfolio community liaison networks, peak bodies representing culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, and intergovernmental groups.

Portfolio community liaison networks

5.15 The Home Affairs Community Liaison Officers (CLO) Network engages with communities around Australia to:

- build trusted relationships with community leaders and listen to feedback;
- promote social cohesion; and
- provide informed feedback to Home Affairs and government on community settlement.¹²

5.16 The network 'delivers Home Affairs and whole-of-government policy and program information, and feeds back community sentiment to Home Affairs to inform policy and program delivery.'¹³ Mr David Wilden, First Assistant Secretary, Refugee, Humanitarian and Settlement Division, Home Affairs, told the committee that the network reaches out to organisations representing ethnic, linguistic and faith groups across Australia.¹⁴

5.17 Mr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Social Cohesion Division, Home Affairs, told the committee that the CLO network has 'been active throughout the pandemic, reaching out to organisations representing ethnic, linguistic and faith groups across Australia':

To give you a sense of the scale of effort, between March and August we had over 7,300 separate engagements with multicultural stakeholders nationally, representing a more than fivefold increase in our outreach activities compared to the same period last year.¹⁵

5.18 Australian Federal Police (AFP) Community Liaison Teams (CLTs) operate around Australia to help build positive, trusting and cohesive relationships with a diverse range of communities. According to Home Affairs, the CLTs 'work closely with partners in both government and non-government agencies with the aim of assisting communities with issues of concern.'¹⁶

5.19 The AFP also uses AFP Media to maintain 'an education awareness approach to matters relevant to specific community groups', including CALD groups.¹⁷

¹² *Submission 78*, pp. 7-8.

¹³ *Submission 78*, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 34.

¹⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 30.

¹⁶ *Submission 78*, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Submission 78*, p. 8.

Peak bodies

5.20 Home Affairs also provides funding to the following bodies, each involved in building partnerships with government and diaspora communities.

5.21 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA) is the peak national body representing Australians from CALD backgrounds and receives Commonwealth funding to:

Represent the views of multicultural communities to government, build community capacity and conduct research and community consultations. FECCA is a strategic partner with Home Affairs on matters relating to Australian values, integration, civics and social cohesion.¹⁸

5.22 In 2018, Home Affairs and FECCA entered into a four-year grant agreement to undertake a number of activities 'to represent CALD Australians and facilitate communication between Home Affairs and CALD Australians'.¹⁹

5.23 The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) works in partnership with young people, government and non-government sectors 'to promote the interests of migrant and refugee youth and support a targeted approach to addressing policy and service delivery'.²⁰

5.24 The Migration Council of Australia (MCA) is an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit body established 'to enrich the productive benefits of Australia's migration and humanitarian programs':

Key activities of MCA include encouraging a greater understanding of migration and settlement through supporting best practice and building partnerships between corporate Australia, the community sector and government.²¹

5.25 The Settlement Council of Australia is the national peak body representing agencies across Australia that assist migrants and humanitarian entrants to settle into life in Australia. It provides a formal network to 'bring settlement service providers together at a national level...to improve collaborative and strategic planning processes for the settlement sector'.²²

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation

5.26 The role of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) is to protect Australia and Australians from threats to their security. Its key priorities include counter terrorism, counter espionage and foreign

¹⁸ Submission 78, p. 8.

¹⁹ Submission 78, p. 8.

²⁰ Submission 78, p. 9.

²¹ Submission 78, p. 9.

²² Submission 78, p. 9.

interference, and border security. To counter these threats, ASIO noted the importance of forming strong partnerships with 'governments, law enforcement and national security agencies, industry, academia, international counterparts and Australian communities,' including engaging closely with diaspora communities.²³ ASIO advised that:

Diaspora communities contribute to Australia's security by providing ASIO with advice on potential threats to national security and informing our contextual understanding of these threats. Our engagement is confidential and provides an avenue for communities to raise issues with representatives of the Australian Government.²⁴

5.27 ASIO highlighted the longstanding and extensive program of engagement with a broad range of leaders and representatives of diaspora communities, noting that it 'currently has contact with 100 different ethnic and religious groups.'²⁵ ASIO advised that:

Australia's diaspora communities are diverse, and the issues concerning them originate from a variety of sources—longstanding religious and/or ethnic conflicts, international events, social and economic inequalities, perceived political injustices and the difficulties faced by migrant communities with integrating into Australian society. ASIO's engagement provides diaspora communities with an opportunity to raise matters affecting their community and to seek advice on potential mitigation measures and resources available to them.

For ASIO, our engagement is a critical component of scanning for future threats, both locally and within the communities' countries of origin. Our engagement supports advice on threat assessments, strategic analysis, border integrity, special events, counter-espionage and foreign interference and counter-terrorism matters, as well as providing community-based situational awareness.²⁶

Enhanced engagement

5.28 While the committee welcomed the above evidence about programs and initiatives to connect government with diaspora groups in some policy areas, a consistent message from a number of submitters was that there is significant opportunity for enhanced engagement to fully realise the value of Australia's diaspora communities as a resource in advancing government objectives. The committee heard that strengthening communication and partnerships with diaspora groups would also deliver mutual benefits, including greater knowledge about government activities and services and support government engagement with diaspora communities' home countries. It was noted by

²³ *Submission 12*, p. 2.

²⁴ *Submission 12*, p. 2.

²⁵ *Submission 12*, p. 4.

²⁶ *Submission 12*, p. 4.

Ms Denise Goldfinch, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Diaspora Action Australia (DAA), that to fully reap the benefits of engagement with diaspora communities, the government should work to build trust through cultivating genuine and long-term partnerships.²⁷

5.29 The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) advised that the current communication and partnership arrangements between government and diaspora communities need to be strengthened, particularly in light of issues that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The AHRC suggested that key stakeholders such as FECCA and Settlement Services International should be invited into the policy development process as early as possible. The Council further recommended that adequate funding for community involvement in service design and culturally appropriate service delivery be provided.²⁸

5.30 The Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH) advised that, while there had been some progress on diaspora engagement through DFAT's public diplomacy agenda, there is opportunity to engage more broadly across government. It noted one of the key findings of the 2016 Australian Council of Learned Academies report *Australia's Diaspora Advantage* was that there is 'a need for a strategic national approach to recognise and better utilise the resources of Australia's diaspora communities.' The Academy advised that:

A significant opportunity exists for Australia to coordinate both *diaspora policy* and *capability development* across relevant portfolios and agencies, to facilitate regional engagement and better position Australia to anticipate, and swiftly respond to, global challenges and opportunities in a highly nuanced way.²⁹

5.31 The South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria also supported enhanced engagement with government for beneficial outcomes for both parties. While acknowledging that it had previously had some engagement with different levels of government, the Association saw opportunity for more engagement, particularly at the federal level.³⁰

5.32 The Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association advised the committee that more open communication would enable their community to convey their needs to government.³¹

5.33 The National Refugee-led Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG) advised the committee of the changing composition of refugee diaspora communities

²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1.

²⁸ *Submission 15*, pp. 7-8.

²⁹ *Submission 52*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Submission 43*, p. 8.

³¹ *Submission 80*, p. 2.

and the need for government to be able to identify and engage with emerging diasporas:

...current community and government partnerships do not adequately reflect partnerships between new and emerging refugee diasporas...While some settled refugee diaspora who have come to Australia a long time ago may be better connected and synchronised with different levels of the Government, newer and emerging communities don't feel as supported with usually much more 'urgent' issues to be addressed.³²

Areas of enhanced engagement

5.34 Submitters advised the committee of the untapped skills, knowledge and experience of diaspora communities that could be harnessed by the government in advancing Australia's interests in a range of specific policy areas.

5.35 DAA noted that diaspora communities have unique characteristics that are a potentially important resource for government:

Diaspora can be permanently based in Australia or be second-generation. They often have acquired Australian citizenship, but they also retain strong ties with their country of origin and cultural background. Therefore, engagement with diaspora has unique nuances and characteristics that should be captured in a federal policy.³³

International relations and diplomacy

5.36 DAA elaborated on the potential value of diaspora input in regard to the government's foreign policy objectives:

Diaspora are stakeholders in their country of origin of which they are also a valuable knowledge holders in terms of the social, political and economic dynamics and mechanism. They are well placed to brief Australia diplomats and officials.

In terms of diplomacy, community consultations have highlighted how government seldom engages with diaspora despite the richness and diversity of their overseas networks.³⁴

5.37 The Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) advised that diaspora communities add to Australia's international standing and influence and that:

[t]o take better advantage of our linguistic and cultural diversity in international relations requires further policy directions and program actions aimed at harnessing such wealth of skills available to us.³⁵

³² *Submission 79*, p.19.

³³ *Submission 67*, p. 50.

³⁴ *Submission 67*, p. 51.

³⁵ *Submission 19*, p. 2.

- 5.38 The Australian Multicultural Foundation, an independent body conducting research, programming, policy advice and evaluation around managing cultural diversity and enhancing social cohesion in Australia, advised:

...the diaspora in Australia is an undeniably rich resource which has been used for positive social, economic and political advancement of Australia and as a channel for the global exchange of skills, knowledge and technology...While I believe that the Australian experience has been largely positive there is scope for improvement in unlocking the diaspora's potential to affect social change in Australia and globally.³⁶

- 5.39 The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) also highlighted the opportunities of more engagement with diaspora communities, advising that these communities should be considered as a strength and resource for Australia, and utilised in developing and implementing policy and international engagement:

These communities are uniquely placed to assist Australia in its interactions internationally and within our own region in particular. A number of our UCA diaspora members mentioned their concern that Australian diplomacy and foreign policy seem to overlook the resources they have within Australia to shape and assist government. They see a role in supporting Australia in its endeavours in regional stability.³⁷

- 5.40 NRAAG noted the value of the unique experiences of the refugee diaspora which the government could utilise:

...refugee diaspora communities have an intrinsic tendency to contribute to resolution of situations of conflict they have left behind. While this has been done so far via aid and development by diaspora groups, the refugee diaspora is immensely interested in diplomatic, political and meaningful solutions to situations in their countries and places of origins. This is because they often have a large segment of their communities either contemplating flight or being directly affected by situations of conflict and instability. Therefore, there is a huge interest in the refugee diaspora communities to engage with the Australian government to support its peace building efforts internationally.³⁸

- 5.41 Mr Paul Power, Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) CEO, told the committee that DFAT could 'take greater advantage of the expertise that exists within communities', providing the example of refugees from Myanmar who are 'mostly from a series of ethnic minorities' with 'different language groups, different cultural groups' who are 'directly connected to each of those communities and speak the particular language' and 'have access to all sorts of

³⁶ *Submission 18*, p. 6.

³⁷ *Submission 54*, p. 9.

³⁸ *Submission 79*, p. 20.

information that's not available in English about what's happening on the ground within Myanmar'.³⁹

- 5.42 The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) saw opportunity for Australia to capitalise on its Muslim diaspora which it advised 'should be seen as a national asset...and deployed accordingly', including in foreign engagement:

Australian Muslim communities have the potential to play a significant role in Australia's international relationship with other countries and regions. They project a positive image of Australia as a tolerant, liberal and multicultural society through their informal networks across the world. Diaspora communities can also be a valuable asset for Australia's foreign policy engagement with neighbouring regions.⁴⁰

- 5.43 The Africa Research & Engagement Centre (AfREC), an initiative to promote greater Australia-Africa literacy, recommended that DFAT should develop a national strategy for directly engaging the African diaspora in aspects of Australian foreign policy towards Africa. The Centre further recommended that the Foreign Minister's Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, universities and African community organisations should contribute to the development of that strategy.⁴¹

- 5.44 Dr Marinella Marmo, Dr Tiziana Torresi and Dr Pam Papadelos advised the committee that they see diaspora communities as resources that are undervalued and under-utilised by government, particularly in relation to Australia's strategic interests:

Australia's multicultural population and diasporic cultural diversity ought to be harnessed to facilitate community connections, trust enhancement, network building and reinforcement, providing untapped expertise in different sectors, to include socio-cultural and economic interests as well as security, transnational criminal and defence activities. Australian can better capitalise on internal links, knowledge, linguistic capacities and successful multicultural coexistence to develop external relationships – in short, Australian human capital and expertise can be used more strategically.⁴²

- 5.45 While they were of the view that diaspora communities have been used successfully by business, the expertise of these groups should be used more strategically by the government across other sectors 'to advance overall Australian interests and to strengthen connections and networks with other nations':

Employing the Australian diaspora to forge greater resilience from external influences and to deploy a strong counter-narrative at the macro-

³⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 9.

⁴⁰ *Submission 13*, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Submission 39*, p.3.

⁴² *Submission 31*, pp. 4-5.

level can also disrupt negative interference. Identifying best practice to tap into this resource is very important. For example, but not only, in the area of security and countering foreign influence, at the forefront of Department of Defence's objectives, engaging the diaspora is critical to support Australian strategic communications onshore and offshore, especially in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴³

- 5.46 Mr Dau Atem of the Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas (CSSOMA) told the committee that his community would have liked to be consulted by the government in the process deciding how to support the peace process in South Sudan. Mr Atem said that diaspora community members could have provided the government 'with knowledge, with understanding, with the kinds of caveats that you have to be South Sudanese to know, to make the whole process much more efficient.'⁴⁴

Refugee policy

- 5.47 The RCOA outlined examples of the current diaspora-government model of engagement. It noted that this model could be further strengthened such that the 'lived experienced of refugee diaspora communities can be further championed by the government at both an international and national level', by: 'including a refugee representative in its formal delegations to relevant meetings'; 'continuing to support the participation of an Australian refugee community representative...and championing the voice of refugees in international dialogue' at relevant international meetings; and further engaging with NRAAG in the development of national policies.⁴⁵
- 5.48 The RCOA further suggested that the government create an Ambassador of Refugee Protection, similar to the existing position of Ambassador for People Smuggling and Human Trafficking, advising that:

Creating such a position would provide diaspora leaders with an avenue through which to support the engagement of affected communities in high-level dialogue on refugee protection and solutions.⁴⁶

Humanitarian and development assistance

- 5.49 Several witnesses pointed to the untapped potential of diaspora communities for enhancing Australia's overseas development program. The RCOA suggested that the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper's commitment to working with diaspora communities to support foreign policy objectives had not yet

⁴³ *Submission 31*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 23.

⁴⁵ *Submission 60*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁶ *Submission 60*, p. 12.

been realised, particularly in relation to development and humanitarian relief work.⁴⁷

- 5.50 The RCOA described the transnational social support networks which are created through refugee resettlement:

...noting the connections and impact resettled refugees have on the people and places from which they have come. As well as sending remittances to family and friends, research has found that it is common for resettled refugees to set up small volunteer-run organisations to collectively mobilise resources to assist 'their people' living in displacement contexts in other parts of the world.⁴⁸

- 5.51 The RCOA underscored the value of diaspora-led development and humanitarianism, suggesting there were a number of ways in which the government could engage more with Australia's refugee diaspora to ensure they are 'more fully enabled to undertake the helping work that they inevitably do of their own accord', including: 'strengthening the fundraising, governance and project planning capacities of diaspora organisations'; 'reducing bureaucratic red tape for small voluntary organisations'; 'establishing a targeted diaspora volunteer or deployment program'; 'championing the participation of active Australian-based diaspora organisations in humanitarian coordination mechanisms'; and 'ensuring greater accessibility by diaspora organisations to existing initiatives'.⁴⁹

- 5.52 NRAAG also noted the potential of diaspora-led aid and development initiatives:

Hundreds of diaspora organisations are involved and highly experienced in raising funds for the purpose of aid and development and have built strong local connections, relationships with local communities in their countries of origin where aid and development is needed. However currently the structure of partnering with smaller, but effective diaspora aid and development initiatives do not exist. This is both a missed opportunity for the Australian Government and the subjects of aid and development in developing countries as the knowledge and inbuilt structures of diaspora are not utilised.⁵⁰

- 5.53 Afghan Australian Development Organisation (AADO) President Ms Sarina Greco noted that 'there's no mechanism to recognise and train diaspora communities in Australia's aid program'.⁵¹ AADO called for greater recognition of and support for diaspora-led non-government organisations undertaking aid programs, noting that:

⁴⁷ *Submission 60*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ *Submission 60*, p. 12.

⁴⁹ *Submission 60*, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁰ *Submission 79*, p. 20.

⁵¹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 19.

The absence of a practical strategy by the Australian Government to maximise the benefits of diaspora-led organisations to Australia's national and international interests is the noteworthy missed opportunity. A strategy that recognises and values the expertise of leaders from diaspora communities for the delivery of Australian programs internationally will help improve the credibility, relevance and success of these programs, since they would benefit from deep understanding of the context, the likelihood of success for various approaches, relationships and the potential for positive developmental change. With this readily accessible expertise, Australia's international reputation and its influence on change is likely to be enhanced significantly.⁵²

- 5.54 AADO explained additional difficulties for diaspora organisations delivering programs in conflict-affected countries which are subject to travel bans, such as Afghanistan:

Unfortunately, as a direct consequence of the DFAT travel ban advice for Afghanistan, a well-matched philanthropic trust interested in supporting AADO's Science training work (which is backed by the Afghan Ministry of Education), decided not to proceed with significant funding.

...

The more significant issue in DFAT's approach of excluding funding in post-conflict countries affected by travel bans is the risk of driving diaspora-led efforts to the edges of Australia's aid program, even underground. This increases risks and undermines the potential to share the benefits of partnerships between diaspora-led NGOs, other large-scale NGOs, UN agencies as well as future DFAT programs.⁵³

- 5.55 CSSOMA also noted the value of their members as 'significant assets' to the government and the broader society. CSSOMA recommended that the government consult with the South Sudanese diaspora in relation to policy about trade, investments and aid to South Sudan. CSSOMA advised the committee that this diaspora community had initiated aid programs but struggled 'with negotiating the international aid systems and have little access to sustainable funding.' CSSOMA recommended that:

South Sudanese organisations initiating projects to build peace, infrastructure and economic development in South Sudan, should receive guidance and support from [the] Australia Government.⁵⁴

Business and trade policy

- 5.56 The AAH outlined opportunities to engage with diasporas to promote trade and business opportunities:

New and responsive pathways for greater engagement of Australia's business diasporas could include increasing representation and

⁵² *Submission 61*, p. 9.

⁵³ *Submission 61*, p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Submission 69*, p. 3

mobilisation in trade policy formation and missions; improving mechanisms for greater engagement in business and investment programs; and connecting business diasporas with research collaborations.

The strength of successful diaspora business enterprise in the services sector is a particular opportunity for Australia – this is an under-developed area of Australia-Asia trade which is traditionally focussed on mining and agricultural exports.⁵⁵

- 5.57 DAA also commented on the potential for diaspora communities to provide assistance to government in regard to trade objectives:

Diaspora...can broker engagement with businesses and trades from their country of origin. Many diaspora communities are leading successful business councils facilitating trade agreements and networking. Yet, there is scant engagement and interest from the Australian government side.⁵⁶

- 5.58 The AMC was also of the view that:

[t]here are enormous opportunities to advance Australia's economic prosperity through the strengthening of communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities in Australia.⁵⁷

- 5.59 The ICV noted the potential for diaspora communities to establish economic connections between Australia and their countries of birth:

The Government should undertake a comprehensive study in its potential engagement with Australia's Muslim diaspora as a resource to advance economic links and build transnational networks for trade, investment and innovation.

...

Australian Muslim communities can play an important role in facilitating and promoting Australia's cross border investment and commercial flows from other countries and regions. They can often be responsible for establishing important social, diplomatic and economic connections between Australia and their countries of birth.⁵⁸

- 5.60 United Macedonian Diaspora Australia highlighted the positive role of business chambers in fostering greater engagement between countries:

Business chambers to facilitate greater trade and business opportunities between the two countries, and between the diaspora and wider Australian society would also be beneficial.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Submission 52*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Submission 67*, p. 51.

⁵⁷ *Submission 19*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Submission 13*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ *Submission 34*, pp. 9-10

Strategies for enhanced engagement

A diaspora policy

5.61 DAA advised the committee of the need for an enabling policy environment that fosters inclusion and participation in order for the full potential of diaspora in Australia to be realised:

Harnessing the unique value of diasporas is impossible to achieve without a systematic and comprehensive diaspora policy. Such a policy is urgently required in order to:

- Set the parameters for diaspora engagement with government
- Clearly identify priority areas of strategic interest
- Offer guidelines for coordination and ongoing consultation.

The current policy vacuum limits engagement with diaspora to ad hoc arrangements often based on the initiative of a few individuals within government who either have a knowledge or a personal interest to work with diaspora. Government initiatives that are driven by individuals often leads to small and focused projects that are often not coordinated, have a short-term vision and are less likely to utilise diaspora potential to advance Australia's objectives.⁶⁰

5.62 DAA noted that a diaspora policy framework which facilitates diaspora engagement with government should acknowledge the need for a mutually beneficial relationship which recognises the contribution of diaspora members:

Diaspora communities appreciate the opportunity to provide information, feedback and be consulted on relevant issues including through this Inquiry. However, in a spirit of reciprocity there should also be follow up, be it in terms of services improvement, information sharing, capabilities development, policy change, diplomatic action, notifying community members of the outcomes of the consultation process or indeed financial compensation for the time and knowledge that they provide. The absence of an overarching policy framework to guide relationship building is a missed opportunity. As a result, engagement is perceived by communities as a compliance requirement, or convenience, in an unequal relationship.⁶¹

Engagement through community organisations

5.63 Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy, FECCA, suggested that government could overcome trust issues with various diaspora communities by using community organisations who have existing relationships as intermediaries.⁶²

5.64 Ms Goldfinch of DAA also pointed to trust as a hurdle for government agencies attempting to engage with diaspora groups and noted that DAA can act as 'a very good bridge'.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Submission 67*, p. 56.

⁶¹ *Submission 67*, p. 51.

⁶² *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 4.

- 5.65 Members of the South Asian youth community commented on the importance of working with community organisations in the dissemination of government information to diaspora communities. It observed that the lack of communication targeting community associations results in a lack of awareness of important information, including advice on support available, opportunities for new migrants, and the rights and protections available to them.⁶⁴
- 5.66 In the context of government communication in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCA raised the importance of the involvement of peak bodies and community groups in effective government messaging. While acknowledging the challenges of the current crisis, the UCA advised:
- ...there has been a lack of resources and particularly resource people who are known by the diaspora communities that are language and culturally appropriate for diaspora communities. Translating documents is not sufficient to ensure good communication and community awareness. Diaspora peak bodies and community groups must be involved in developing and disseminating relevant information and instruction to the communities.⁶⁵
- 5.67 Reverend Esteban Lievano, Chairperson, Ibero Latino National Conference of the UCA, said that the Latino community considers itself an emerging community in Australia and has found that many of its members are 'coming from systems in the developing world, where they don't feel that they can actually engage with government'. He suggested engaging through the systems that brought these individuals to Australia, such as universities or local community associations.⁶⁶

Financial compensation

- 5.68 Some submissions supported DAA's proposal that government provide financial compensation for the utilisation of diaspora community members' skills, knowledge and experience. These included the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma⁶⁷ and CSSOMA, which provided the following rationale:

For community leaders to be proactive in creating a better link between Government agencies and the community, they need to be given incentives. South Sudanese cultural and grassroots knowledge carried by community leaders should be given an equal value to that given to expensive private consultants. Our leaders are expected to share this

⁶³ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Submission 48*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ *Submission 54*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2020, p. 9.

⁶⁷ *Submission 71*, p. 6.

knowledge free of charge and in their own time. This approach devalues our cultural knowledge and privileges certain knowledge over other. The technical program design knowledge is no more essential to successful service design than the knowledge of our community, its infrastructures, experience and culture.⁶⁸

- 5.69 Ms Raphael of FECCA noted that the recent increase in requests for assistance from government is very welcome but puts an 'enormous strain on already very limited resources'. She continued:

If community engagement is of value then it needs to be invested in, because it takes a lot of work. If it's important and needs to be done well, it does take resources, people and time, and that needs to be acknowledged more.⁶⁹

Broader, more structured and systematic engagement

- 5.70 A number of diaspora community organisations supported more structured and systematic engagement with government. For example, CSSOMA expressed a wish to see strengthened engagement between the government and the South Sudanese community through the development of a South Sudanese community engagement strategy, co-designed with the community.⁷⁰

- 5.71 The AfREC called for a more structured approach to government engagement with diaspora communities including: regular consultations between government and the national peak body; the creation of specific African community engagement strategies, in partnership with African community organisations; and the establishment of an annual African diaspora engagement conference.⁷¹

- 5.72 The committee also received evidence on this matter from the South Sudanese Australian National Consensus Council (SSNCC), an independent advocacy organisation working to build common understandings on issues affecting South Sudanese Australians. The SSNCC supported strengthening 'networking and communication between diaspora communities towards the building of strong partnerships with government and other non-governmental organisations.'⁷² It recommended the establishment of:

a platform for diaspora communities to regularly meet with the federal government, its departments and institutions so that emerging issues are discussed, and solutions provided yearly.⁷³

⁶⁸ *Submission 69*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 2.

⁷⁰ *Submission 69*, p. 7.

⁷¹ *Submission 39*, pp. 2-3.

⁷² *Submission 49*, p. 1.

⁷³ *Submission 49*, p. 2.

5.73 The Yazidi Australian Association called for 'proactive and genuine' engagement between the government and the Yazidi community, and proposed a number methods for achieving this, including dedicated communication channels and involvement in decision making processes for issues relevant to the their community.⁷⁴

5.74 The Assyrian Resource Centre called for regular and broader collaboration and communication across all portfolio areas relevant to its community, including employment, education, health and small business:

Assyrian organisations have a lot to offer in the settlement realm. However, our knowledge and grassroots connections extend far beyond the narrow limit of settlement sector.⁷⁵

5.75 The Multicultural Communities Council of NSW (MCC) noted that providing 'one-way communication via interpreted material on websites, in brochures or media releases to ethnic media is not an effective means of achieving participation and integration'.⁷⁶ MCC suggested bilingual educators as a means of providing full two-way engagement with individual members of diaspora communities directly through:

...forums...,through local government, utility providers, diaspora community organisations and the ethnic media.⁷⁷

5.76 In a similar vein, and acknowledging how difficult it is for governments to engage broadly, Ms Raphael, FECCA Director of Policy, nevertheless urged government departments not to subscribe to the idea that 'engagement or liaison is really down to providing translated materials.'⁷⁸ FECCA advised the committee that in order to strengthen communication and partnerships between the government and diaspora communities, 'meaningful two-way engagement is essential':

FECCA recommends that communication and partnerships between diaspora communities and government should be mutually beneficial, well informed, and work towards long-term change. Diaspora communities can provide a wealth of information around their experiences and are best placed to co-design better government service and practice. Partnering with diaspora communities also works towards building capacity for community members and allows them to become better informed about government processes and services.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *Submission 70*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ *Submission 2.1*, p. 5.

⁷⁶ *Submission 8*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ *Submission 8*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 1.

⁷⁹ *Submission 56*, p. 11.

5.77 Ms Raphael further cautioned against government overreliance on engaging with community leaders as a substitute for engaging with communities. She expanded that community leaders 'are often self-identified and not necessarily representative' and that there can be issues with gender.⁸⁰ DAA CEO Ms Goldfinch made a similar observation, noting that community leaders have not been elected and that there is a sense that government departments always 'go to the usual people' and as such 'may not be aware of all the issues'.⁸¹

5.78 The Kampuchea Krom Cultural Centre of NSW, the Cambodian Action Group and the Buddhist Monks Human Rights Council recommended strengthening the partnership with federal law enforcement bodies, such as ASIO and the AFP:

...in the form of training to promote Australia's good governance, democracy, rights, freedoms and expectations of community leadership should be embraced with special funding support to attend training by volunteer community leaders.⁸²

5.79 The Khmer Community of New South Wales recommended the establishment of regular community forums by Federal MPs based on its involvement in human rights forums hosted by federal members of parliament:

These human rights forums build civic and democratic participation among diaspora communities by informing about international human rights issues affecting local communities and providing opportunities to meet the local member and discuss concerns arising from the forum while promoting positive relationships among constituents.⁸³

Youth

5.80 Some submissions called for more programs to target youth as a distinct cohort within diaspora communities. The importance of engaging young and second-generation diaspora members was highlighted by AMF:

Today, second and third generation of young Australians from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds have become important advocates for diasporas. They are a key source for building social cohesion, creating understanding and developing cultural and educational links between the country of origin of their ancestors and country of their birth. They realise that they can play an important role in peace building and creating a better understanding between communities, like in the case of Australia with such a diverse population.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 2.

⁸¹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 4.

⁸² *Submission 76*, pp. 8-9.

⁸³ *Submission 59*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ *Submission 18*, p. 5.

Provision of information in languages other than English and multiple media

5.81 FECCA noted the importance of the provision of information to diaspora communities using a range of media and in languages other than English:

...a large portion of the Australian population will miss out on important information concerning their right to necessary services. These services are designed to benefit all Australians, but many migrants are still missing out. Barriers to accessing these services can be addressed through ensuring that necessary information is available online, in-print, and in-person. Information should also be available in commonly spoken languages other than English.⁸⁵

5.82 MCC called for 'all government agencies make basic information about the agency available in a range of community languages...across the established and newly arrived communities.'⁸⁶

5.83 In relation to the means of communicating information, the UCA noted the effectiveness of radio as a medium for diaspora communities:

Our diaspora communities indicated the value of radio in different languages as a good way of communicating, particularly in times of crisis that we have been facing recently. There is concern that SBS has experienced cuts to its radio broadcasts in languages.⁸⁷

5.84 Ms Catherine Duff, Director, Race Discrimination, AHRC, told the committee that government engagement with communities had been crucial to managing the COVID-19 pandemic:

...access to tailored, accessible information, including information in community languages, has been central to spreading public health messages and providing all Australians with information about government services available during the pandemic.⁸⁸

5.85 Ms Nadine Liddy, MYAN National Manager, noted that there was 'an overreliance on written, translated materials to reach culturally diverse communities' in the context of COVID-19.⁸⁹ She continued:

The message that we have heard loud and clear is that there need to be multiple platforms, multiple methods, multiple messages to reach the diversity of Australia's entire population.⁹⁰

5.86 Dr Sev Ozdowski, AMC Chair, recognised the effectiveness of the regular virtual roundtables hosted by the Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship

⁸⁵ *Submission 56*, p. 11.

⁸⁶ *Submission 8*, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Submission 54*, p. 5.

⁸⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2020, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 16.

⁹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 17.

Migration Services and Multicultural Affairs during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹¹

- 5.87 As noted in Chapter 4, SBS provided the committee with information on how they assist diaspora communities keep informed. Libraries also were noted as a key resource.

Access to government

- 5.88 A number of submissions identified the need for an easier way for diaspora communities to connect with government, noting that for many, there was not a clear avenue to engage. DAA advised:

[t]here are also barriers to engage with government departments and there is no clarity about "who is the best person to talk to". When diaspora are concerned, the lack of a "diaspora liaison" or a focal point, makes it difficult for communities to access information and get a clear understanding of government agenda on human rights, humanitarian aid, development, business and trade.⁹²

- 5.89 DAA CEO, Ms Goldfinch, advised that 'it's very difficult for diaspora communities to find a pathway into DFAT to discuss the issues that are happening within their communities overseas and here in Australia.'⁹³

- 5.90 The NRAAG noted that despite the close alignment and complementarity of government objectives and diaspora efforts in their home countries, the lack of a clear avenue for engagement meant these synergies were underutilised. It further affirmed that:

The role of diaspora communities justifies a dedicated space that enables a seamless, clear, and centralised space for communications to take place in relation to diaspora communities. This is...needed both for diaspora communities to inform ongoing government policies, and a unit where the Government can easily navigate communications with diaspora communities over a longer period.⁹⁴

- 5.91 To facilitate access to government, the Kampuchea Krom Cultural Centre of NSW, the Cambodian Action Group and the Buddhist Monks Human Rights Council recommended the creation of a national position to engage with members of diaspora communities on a range of issues facing these groups, advising that:

⁹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 8.

⁹² *Submission 67*, p. 51.

⁹³ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Submission 79*, p. 19.

This would create a range of opportunities for those issues ranging from political interference, community recruitment to community leadership to be raised at a national level.⁹⁵

- 5.92 Several organisations were of the view that a diaspora liaison unit within DFAT would address many of these concerns. RCOA CEO, Mr Power, expressed strong support for such a unit.⁹⁶ Ms Goldfinch of DAA also supported the establishment of a diaspora liaison role within DFAT to 'oversee, coordinate and support departmental engagement with diaspora communities across its range of functions.'⁹⁷
- 5.93 Ms Lorenza Lazzati, DAA Diaspora Learning Network Coordinator, concurred, adding that DFAT staff members are very responsive but they 'shuffle around on a regular basis' and there is 'no proper handover because dealing with diaspora does not have an allocated place within the department.'⁹⁸
- 5.94 The Kateb Hazara Association underlined the need for a direct contact point with government, rather than relying on engagement through large service providers. The Association recommended the establishment of dedicated channels for diaspora communities to engage directly with government and suggested a way to achieve this would be through the creation of a diaspora liaison unit within DFAT.⁹⁹
- 5.95 Mr Marcelo informed the committee that DFAT does not have a 'one-off diaspora desk as such that channels all engagement with diaspora groups in Australia' but that 'every geographic desk in the department is open for diaspora communities to talk to'.¹⁰⁰ Mr John Williams, Assistant Secretary, Pacific Strategic Branch, DFAT, added that 'all of our diaspora engagement is mainstreamed across our programs'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ *Submission 76*, p. 8.

⁹⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2020, p. 9.

⁹⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 1.

⁹⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2020, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Submission 72*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 26.

¹⁰¹ *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2020, p. 27.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 This chapter covers the committee's conclusions and recommendations.

Recognising the contribution of diaspora communities

6.2 The committee recognises the valuable contribution of diaspora communities to building our successful Australian multicultural society. Australia's rich cultural diversity is one of its greatest strengths.

6.3 However, a key message from the evidence was a desire for better recognition and celebration of the contributions of diaspora communities to Australia in a formal way. Witnesses pointed to a more securitised framing and tenor of responsibilities towards migrants evident under the Department of Home Affairs and called for a more celebratory and inclusive approach.

6.4 The committee agrees that, as well as the responsibility to keep all Australians safe, a celebratory and inclusive approach should also be prominent in government policy. While Harmony Day and now Week is a successful example of recognising and celebrating diaspora communities, the committee understands and supports the request the calls for more formal and meaningful recognition. This could take a variety of forms and deserves further consideration at all levels of government. The committee believes the multicultural policy statement is one form this recognition could take.

Recommendation 1

6.5 The committee recommends the government investigate ways to further recognise the many contributions of diaspora communities to Australia. Multicultural policy statements should reinforce the recognition and celebration of the contribution of diaspora communities to Australia.

Reviewing the delivery of federal government programs and services

6.6 The Multicultural Access and Equity policy is an important vehicle to review the delivery of government programs and services. Witnesses praised the policy but thought its implementation could be more robust. The last whole of government report covering the period 2013-15 was tabled in 2017. It would appear that the next report is overdue.

Recommendation 2

6.7 The committee recommends that the Department of Home Affairs table the whole-of-government review report on the performance of the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy for the period 2016-18 as soon as possible.

Support for diaspora organisations

Grants processes

- 6.8 The committee recognises the importance of diaspora community organisations, which provide support to individuals, families and communities and play a unique role providing a bridge between government and the community and acting as cultural hubs. The committee heard that this has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the need for support and connection.
- 6.9 The committee heard about the importance of grants for community organisations. There was criticism of the shift away from providing grant funding directly to community groups and instead directing funding to commercial service providers or well established community organisations. It was submitted that this model not only leaves smaller and new and emerging communities at a disadvantage when applying for funding but also reduces the understanding of specific cultural issues in the design and implementation of community programs. The importance and effectiveness of community led programs was emphasised to the committee.
- 6.10 The committee also heard of what appears to be a lack of flexibility in grant processes where the grants on offer are not always adequately tailored to the needs of particular communities.
- 6.11 The committee agrees that direct engagement and consultation with communities is vital to understanding their needs and priorities. The committee also notes the importance of ensuring smaller and emerging communities are not inadvertently disadvantaged or excluded by the grant processes being used. The committee acknowledges that understanding and having the ability to apply for grant processes may be difficult for smaller organisations with fewer resources at their disposal and less familiarity with government processes and language.
- 6.12 While the committee understands that some funding will go to larger organisations to provide services, from the evidence received, the committee is concerned that current grant processes may inadvertently be hindering smaller diaspora organisations. It also appears that there may not be sufficient flexibility to ensure the specific needs of certain communities such as new and emerging communities are addressed. The committee also recognises the difficulty smaller organisations face in applying for grants in terms of complexity and capacity.

Recommendation 3

- 6.13 The committee recommends that government departments running grant processes ensure that they:**

- **do not inadvertently disadvantage or exclude smaller and new and emerging community organisations;**
- **have sufficient flexibility to meet the specific needs of communities;**
- **use clear language and make generic advice on common issues and questions available in languages other than English; and**
- **provide constructive feedback on unsuccessful applications submitted by community organisations.**

Capacity building for diaspora organisations

6.14 In relation to capacity building, the committee acknowledges the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program includes a community capacity building component which targets new and emerging communities and leaders and organisations with limited corporate capacity. The committee was pleased to hear that support for new and emerging community groups and organisations in applying for and managing government funding is available under this component. The committee also notes the information on grant applications available on the Community Grants Hub. However, from the evidence received, it would appear these resources are either not well publicised or not as helpful as they could be. The committee considers that publicly available information on this support should be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate and adequate.

Recommendation 4

6.15 The committee recommends that the Department of Home Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Social Services, review support available to community organisations wishing to apply for government grants to assist with capacity building to ensure it is appropriately targeted and publicised. This may include translating some resources and publishing some training online so it is more accessible.

Safety concerns

Foreign interference

6.16 Despite not forming an explicit part of the terms of reference, foreign interference and its impact upon diaspora communities in Australia was addressed by a variety of witnesses and proved to be a key issue for the inquiry. The committee finds the reports of foreign interference with diaspora communities to control opposition or dissent and influence by co-opting representatives; the use of surveillance, monitoring, harassment and intimidation; as well as the use of threats against family members overseas; and reports of interference in ethnic media extremely troubling.

6.17 The committee recognises that many diaspora groups come to Australia to seek safety from risks and threats in their home countries, such as war and fear

of persecution. It is vital to protect the free and open society Australians enjoy and ensure social cohesion is not undermined.

- 6.18 The committee recognises that government agencies are well aware of these concerning activities and actively work with diaspora communities to protect them. The committee agrees that ongoing dialogue, building strong and trusted relationships between government agencies and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, as well as ensuring a shared awareness of the threat of foreign interference, will strengthen the resilience of communities.
- 6.19 The committee welcomes the various initiatives taken by the Department of Home Affairs in this connection, including the establishment in 2018 of the Office of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator and the 2019 establishment of the Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce. It further welcomes the various legislative measures taken to strengthen Australia's defences against foreign interference, including through the passage of the *National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018*, the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018*, the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018*, the *Electoral Funding Act 2018* and the *Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2017*.
- 6.20 The committee noted with satisfaction the active efforts by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) to maintain links and build trust with over 100 different ethnic and religious groups, as well as its emphasis on both awareness raising and counternarratives. ASIO's efforts to ensure its internal capacity is sufficient to meet these challenges were also noted by the committee.
- 6.21 The committee notes the role of the National Security Hotline. The national security website emphasises the hotline as a vital component of Australia's national counter-terrorism efforts, however, the committee heard that it can also be used by the public to report potential acts of foreign interference. There appeared to be variable awareness of this reporting avenue, which may be a result of the emphasis of terrorism and radicalisation on the relevant website. The committee believes it would be of benefit to have an information and awareness campaign around this means of reporting foreign interference and to involve peak groups.

Recommendation 5

- 6.22 The committee recommends that the government consider increasing awareness of the National Security Hotline as a means of reporting foreign interference by way of a multilingual media or information campaign and promoting awareness through peak groups.**

6.23 Despite the advice from government agencies that consultations are ongoing with various ethnic and religious groups, there still appeared to be uncertainty from some groups about not only how to report issues but that they did not receive feedback about any actions underway. The committee sees value in government agencies reviewing the effectiveness of their community engagement around foreign interference on an ongoing basis to ensure there is genuine two way communication.

Magnitsky-style legislation

6.24 The committee notes considerable support for Australia to adopt Magnitsky-style legislation. Several diaspora community groups suggested that such legislation could deter some acts of foreign interference. The committee is aware that, on 7 December 2020, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Human Rights Sub-committee tabled its report on the use of targeted sanctions to address gross human rights abuses.¹ The Sub-committee recommended that the government 'enact stand alone targeted sanctions legislation to address human rights violations and corruption, similar to the United States' *Magnitsky Act 2012*.² It further recommended:

the preamble acknowledge the importance of maintaining journalist and human rights defenders' human rights and expressly state that systematic extrajudicial actions that intend to limit media freedom can be considered human rights abuses.³

6.25 The committee supports the work and recommendations of the Joint Committee and recommends that such legislation be brought forward by the government as soon as possible.

Recommendation 6

6.26 The committee recommends that the government bring forward Magnitsky-style legislation having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on the use of targeted sanctions to address gross human rights abuses.

Racism and discrimination

6.27 The committee notes the damage that racism and discrimination have on social cohesion, as well as reducing access to employment, housing and education

¹ *Criminality, corruption and impunity: should Australia join the Global Magnitsky movement?*, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/MagnitskyAct/Report

² Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Criminality, corruption and impunity: should Australia join the Global Magnitsky movement?*, December 2020, p. xxi.

³ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Criminality, corruption and impunity: should Australia join the Global Magnitsky movement?*, December 2020, p. xxi.

and affecting individual wellbeing. The apparent increase in anti-Chinese sentiment following the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly worrying.

- 6.28 The committee notes there were numerous calls for a national anti-racism strategy. While recognising a National Anti-Racism strategy was developed in 2012, evaluated in 2015 and extended until 2018, it would appear this campaign has lost government funding and momentum. The committee notes the call from the Race Discrimination Commissioner in 2018 for the need to continue and extend efforts in anti-racism. In light of what appears to be increased incidents of racism during COVID-19 pandemic, the committee sees value in reinvigorating that National Anti-Racism Strategy and campaign as a matter of urgency.
- 6.29 The committee notes and sees value in the work being undertaken by the Australian Human Rights Commissioner to develop a broader national anti-racism framework, which would provide an opportunity to begin to address deeper structural forms of racism.

Recommendation 7

- 6.30 The committee recommends that the government consider the appropriateness of resourcing the Race Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission to reinvigorate the existing National Anti-Racism Strategy and Campaign in the immediate term.**

Recommendation 8

- 6.31 The committee recommends that the government consider resourcing the development of a new and comprehensive national anti-racism framework.**

Recommendation 9

- 6.32 The committee recommends that the development of the new national anti-racism framework include a comprehensive consultation process, with a focus on diaspora communities.**

Domestic and family violence

- 6.33 Family and domestic violence was raised as an issue in a number of submissions, suggesting there is a need for more culturally appropriate support services. The committee heard reports indicating an increase in reporting of domestic and family violence and people seeking support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee commends the work of the Department of Home Affairs connecting with other agencies to facilitate the provision of information and support to communities. The committee also notes the resources available on the OurWatch website.

- 6.34 The committee notes that the current Fourth National Action Plan on domestic and family violence is the final iteration in this series.

Recommendation 10

- 6.35 The committee recommends that any evaluation of the effectiveness of the Fourth National Action Plan, as well as any policy developed in this area in future, retains a focus on supporting CALD communities.**

Barriers to full participation

Settlement services

- 6.36 The committee notes the settlement services available for new arrivals and that this may be a mixture of support from government and community organisations. The committee heard of the effects of limitations of the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program according to visa type and period of time since entering Australia. While the committee understands the need for eligibility criteria it also recognises a number of individual circumstances, such as mothers with young children, people with low education attainment and literacy issues, and those who have experienced torture and trauma, for whom rigid criteria reduces the assistance required to settle well.
- 6.37 The committee notes that a review of settlement grants was conducted over 2016-17 by the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Social Policy Research Centre. It found the 'five year eligibility limit is appropriate for most clients'⁴ but that 'some high-needs clients are not being served by the level of service available through the program'.⁵ The review recognised that 'some clients have very high needs which must be met in a culturally appropriate way'. While noting the need to focus on independence and self-reliance, it suggested that 'consideration must be given to whether this support is provided through [Settlement Grants (SG)] or another funding stream'.⁶ It is unclear on the Department of Home Affairs website whether this suggestion has been addressed in some way.
- 6.38 The committee agrees that there will be a small number of individuals with either high needs or the need to defer such assistance and suggests that, where a case can be put to outline such a situation, that there should be sufficient

⁴ UNSW, Social Policy Research Centre, *Evaluation of Settlement Grants, Final report*, August 2017, p. xiii.

⁵ UNSW, Social Policy Research Centre, *Evaluation of Settlement Grants, Final report*, August 2017, p. xiii.

⁶ UNSW, Social Policy Research Centre, *Evaluation of Settlement Grants, Final report*, August 2017, p. xiv.

flexibility in the system in order to give new arrivals the best chance of full participation in Australian society.

Recommendation 11

6.39 The committee recommends that the government clarify how it intends to respond to the identified need for some individuals to be able to access settlement services beyond their first five years in Australia.

English language support

6.40 The recent changes to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) announced in August 2020 and facilitated through the *Immigration (Education) Amendment (Expanding Access to English Tuition) Act 2020*, which was passed in December 2020, were welcomed by witnesses. The committee was also pleased to hear how the AMEP adapted to the challenges of COVID-19 using technology and online platforms to supplement classroom-based learning. However, the committee notes caution is needed over access to the requisite technology and urges the government to ensure an increased use of online platforms for delivery does not inadvertently disadvantage those who need the program.

Other barriers

6.41 Regarding the other barriers raised with the committee, such as those relating to education, employment and health, which cut across federal, state and local jurisdictions, the committee supports the development of customised programs to fit the needs of various communities which are designed in consultation with the communities themselves. The committee encourages enhanced consultation with diaspora community organisations in seeking to appropriately customise these efforts.

Diversity and cultural awareness

6.42 A lack of cultural diversity was identified as an issue in various areas such as politics, business and the public service. This can be a problem not only in terms of employment aspirations but also, in relation to the political landscape. A lack of diversity could hinder communication with diaspora communities to ensure their issues are appropriately represented and may impede confidence in political processes. The committee recognises that a number of strategies are being pursued at the political, private enterprise and public sector levels to address diversity and it will take time to see results. In the meantime the committee hopes that parliamentary inquiries such as this one provide a useful platform for diaspora communities to engage with the parliament.

6.43 Some diaspora communities advised the committee that their members feel that a better understanding of their cultures within the broader community would help in creating a sense of belonging. Therefore, it was suggested that government support for diaspora communities should include a more active

role in promoting their rich and varied cultures, conveying positive narratives and creating a greater awareness in the wider Australian public of the benefits of multiculturalism to the nation. The committee recognises that enhancing cultural understanding in the public service is vital to ensure the development of effective government programs.

Recommendation 12

6.44 The committee recommends that the government, in consultation with stakeholder and representative bodies, explore options to improve knowledge and understanding of diaspora communities within the public service and across the broader Australian population.

Public libraries

6.45 The committee was advised about the important role of public libraries in the delivery of services, programs and resources to diaspora communities. As a valued resource centre that is closely connected to their local communities, library representative bodies advised the committee that they are well placed to be utilised further by government agencies to connect and deliver services to diaspora communities.

6.46 The committee also heard about the importance of collection diversity in attracting diaspora communities and that libraries are focussing on improving collecting material to include greater variety of languages, formats and publishers to reflect the interest of diaspora communities, to ensure collections are relevant and accessible. In particular, the committee was informed of the challenge for libraries in collecting the digital footprint of diaspora communities.

Recommendation 13

6.47 The committee recommends that the government explore opportunities for closer collaboration with public libraries in the provision of services to diaspora communities, including consideration of how to better articulate and disseminate positive narratives about diaspora contributions in their local communities.

Strengthening partnerships

6.48 The committee was pleased to hear about a range of programs and processes that government departments have in place which facilitate engagement with Australian diaspora communities in order to effectively carry out their functions, including in policy development and determining service priorities.

6.49 The portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Home Affairs in particular provided examples of the important contribution of diaspora communities to their work. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade noted the valuable

role of diaspora communities in carrying out Australia's foreign policy objectives, including expanding our political, trade and business networks, in addition to supporting the development assistance program.

- 6.50 The committee also heard about engagement that the Department of Home Affairs has with diaspora communities in promoting social cohesion, keeping communities safe and encouraging the participation of new arrivals in Australia's social, economic and civic life.
- 6.51 The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation also advised of its close and critical engagement with diaspora communities in order to protect Australia from security threats.
- 6.52 While the committee was pleased to hear about these arrangements, a number of submissions suggested that there was considerable scope for government to strengthen communication and partnerships with diaspora communities in order to harness their full potential as a resource for mutually beneficial outcomes, including through earlier, broader and more systematic engagement across government.
- 6.53 The committee was impressed by the wealth of evidence regarding the unique and extensive expertise and knowledge diaspora communities possess on a number of priority foreign policy issues.
- 6.54 The committee also heard about the extensive contribution of refugee diaspora communities in Australia, including how the unique experiences of this group enhances the government's efforts for peacebuilding, development and humanitarian challenges globally. The involvement of Australian-based refugee diaspora leaders in international dialogues on forced displacement and government support for refugee self-representation at an international level is welcome.

Recommendation 14

- 6.55 The committee recommends that the government consider establishing a single point of contact for Australia's diaspora communities.**

Recommendation 15

- 6.56 In the context of better leveraging the unique expertise in Australia's diaspora communities, the committee recommends that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade develop an internal policy on diaspora community consultation, to make such consultation a systematic element in its policy development processes.**

Recommendation 16

- 6.57 Acknowledging the value of diaspora-led development and humanitarianism, the committee recommends that the government support,**

where appropriate, the attendance and participation of active Australian-based diaspora organisations in intergovernmental dialogue and debate on relevant topics.

Government Communication

6.58 The committee acknowledges the importance of effective government communication across all policy and service areas, particularly in relation to critical and essential information, which has been particularly highlighted during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Some submitters noted that there were certain areas of deficiency in government communication with diaspora communities, including accessibility, messaging not being culturally appropriate, and the need for availability in more languages. The committee also heard about the benefits in working with diaspora community organisations to more effectively develop and disseminate Government information.

Recommendation 17

6.59 The committee recommends the government review its approach to communication with diaspora communities to ensure that essential information is being effectively disseminated, including through engaging with diaspora community organisations in the development and dissemination of information.

Recommendation 18

6.60 The committee recommends that the Department of Home Affairs develop guidance for communications tailored to diaspora groups for dissemination across government. The guidance should cover language, cultural sensitivity and consideration of modes of delivery.

**Senator Kimberley Kitching
Chair**

Additional comments from the Australian Greens

- 1.1 The Australian Government's failure to acknowledge or address colonisation and its impacts on First Nations people directly challenges any efforts to build a successful, multicultural society; which in turn impacts diaspora communities in Australia today.

Supporting multicultural communities

- 1.2 The Australian Greens support the findings of the main Committee report, that diaspora communities make a "valuable contribution ... to building our successful Australian multicultural society". We also agree that "a celebratory and inclusive approach should also be prominent in government policy." The Australian Greens believe that Australia's cultural plurality is a part of the nation's identity and should be recognised as such. Australia is a culturally diverse society and this should be fully reflected in Australia's social, business and political institutions.
- 1.3 The Australian Greens also advocate for greater inclusion and support from governments. We support the recommendations in this report, but much greater action is needed. In particular, the Australian Greens recommend that:
- All government-funded services should be designed in a culturally intelligent manner to ensure they are respectful and respond to the needs of people of diverse cultural backgrounds.
 - The Government should establish an Australian Multiculturalism Act, to work in conjunction with an Australian Charter of Rights, which would create a framework for multiculturalism and establish clear guiding principles for Australian society to embrace cultural and religious diversity.
 - The Government should establish an independent and properly resourced Australian Multiculturalism Commission to protect and promote diversity, to work with human rights and anti-discrimination bodies to create cross-governmental partnerships for diversity, and to implement the Multiculturalism Act.
 - Contrary to attempts by conservatives to undermine legislated protections, Australia as a nation needs a strong Racial Discrimination Act, including preservation of section 18C and proper funding for the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Combating racism within Australia

- 1.4 The Australian Government, and Australia more broadly, have failed to acknowledge or address the rise of far-right extremism, its inherent racism, and the impact this has had on Australian society. The Australian Government

must act, urgently, to build an anti-racist country. That should at a minimum include:

- A refreshed, well-resourced and coordinated national anti-racism strategy;
- A Federal Parliamentary Code of Conduct to establish a set of rules governing our federal politicians with regard to discrimination and hate speech;
- Better data and tracking of experiences of racism and discrimination, including a national database of hate crimes; and
- Additional grant funding to support community-led programs to counter violent extremism.

1.5 Crucially, the Australian Government must provide full funding and support for an extensive anti-racism campaign, to address its impact across Australia.

Senator Janet Rice

Appendix 1

Submissions, tabled documents and answers to questions on notice

- 1 Australian Library and Information Association
- 2 Assyrian Australian Association. Assyrian Resource Centre
 - 2.1 Supplementary to submission 2
- 3 Mr Osmond Chiu
- 4 Professor Wanning Sun
- 5 Professor Mobo Gao
- 6 Ma'di Community Council of Australia, Inc
- 7 Ms Yun Jiang
- 8 Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales
- 9 Chinese Community Council of Australia Inc
- 10 Dr Chiaki Kojima
- 11 Federation of Equatoria Community Association in Australia Inc (FECAA)
- 12 Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
- 13 Islamic Council of Victoria
- 14 South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations' Council Inc
- 15 Australian Human Rights Commission
- 16 Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter (VCA NSW)
- 17 Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN)
- 18 Australian Multicultural Foundation
- 19 Australian Multicultural Council
- 20 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- 21 Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)
- 22 Associate Professor Nathalie Nguyen
- 23 Settlement Council of Australia
- 24 National and State Libraries Australia
- 25 African Australian Advocacy Centre Inc
- 26 VOICE Australia
- 27 Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victorian Chapter)
- 28 Asian Australian Alliance
- 29 Amnesty International Australia
- 30 cohealth
- 31 Dr Marinella Marmo, Dr Tiziana Torresi and Dr Pam Papadelos
- 32 Ms Laura Simpson Reeves
- 33 *Name Withheld*
- 34 United Macedonian Diaspora Australia
- 35 Sydney Japanese International School, Terrey Hills

- 36 Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council
- 37 HSC Japanese Committee Inc
- 38 South Asian Today
- 39 Africa Research & Engagement Centre (AfREC)
- 40 Fairfield City Council
- 41 Professor Helen Lee
- 42 *Name Withheld*
- 43 South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria Inc
- 44 Ms Wesa Chau
- 45 African Think Tank Inc
- 46 Dr Dominic Dagbanja
- 47 Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS)
- 48 South Asian Youth Community, submitted by Ms Mehak Sheikh et al.
- 49 South Sudanese National Consensus Council
- 50 Dr Kiran Shinde
- 51 Dr Andrea Tomizawa
- 52 Australian Academy of the Humanities
- 53 Uyghur Association of Victoria
- 54 Uniting Church in Australia Assembly
- 55 Australian Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Advocacy Network
- 56 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)
- 57 Responsible Technology Australia
- 58 Ami and Dirk Breutmann
- 59 Khmer Community of NSW Inc
 - 59.1 Supplementary to submission 59
- 60 Refugee Council of Australia
- 61 Afghan Australian Development Organisation
- 62 Springvale Monash Legal Service
- 63 Migration and Refugee Research Network (MARRNet)
- 64 Associate Professor Farida Fozdar, Dr Sarah Prout Quicke, Dr David Mickler, Dr Dominic Dagbanja and Dr Muhammad Dan Suleiman
- 65 Chinese Australia Forum (CAF)
- 66 New South Wales Bar Association
- 67 Diaspora Action Australia
- 68 Falun Dafa Association of Australia
- 69 Community of South Sudan & Other Marginalised Areas Association NSW
- 70 Yazidi Australian Association
- 71 NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
- 72 Kateb Hazara Association
- 73 Cambodian Australian Federation
- 74 The Epoch Times Chinese - Australia
 - 74.1 Supplementary to submission 74

- 75 Australia Tibet Council and Australian Tibetan Community Association
- 76 Kampuchea Krom Cultural Centre of NSW Inc.
- 77 Football Federation Australia
- 78 Department of Home Affairs
- 79 National Refugee-Led Advisory and Advocacy Group
 - 79.1 Supplementary to submission 79
- 80 Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association
- 81 Mr Chek Ling
- 82 Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations
- 83 Human Rights Watch
- 84 *Confidential*
- 85 *Confidential*
- 86 *Confidential*
- 87 *Confidential*
- 88 *Confidential*
- 89 *Confidential*
- 90 *Confidential*

Tabled Documents

- 1 Opening statements provided by members of the African Australian Advocacy Centre at public hearing on 2 November 2020.

Answer to Question on Notice

- 1 Response from the Afghan Australian Development Organisation, following public hearing 29 September 2020 (received 16 October 2020).
- 2 Response from the Special Broadcasting Service, following public hearing 29 September 2020 (received 22 October 2020).
- 3 Response from the South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria, following public hearing 9 October 2020 (received 24 October 2020).
- 4 Response from Dr. B Hass Dellal AO, written questions on notice (received 29 October 2020).
- 5 Response from the Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas Association NSW, following public hearing 9 October 2020 (received 30 October 2020).
- 6 Response from the Australian Library and Information Association and National and State Libraries Australia, following public hearing 14 October 2020 (received 29 October 2020).
- 7 Response from Ms Wesa Chau, following public hearing 14 October 2020 (received 6 November 2020).

- 8 Response from the Settlement Council of Australia, following public hearing 15 October 2020 (received 4 November 2020).
- 9 Response from the Australian Human Rights Commission, following public hearing 2 November 2020 (received 5 November 2020).
- 10 Response from the Department of Home Affairs, following public hearing 15 October 2020 (received 13 November 2020).
- 11 Response from the Department of Home Affairs to written questions notice (received 11 December 2020).
- 12 Response from the Department of Home Affairs to written questions notice (received 7 January 2020).
- 13 Response from the NSW Bar Association, following public hearing 6 November 2020 (received 3 December 2020).

Appendix 2

Public hearings and witnesses

Tuesday, 29 September 2020

Committee Room 1S3
(Via Teleconference)
Parliament House
Canberra

Diaspora Action Australia

- Ms Denise Goldfinch, Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Lorenza Lazzati, Diaspora Learning Network Coordinator

Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

- Ms Mandi Wicks, Director Audio and Language Content
- Ms Clare O'Neil, Director Corporate Affairs
- Ms Natasha Eves, External Affairs Manager

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN)

- Ms Nadine Liddy, National Manager
- Mr Arif Hazara, Representative
- Ms Jane Chen, Representative
- Ms Apajok Biar, Representative

Afghan Australian Development Organisation

- Ms Sarina Greco, President
- Dr Nouria Salehi AM, Executive Director

Responsible Technology Australia

- Mr Matthew Nguyen, Director of Policy
- Mr Chris Cooper, Executive Director

Cambodian Australian Federation & Cambodian Association of Victoria

- Mr Hong Lim, President

Friday, 9 October 2020

Committee Room 1S3
(Via Teleconference)
Parliament House
Canberra

VOICE Australia

- Ms Janice Le, Director of Advocacy

South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations' Council Inc

- Mr Trung Doan, Representative

National Refugee-Led Advisory and Advocacy Group

- Mr Shukufa Tahiri, Deputy Chair
- Mr Sayed Rahmatullah Hussainizada, Member, Steering Committee, Refugee Council Australia

Refugee Council of Australia

- Mr Paul Power, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Joseph Youhana

Uyghur Association of Victoria

- Mr Alim Osman, President

Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association

- Ms Ramila Chanisheff, President

Community of South Sudan & Other Marginalised Areas in NSW

- Mr Mawat Michael Majok, President
- Atem Dau Atem, Representative
- Emmanuel Dhaal Marial, Secretary General

South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria Inc

- Mr Ring Mayar, President

Wednesday, 14 October 2020

Committee Room 2S2

(Via Teleconference)

Parliament House

Canberra

Ms Yun Jiang, Private capacity

Mr Osmond Chiu, Research Fellow, Per Capita

Ms Wesa Chau, Private capacity

Australian Library and Information Association

- Ms Sue McKerracher, Chief Executive Officer

National and State Libraries Australia

- Dr John Vallance, State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer of the State Library of New South Wales

Football Federation Australia

- Mr Ricardo Piccioni, General Manager Government Relations

- Ms Angeyo (Ann) Odong, FFA Digital Content Project Manager

Australian Academy of the Humanities

- Dr Christina Parolin, Executive Director
- Emeritus Professor John Fitzgerald, Immediate Past President
- Professor Louise Edwards, Vice-President and International Secretary

Thursday, 15 October 2020

Committee Room 2S2

(Via Teleconference)

Parliament House

Canberra

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

- Ms Alexandra Raphael, Director of Policy

Australian Multicultural Council

- Dr Sev Ozdowski, Chair

Settlement Council of Australia

- Ms Sandra Wright, Chief Executive Officer

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation

- Mr Mike Burgess, Director-General of Security

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Mr Kenneth Gordon, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer, National Foundation for Australia-China Relations
- Mr Ray Marcelo, Assistant Secretary, Southeast Asia Regional Engagement Branch
- Mr James Wiblin, Assistant Secretary, India and Indian Ocean Branch
- Ms Nancy Gordon, Assistant Secretary, North East Asia Branch
- Mr John Williams, Assistant Secretary, Pacific Strategic Branch
- Ms Chantelle Taylor, Assistant Secretary, Africa Branch
- Mr Benjamin Hayes, Assistant Secretary, Middle East Branch
- Dr Annemarie Watt, Acting Assistant Secretary, Latin America and Caribbean Section
- Ms Jeannie Henderson, Director, Communications Branch

Department of Home Affairs

- Mr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Social Cohesion Division
- Mr Steve Biddle, Assistant Secretary, Settlement Program Operations Branch
- Mrs Jess Del Rio, Assistant Secretary, Adult Migrant English Program Branch

- Mr David Wilden, First Assistant Secretary, Refugee Humanitarian and Settlement Division
- Ms Anne Leo, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Citizenship Division
- Ms Geraldine Dennis, Acting Assistant Secretary, Citizenship Policy Branch
- Ms Alison Garrod, Acting Assistant Secretary, Immigration Policy Framework Branch

Monday, 2 November 2020

Committee Room 1S4

(Via Teleconference)

Parliament House

Canberra

Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales

- Mr Mark Franklin, Director
- Mr Vickram Grewal, Member (representing the National Sikh Council of Australia)
- Dr Cao Thang (Peter) Ha, Director
- Dr Anthony Pun OAM, Chair

Australian Human Rights Commission

- Ms Catherine Duff, Director, Race Discrimination
- Mr Darren Dick, Senior Policy Executive

NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

- Mr Jorge Aroche, Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Jasmina Bajraktarevic - Hayward, Community Services Coordinator

African Australian Advocacy Centre Inc

- Mr Noel Zihabamwe, Chairman
- Mr Daniel Gobena, Secretary
- Ms Kirsten Keith, Executive Committee Member
- Dr Vincent Ogu, Board Member
- Ms Itumeleng (Aisha) Setipa, Youth Team

African Think Tank Inc

- Mr Haileluel Gebre-selassie OAM, Chairperson

Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations

- Dr Casta Tungaraza, Chair

The Epoch Times Chinese - Australia

- Mr Daniel Teng, Sydney Representative
- Ms Angela Gao, Perth Representative

- Mr Alfred Sinn, Sydney Representative
- Mr John Xiao, Melbourne Representative
- Mr Peter Tiong, Adelaide Representative

Yazidi Australian Association

- Mr Ahmad Iesso, President
- Mr Ashraf Sedrak, Community Development Officer (STARTTS)

Friday, 6 November 2020

Committee Room 1S4

(Via Teleconference)

Parliament House

Canberra

New South Wales Bar Association

- Ms Elizabeth Pearson, Director, Policy and Public Affairs
- Ms Suzanne Christie SC, Member, Family Law Committee
- Ms Claire Cantrall, Member, Family Law Committee

Fairfield City Council

- Ms Susan Gibbeson, Manager, Social Advocacy and Community Development
- Mrs Amanda Bray, Group Manager City and Community Services

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

- Mr Rob Floyd, Associate General Secretary
- Reverend Esteban Liévano, Chairperson, Ibero Latino National Conference of the Uniting Church in Australia
- Reverend Dr Jione Havea
- Reverend Paul Aleu Dau

Vietnamese Community in Australia - NSW Chapter

- Mr Paul Huy Nguyen, President

United Macedonian Diaspora Australia

- Mrs Verka Sekulovska, Director

Australia Tibet Council and Australian Tibetan Community Association

- Mrs Kyinzom Dhongdue, Member Representing Australasia, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile
- Mr Kaslang Y Tipnak, President, Australian Tibetan Community Association and President of the ACT Tibetan Community

Khmer Community of NSW Inc

- Ms Srey Kang, President
- Dr Michael Michell, Association Member

