



*Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of the
Northern Territory*

Briefing Paper

Newly Arrived¹ Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds in the Northern Territory

June 2012

¹ Newly-arrived young person refers to a young person who was born overseas and has lived in Australia for a relatively short period of time. The Australian Government defines 'newly-arrived' as someone who has arrived in Australia in the previous 5 years. Other definitions vary according to the length of time it is considered to take to effectively resettle (up to 10 years). (source CMY 2010)

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Steering group members provided invaluable guidance and support throughout the project.

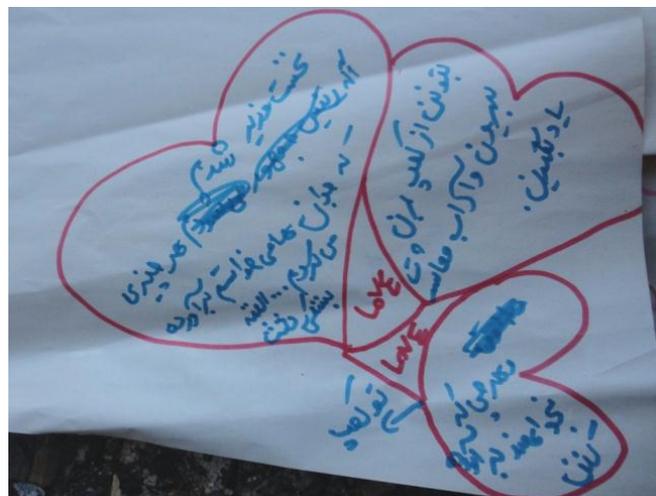
The project engaged as many stakeholders as possible in the limited time available. Apologies are offered to those not yet consulted and their input is invited to the ongoing work of developing policy responses to the needs of newly arrived youth.

Respects are paid to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the first peoples of Australia, and especially to the Larrakia people of Darwin and the Arrente people of Central Australia on whose country this was compiled.

Most importantly we thank all the young people who willingly shared their voices and experiences.

Acronyms

ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
BVE	Bridging Visa E
CaLD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CMY	Centre for Multicultural Youth
DAISY	Drug and Alcohol Intensive Support program for Youth (DAISY),
DASSAN	Darwin Asylum Seekers Support and Advocacy Network
DCA	Darwin Community Arts
DHS	Department of Human Services (includes Centrelink)
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Australian Government)
DOJ	Department of Justice (NTG)
DSCP	Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DIAC)
ESL	English (as a) Second Language
FaHCSIA	Dept of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs
FICT	Families in Cultural Transition
HSS	Humanitarian Settlement Services (DIAC funded program)
IEU	Intensive English Unit
MYAN	Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
MCNT	Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory
MCSCA	Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia
MSF	Multicultural Services Forum (convened by Centrelink)
MyNT	Multicultural Youth Northern Territory
NAYSS	Newly Arrived Youth Support Services
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NT	Northern Territory
NTCOSS	Northern Territory Council of Social Services
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NTLAC	Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
OMA	Office of Multicultural Affairs. (NTG)
RSN	Refugee Support Network (convened by Melaleuca)
SGP	Settlement Grants Program (DIAC)
SPC	Settlement Planning Committee (convened by DIAC)
TEAMHealth	Top End Association of Mental Health
TIS	Translating and Interpreter Service (a national telephone-based program)
VET	Vocational Education and Training.



Executive Summary

This paper is driven by the current policy vacuum in the NT with respect to newly arrived young people². It identifies issues affecting these migrant and refugee young people in order to raise their profile and ultimately improve their experience of building a new life in Australia. The guiding questions were:

1. *What challenges are faced by newly arrived young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds, in the Northern Territory?*
2. *What could improve their experience?*

The information presented here results from consultations held during 2011-12 in both the Darwin and Alice Springs areas with youth, service providers, schools, police and community members. A brief review of local and national studies was done to situate local findings within a broader context and inform future policy. While many challenges for newly arrived young people in the NT are similar to those identified elsewhere in Australia, they play out in unique ways in the NT context.

Youth settlement processes differ from those of adults and the issues experienced by newly arrived young people can be more complex due to life and developmental stage as well as environmental factors such as school, recreation and community supports. The youth voices heard here, emphasise the significance of the settlement experience both as a crucial time itself and because of its formative role in determining much of their subsequent life.

This paper is a summary of the main issues currently identified and should not be taken as comprehensive. If anything it reveals how nuanced the experiences of newly arrived young people really are and points to the need for further work with this group to develop a greater understanding of their context and address barriers to their sustained meaningful participation in Australian life.

A significant learning from this project is the fact that newly arrived youth in the NT are poorly understood and catered for by many institutions and processes beyond the initial formal settlement services. These are seen as effective in the Top End of the NT. Similarly young asylum seekers are at great risk and their situation is dynamic and uncertain. Racism and discrimination as well as tensions due to cultural difference, impact on the day to day lives of newly arrived young people as significantly as their experiences of navigating a new place, education system and trying to make sense of the labour market. Nonetheless they draw strength and support from their own experiences and resilience, new friends, sport, recreation and communal activity, committed support volunteers, diaspora groups and agencies that provide support. Building on these will ensure more newly arrived young people take their rightful places in the community.

Youth participation emerged as critical to ensuring appropriate services and building social capital. Specialist professional development for youth, multicultural and mainstream services working with newly arrived young people will ensure they can better access their rights. Current identified gaps are recreation, transport, health and education programs as well as funding to diaspora communities for projects and new representative groups run by and for young people. Further programs are needed to creatively address youth justice and inter-group conflict issues between newly arrived and other young people.

² As per the United Nations definition, MYAN and this paper use the terms 'young people' and 'youth' to refer to those aged between 12 and 25 years inclusive.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Youth Settlement

- 1.1 NT Government to develop culturally inclusive sport & recreation spaces and activities.*
- 1.2 Public transport services to provide more buses on weekends and late nights to suburbs.*
- 1.3 OMA to provide increased funding for diaspora community initiatives.*
- 1.4 DIAC to Increase support for Bridging Visa holders beyond initial period.*

2. Family issues

- 2.1 DIAC and other agencies to increase capacity building support for newly arrived families to manage conflict.*
- 2.2 Community groups to facilitate intergenerational forums on families and cultural adjustment.*

3. Racism and Discrimination

- 3.1 NT Parliament in consultation with the people should establish an NT Charter of Human Rights to provide legislative protection for all Territorians rights.*
- 3.2 Governments, academics and service providers should form partnerships to conduct further research into intercultural and intra-community conflict.*
- 3.3 DIAC should continue and extend the integration, flow and consistency between off-shore and on-shore cultural orientation and settlement information*
- 3.4 Arts and community cultural development funding bodies should invest in the development of community language-based media programs.*

4. Community Safety

- 4.1 NT government (DoJ) should invest in community-based approaches to addressing justice issues for newly arrived migrants and refugees.*
- 4.2 The NT Education Department shall develop alternative school-based programs to engage newly arrived young people who are alienated by formal schooling*

5. Education, Employment and Training

- 5.1 Commonwealth and NT Governments to jointly provide funding to build the capacity of the education sector to better meet the needs of newly arrived young people*
- 5.2 DIAC to fund settlement services to provide peer-to-peer settlement mentoring programs.*
- 5.3 Education departments both NT and Federal to improve targeted support for newly arrived young people to increase their access to education, training and employment.*
- 5.4 DIAC to ensure that meaningful offsite education opportunities are provided to young people who are in detention including those 15-17 years of age and 18- 25 years.*

6. Health

- 6.1 Health services shall ensure representation of and consultation with, migrant and refugee young people in public health education campaigns esp. mental health and sexual health*
- 6.2 Education bodies and health services should collaborate on appropriate health promotion*
- 6.3 NTG should resource capacity development for a range of health and community service providers – including upskilling an appropriate generic service in Alice - to provide appropriate community support for refugees (survivors of torture and trauma).*

7. Housing and homelessness

- 7.1 NTG to fund liaison staff to ensure service coordination between school & community services*
- 7.2 Youth policy bodies to gather specific information on the risks of housing and homelessness for Newly arrived youth and recommend strategies.*
- 7.3 Service agreements shall mandate training for service providers who work with migrant and refugee youth.*

8. Youth Participation and Engagement

- 8.1 NTG to resource peak bodies to effectively represent the interests of newly arrived youth.*
- 8.2 NTG to increase investment in youth-led organisations and youth participation initiatives.*
- 8.3 Service provider networks to ensure young people's voices are included.*
- 8.4 OMA to support the establishment of an NT Refugee Association*

'Newly arrived young people experience two key transitions: transition to adulthood and formation of identity, and transition to a new culture, and each is complicated by the other'.

Coventry L et al. 2002 quoted in Francis, Steve and Sarah Cornfoot. P.24

Section 1 - Introduction & Background

This paper has been prepared to capture the key issues facing newly arrived young people in the Northern Territory. As such, it represents an important contribution to policy and advocacy work on multicultural youth issues in the NT – and a significant project for the MYAN NT. To date, there has been little or no specific information available about the issues relevant to refugee and migrant youth in the Northern Territory. While there is some capacity in other states and territories, and nationally, through the - MYAN Australia - there is a need to build capacity for Territory-based policy and advocacy. The MYAN Australia, through its DIAC funding, has provided resources in each of Australia's states and territories to build this capacity. In conversation with network member organisations in the NT it was decided that the most appropriate use of these funds in the NT context would be to capture the key issues facing newly arrived young people in the NT in a policy paper. This would fill the current information gap and provide the basis for future policy and advocacy work on newly arrived youth issues in the NT.

The result was a project undertaken during 2011-12 by the MYAN-NT as a partnership between MyNT, Melaleuca Refugee Centre, NTCOSS and the MYAN Australia. The MYAN NT consists of key organisations in the Northern Territory concerned with the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. It works to promote the development and implementation of effective policy to attend to the needs of these communities. This project aimed to gather information, provide opportunities to discuss and identify key issues of concern and identify recommendations to support policy and advocacy work. It did this through:

1. Consultations with young people themselves - consistent with MYAN's commitment to youth participation as recognition that young people have unique experiences and knowledge, and should be supported to articulate the issues impacting on their lives and identify appropriate solutions³ providing valuable insight into sustainable solutions.
2. Consultations with key stakeholders such as schools, education providers, police, community service and support agencies;
3. A brief review of relevant existing data and published material about young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds living in the Northern Territory; and
4. Developing initial ideas for recommendations to further understand the issues of concern and begin to address them.

This paper aims to improve understanding of the issues facing newly arrived⁴ young people in the Northern Territory, in particular those from refugee and migrant (non-English Speaking) backgrounds. This is the first time a paper of this kind has documented the key issues of concern affecting these young people and proposed recommendations for program and policy initiatives that

³ MYAN Australia *Policy Briefing Paper*, November 2011.

⁴ This project originally targeted refugee and migrant young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds. CaLD is an ambiguous term that can include a diverse majority of the NT community: young people whose families migrated to the NT during the past 10 or more generations for whom there are myriad issues beyond the scope of this project. The scope narrowed when consultations focussed specifically on the needs of newly arrived youth from refugee & migrant backgrounds. This discussion was exclusively about those from Non-English speaking backgrounds and centred mostly on their experiences within 5 years of arrival - often even more closely on the initial settlement period.

can address them. Project partners intend this paper to be broadly available as a tool to engage stakeholders in further ongoing policy and advocacy work at both Territory and national levels.⁵

Consultations were conducted by youth policy and development workers within the course of their existing roles. Despite the absence of dedicated resources for policy work with the target group and the small number of services engaged with these issues, consultations and discussions were held in Darwin and Alice Springs. Other regions in the NT (Katherine, Barkly, and East Arnhem) were not investigated due to perceived low numbers of newly arrived youth and the lack of time available. Nonetheless the project revealed key themes and pointed to directions for further policy development and analysis.

Young people settling in the NT bring a wide variety of skills, knowledge and experience along with resilience, optimism and hope for the future. Although this paper explores the difficulties young people face, it is also strength-based and solution-focused in expressing their constructive ideas. Challenges faced by newly arrived young people are a combination of negotiating the developmental changes of adolescence along with settling in a new country, having left behind significant others and a familiar culture. As such the challenges are distinct from those of their Australian-born counterparts and older members of their own settling communities. Failure to recognise and respond to these specific needs in appropriate ways can heighten the risk of social isolation.⁶

While much has been written nationally about the issues faced by newly arrived young people, very little work of this type has taken place in the Northern Territory. Past relevant NT work includes the NT Government's Islamic Youth Forums in 2006, the MCNT Multicultural Youth Forum in 2007, the MyNT's 'Eracism' forum in 2006, MCNT consultations at Darwin High School in 2009, the MyNT Online Youth Issues survey in 2010, *The Youth Facilities Report from the Northern Suburbs of Darwin* in 2007, as well as the NT Government report on *Engagement of the African community in the NT*.⁷

While these papers provide good insights into the challenges faced by some groups of NT young people, who happen to be from migrant and refugee backgrounds, they do not have this group as their main focus. The MYAN-NT felt it was timely and important to engage in consultations specifically with newly arrived youth and service providers who work with this cohort to capture their experiences and challenges during settlement in the NT, and identify solutions to these challenges.

The Australian Government's national multicultural policy *The People of Australia*⁸ strongly supports a multicultural future for Australia. This vision includes changes to DIAC's Settlement Grants Program (SGP) in which funding for 'youth settlement services' is now available. This policy reform is welcomed by many working in the field who have for many years advocated for consideration of the unique needs of young people in approaches to settlement service provision.

Consultations focussed on initial settlement processes and less with later phases. This is partly because targeted resources exist to support young people in the (early) settlement stages, and settlement services participated in the consultations. The settlement phase was described as critical by newly arrived young people and service providers, both because the process itself is dynamic and challenging, but also because of the way it shapes subsequent experiences of life in Australia.

⁵ A project overview is attached at Appendix 1.

⁶ Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues 2006, *Settling In* report.

⁷ All studies referred to can be found in the reference list

⁸ Govt of Australia nd, *The People of Australia*

Section 2 - Snapshot of newly arrived young people in the NT

The numbers of refugee and migrant families settling in the NT are rising annually, and many of these are youth. In 2011-2012, 36% of total arrivals in Australia were under 25 years of age. Under the Federal Government's humanitarian migration stream, 48% of migrants were under 25 at the time of their arrival. Melaleuca Refugee Centre reported that in the Northern Territory this figure was higher with young people comprising 55% of all humanitarian entrants (45 of 81) and 36% of total migrant arrivals. This is an increase from 33 young people arriving in the year to June 2011.

Table 1 – Select NT Settlement Data 2010 – 12

	July 2010- June 2011	July 2011- June 2012
<i>Number of HSS visa holders settled in NT:</i>	165	141
<i>Number of HSS settled who are young people (12-25):</i>	33	45
<i>Number of HSS who received visas from detention:</i>	49	55
<i>Young people (including Unaccompanied Minors) Who received their HSS visa from detention:</i>	15	16

It must be noted that a large and growing number of people receiving HSS status in the NT come from detention. This changes their settlement pathway and cultural adjustment process significantly. For example they are impatient to adapt quickly, tend to have better English skills and are not necessarily adjusting to a new country but to a new status.

The majority of these are 'individual'⁹ men including many young men under 25 from emerging communities who settle without family support and without strong diaspora community groups in the NT. In addition most have spent significant time in detention. The negative mental health impacts of prolonged detention without certainty of release dates are well documented¹⁰. Though not all detainees stay local when they get their visas, some come to the NT after settling elsewhere so the figures may include the former but not the latter.

For many of these people there is little foreseeable possibility that they will be able to bring family members to join them due to very limited numbers allocated in Australia's immigration quotas. The impact of the associated isolation and stress on settlement and adjustment is immeasurably great. In addition changing and tenuous work conditions and lack of established communities mean this cohort is likely to remain highly transient within Australia.

This project identified strong ongoing community concerns around the detaining of young asylum seekers - particularly unaccompanied minors - in the Northern Territory. Three large immigration detention facilities exist in close proximity to Darwin and during the period of this report they housed high numbers of families, children and young people - including at one point hundreds of unaccompanied minors. While not officially refugees or migrants (though up to 95% will eventually receive their humanitarian visa) many attend local schools and some participate in community programs. They are newly arrived to the NT and deserve the attention of this report.

⁹ While they may have travelled to Australia alone they often have immediate family they wish to reconnect with as soon as possible.

¹⁰ See for example Bronstein & Montgomery 2011; Robjant et al 2009.

Families and young people detained in the NT do not necessarily settle locally (until recently rarely or not at all) and those settled locally who receive their humanitarian visa from detention may have been detained interstate. There are numerous policy complexities around eligibility for services and adequate supports and services for this group of young people. Their needs were prominent during 2011-12 on the radar of Darwin area services and the young people consulted – many of whom are engaged in support and advocacy work with asylum seekers. While this report cannot comprehensively address this area it highlights some issues and suggests the need for deeper investigation of young asylum seekers needs, building on the work of asylum seeker support groups.

“DIAC records show between 25 November 2011 and 30 June 2012, 97 irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs) were granted Bridging visas E (BVEs) whose first destination at date of visa grant was the northern Territory. 57 BVE clients resident in Darwin and Palmerston were recorded by DIAC at 30/6/12.¹¹

From 25th November 2011, until 14th September 2012, Red Cross Migration Support received 133 clients on Bridging Visa E. Of these, 31 were young people aged 25 or under. Of the 133, 35 have been granted a Permanent Visa, and 46 have moved interstate. At the time of writing this report (September 2012) the program had 43 clients, of whom **12** were young people aged 25 or under.¹²

People granted BVE are often allocated to the NT because they have either not expressed a preference for anywhere else or they do not have community links (family, friends, and contacts) anywhere else. As a result those on BVE in Darwin are likely to be those with the least social capital. There are, however, communities emerging in Darwin who are forging linkages with each other through their shared experiences.

This program in most cases offers the intensive support only for a very limited time frame (6 weeks). During this time people on BVE are essentially in a state of crisis as they rush to find accommodation, employment and other means of self-sufficiency before intensive case support finishes. After this they receive minimal contact under the ACAS scheme. They are only eligible for ongoing intensive casework if they are assessed as particularly vulnerable because they are for example elderly or have ongoing mental / physical health concerns.

Both Federal and Northern Territory Governments have responsibilities with respect to asylum seeker youth and these sit in the broader context of Australia’s immigration policy and mandatory detention of people arriving by boat seeking refugee status. Due to high detention numbers, location, history of settlement in the NT, limited specialist services and small ethnic communities there is a large crossover between issues and services for asylum seeker youth and those settled in the community – especially given the recent policy shift to using the Bridging Visa E category to process people while living in community settings.

While this project gives an overview of the main themes affecting the lives of newly arrived youth it leaves many questions to be answered. Further work should involve young people, their families, communities, policy makers, and service providers working with youth as well as other stakeholders as appropriate. Responses are invited to round out the picture in regional and remote as well as urban settings. A summary version of this paper is available to make the ideas easily accessible (**see Appendices**)

¹¹ Source: DIAC 2012;

¹² Personal communication Red Cross MSP coordinator.

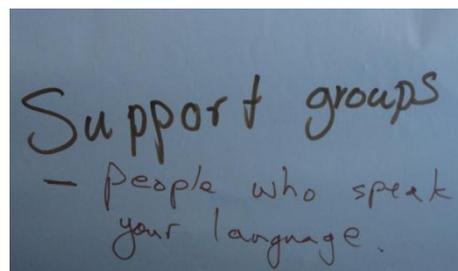
The Northern Territory's particular history, geography, demographics and politics means there is a different discourse about cross cultural and migration issues to other states and territories in Australia. The need for appropriate programs for newly arrived youth is not as well understood as in other locations. Likewise policy responses need to be custom built for the community. Education and awareness-raising is required and this report is intended to open and progress this understanding.

Section 3 – Emerging Issues

3.1 Youth Settlement

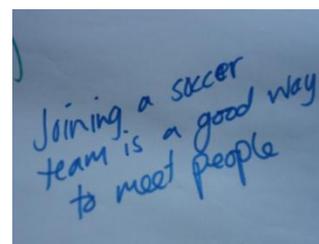
Support

During consultations, many respondents said that family, friends and community are the most important supports that enable living in Australia. Many young people had arrived without family but stressed the importance of the friends they now had in Australia. They spoke of feeling lonely, isolated, and missing their country and family who were left behind. Making friends locally was seen as more difficult when they first arrived and more opportunities to meet other young people would make life in Darwin much easier. This was made more difficult by language barriers and cultural differences. Here the role of 'diaspora'¹³ communities -knowing 'people who speak your language' was supported because 'it's easy when you meet people who are from your country'.



Activities and Spaces

Young people consulted in this project reiterated that recreational activities especially sport, are key to feeling a sense of belonging. Many said Darwin was boring with nothing for young people to do - especially during holidays. 'I don't know where to go so I stay at home'. A recurring theme was that the holidays were too long! Newly arrived young people said that they are accustomed to places where there is a lot of social activity in neighbourhoods and public areas and they feel alienated in the NT's lowly populated and spread out suburbs.



The need for youth spaces to hang out was expressed as 'more public places for teenagers', 'youth meeting spots' and 'places to meet'. The Red Cross Youth SHAK in Casuarina is an example of a Darwin youth space, that provides activities. However many newly arrived young people did not know about it while others felt they needed another youth space to meet their needs. Casuarina police officers suggested that to ease youth conflict there need to be more organised activities for young people such as music and dance competitions at the SHAK, plus a new youth space. Similar dynamics were noted during Alice Springs consultations. As there have been a number of dedicated youth spaces established in the NT, this would indicate the need for

'need more public places for us to hang out, now we only have Casuarina'
'more facilities for us to have fun and meet others'

¹³ This report uses the term diaspora to mean ethnic community groups of people from overseas already settled in the NT.

further investigation of access to youth spaces by newly arrived young people. If they are not accessing them then why not and how can this best be addressed at program and policy levels?

Transport

Young people consistently noted transport and mobility as key challenges. During settlement, initial challenges were orientation to public bus services. Getting lost and fear of this were repeatedly mentioned as was not knowing or remembering where to go. A number of people felt it was good that bus services in Darwin are free for students. However there are not enough buses, particularly on weekends and weeknights. More transport options were suggested - such as a train. Though there are limited things to do, getting to them is very difficult.

NGO workers spoke of transport as being a compounding challenge. The infrequency of bus services *'would be less of an issue if there were stronger local economies happening in other suburban centres such as Malak'*. With most activity occurring in Casuarina area *'the model of a city only functioning out of one centre is not sustainable long-term, and is not even functional now when there is no transport to support it'*.

Settlement services

Young people from refugee backgrounds in Darwin spoke highly of the support services that provided assistance on arrival, including the work of youth workers and volunteers with newly arrived families. They specifically asked for *'more Melaleucas¹⁴'* to *'give other people more opportunity'*. They fondly remembered the experience of *'...other families coming to meet you at the airport...'* coordinated by Melaleuca, and the strong support of diaspora communities. They recommended more money be given to diaspora communities to help newcomers. Many wished they received settlement services for longer than the 6 months and spoke of the difficulties experienced when volunteers stopped visiting. Knowing one's way around including how to access services were seen as major challenges mitigated by the help of volunteers. Young people also spoke about the importance of their faith and feeling supported by their churches. Migrant youth felt they did not have the same type of settlement support as refugees and but would have liked to have volunteers show them around on arrival – supporting the need for specific programs for migrant youth.

Melaleuca Refugee Centre is a community-based organisation providing settlement services for humanitarian arrivals, counselling and advocacy for refugee survivors of torture and trauma, and community development programs for newly arrived communities. It has a youth team which comprises two staff – one position funded by FaHCSIA's NAYSS program, and one position funded internally by Melaleuca. The Youth Team aims to assist young people between 12-21 years who have arrived in Darwin within the last five years. It aims to enhance the capacity of the Reconnect Program to offer holistic, timely and culturally appropriate assistance to newly arrived young people to engage with their family and/or community. The service provides individual case management and support, as well as therapeutic group work, community development activities, school based support, capacity building and action based research. Due to pressure on this service it has recently begun seeking to recover costs for delivery of its programs. Partnerships and additional funding will be essential to meet the rising demand for this service.

¹⁴ Melaleuca Refugee Centre – the DIAC funded Humanitarian Settlement Services provider for Darwin.

In stark contrast, Alice Springs contributors described a dearth of services understanding and working appropriately with youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds. There were reports of services failing to access and confidently use interpreting and translation facilities and the limits of Central Australia's reliance on the phone-based TIS system. For newly arrived communities, Alice Springs is often not their first location so settlement services are not well-resourced despite the need for ongoing support including issues that arise specific to the remote location.

The need for appropriate service provision for newly arrived young people was most strongly emphasised for young asylum seekers in detention facilities. In an NTCOSS / DASSAN report produced in early 2012 *"...a number of organisations expressed concern that the major service providers - ie SERCO and IHMS - needed additional knowledge and skills to work with particular client groups eg working with children and young people, parenting issues or suicide prevention and assistance."* It went on to note that *"...these skills exist in the community services sector and the sector would be happy to provide training and support to these agencies"* though to date this has not been taken up. The high importance of social support to effective settlement has been established and would strongly suggest that young people in detention should be provided with as many opportunities as possible of interaction with local communities to normalise their time awaiting processing and reduce the risk of isolation and depression.

Support for Bridging visa Holders

Service providers also raised concern for young asylum seekers released on bridging visas. While they have the right to work and access medical care, the lack of English language programs and the impact of past torture and trauma pose barriers to employment and accessing services. The Red Cross is funded to support people on bridging visas with accommodation, an emergency income that is 89% equivalent to Centrelink, basic community orientation and caseworker referrals and support for a period of 6 weeks with limited possibility for review and extension under strict criteria. Of course many people after 4 weeks do not have secure accommodation, work or the capacity to live independently in the community. This particularly disadvantages young people who may not have developed independent living skills and were institutionalised for long periods in detention. The asylum seeker support and advocacy network provides some informal voluntary support. Community organisations in Darwin are currently attempting to establish a drop-in centre to provide English language classes, housing and employment support and a number of voluntary activities. This is dependent on the goodwill of the community and has been slow to establish due to limited capacity in the Red Cross Migration Support Programs team and limited numbers of volunteers and other services coming forward to assist.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Youth Settlement

3.1.1 The NT Government should **invest in the development of sports and recreational activities and spaces** that create welcoming and inclusive culturally friendly environments as critical facilitators of good settlement and integration of newly arrived young people.

3.1.2 Public **transport services (in Darwin and Alice) to provide more buses** on the weekends/late at night to support young people, particularly those living in outer suburbs.

3.1.3 Office of Multicultural Affairs should provide **increased funding options for community associations and diaspora community initiatives** including for the capacity building activities of the Multicultural Council of the NT, MyNT and Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia.

3.1.4 DIAC should **increase resources for Bridging Visa support programs** provided by the Red Cross and other community organisations. Support should be extended past the initial 4 weeks with more flexible criteria and investments should be made in organisations providing services such as English classes.

3.1.5 Service providers for the community and detention centres should have mandated specialist training in the areas of:

- Cross cultural competency
- Working with children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
and
- Understanding the needs of and working appropriately with young asylum seekers.”

3.2 Family Issues

Cultural differences

As outlined in the *Good Starts* report, for refugee background young people, *'family is both their key source of support and their key source of worry and distress'*.¹⁵ Changes in family structure, power and authority, intergenerational tensions, gender roles and discipline styles all present interlocking challenges.¹⁶ The ARACY report also cites *'role reversal'* as a major source of family conflict; *'...as young people acculturate and gain language skills faster, they are often expected to take on additional responsibilities, for example interpreting (and translating) and generally representing the family. These 'role reversals' place increased pressure on young people, and can lead to family conflict if adults feel they have lost their culturally-defined status'*.¹⁷

The ARACY Report also noted how refugee and migrant parents may fear host culture's effects on their children tending to be over-protective, hindering involvement in sporting or community events.¹⁸ This can lead to conflict when young people adopt attitudes and behaviours which resist some of their parents'.¹⁹ ²⁰ Adult members of Darwin's African communities in 2005 expressed their concern at children learning behaviours at school that are inconsistent with home values.²¹

Many young people spoke to this project of their parents beliefs that 'Australian' culture is in conflict with their 'home' culture and that this is the source of most family conflict. While Australian law considers an 18 year old to be an adult, many migrant families view childhood as continuing till marriage.

'Young people communicate better with different groups and we need to lead the adults'

NGO workers also spoke of intergenerational conflict as a major issue, saying parents often had expectations that their children behave as they themselves had done as children. This is shaped by their own childhood, cultural values and expectations of their home country (which are often perceived as different to 'Australian' parenting values and expectations). Newly arrived youth navigate a very different pathway to their parents due to factors such as increased responsibility, quick acculturation, access to financial support, personal freedom, travelling away to work and study and living independently at younger ages outside extended family settings. Young people's accelerated pathways may also lead to some feelings of exclusion and powerlessness for parents.

Youth as mediators

Some young people spoke about conflicts their parents had with others in the community questioning how they should behave when their parents aren't being good role models. They said

¹⁵ Sandy Gifford, Ignacio Correa-Velez and Robyn Sampson, p.66.

¹⁶ Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson, *Good Starts*.

¹⁷ Francis & Cornfoot. *Multicultural Youth in Australia*, p.16.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Coventry L et al., *Wealth of all Nations*.

²¹ Abu-Duhou, Ibtisam. *Engagement of the African Community in the Northern Territory: Their Settlement, Education, Workforce and Community Participation* (Charles Darwin University: Darwin, 2006), p.26.

their parents sometimes import (ethnic or religious) conflicts to Australia that the younger generation would like to move past. Some felt they as young people could be good mediators who *'communicate better with... different groups and ...need to lead the adults'*. One strategy promoted was to hold forums jointly facilitated by and for adults and young people in partnership to build trust and mutual understanding and *'teach communities to work together'*.

Culturally inappropriate support services and responses

Service providers said that more young people needed education on how to deal with and report family violence. While there has been much discussion about the fact that Australian systems of dealing with family conflict are not always culturally familiar, we should recognise there are diverse views within communities. Especially vulnerable members who are not heard should be skilled up to navigate the system and recognise its principles of equality for all. Some asked for more culturally appropriate family support services to incorporate newly arrived families' diverse approaches to dealing with family conflict such as consultation with elders, community leaders or relatives outside the immediate family. While many NT family services adapt to different degrees to deal with Aboriginal cultural differences, such an approach would also be relevant to newly arrived families. Some suggested that if more family support was provided, children would not need to live separately from parents.

When the NTG consulted in Darwin in 2005, African communities raised concerns about service providers *'trying to break up families'*, children being removed and concerns that *'interactions between husband and wife are being misunderstood as family violence (eg because cultural norms in to speak very loudly are misconstrued)'*.²² In addition, the Australian Human Rights Commission, reporting on their consultations with the African Australian community said that *'a number cautioned that, in some instances, services and interventions can inadvertently undermine the collectivist basis that is crucial to African Australian communities, particularly the family unit.'*²³ The dynamic nature of settlement in the past five years means this needs updating and clarification.

NGO workers described how young people generally want to access those agencies that show respect and support them. Such trust relationships can lead to disclosures that identify young people at risk and families requiring support. It can be challenging to advocate for young people when parents feel disempowered and resist. Referrals are complicated by the 'additional' work required to effectively support this client group (eg. Interpreters, cross cultural skills, time). However this discussion supported strongly the recommendation - discussed above - that all support services working with newly arrived young people should receive training to enable them to operate sensitively and appropriately to meet the particular needs of this group of young people.

Immigration issues

Many young people felt it would be much easier to settle and live well if families were allowed to come and felt frustrated at the slow and challenging immigration process of trying to obtain visas. They spoke about worries about family back home and the need to provide money and food. NGO

²² Abu-Duhou Ibtisam, Engagement of the African Community in the Northern Territory: Their Settlement, Education, Workforce and Community Participation (Charles Darwin University: Darwin, 2006), p.26.

²³ Australian Human Rights Commission. 2010, In Our Own Words-African Australians: A Review of Human Rights and Social Inclusion Issues (Australian Human Rights Commission: Australia, 2010), p.9

workers supporting young people found burden of care issues often arose due to their high family obligations and expectations of education and employment success. Given the changing patterns of refugee settlement discussed above in Section 1, ie the increased proportion of lone males being settled from detention and seeking to have their families join them, this pressure is only increasing as family reunion numbers in immigration quotas remain the same or reduced. The lack of locally based holistic and accessible migration support services since July 2011, further disadvantages people in this situation. Family reunion, support and cohesion carry greater importance for meeting the developmental needs of vulnerable young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Family Issues

3.2.1 DIAC and other government agencies should *increase support and capacity building for newly arrived families to manage family conflict* including but not limited to:

(i) additional culturally adaptive family support and mediation programs;

(ii) further funding for education programs that normalise cultural adjustment stresses such as family and intergenerational conflicts and shares learning from previous waves of migration to provide new arrivals with proven skills and strategies to manage conflict

(iii) education for young people & families about reporting and handling family violence.

(iv) increased resources for new arrivals youth services to extend beyond the provision of limited casework support and to develop and deliver education programs

3.2.2 Community groups and service providers working with newly arrived families should hold *intergenerational forums to address the issues affecting families and cultural adjustment*. Forums should be jointly facilitated by both young people and adults to build mutual understanding and model cooperative approaches.

3.2.3 DIAC should *increase the family reunion category of the humanitarian program* to account for large numbers of recent arrivals seeking to settle sustainably as families.

3.3 Racism and Discrimination

Young people commonly expressed the fact that they appreciated the multiculturalism of Darwin, that they *'really liked having friends from different cultures/countries'* as well as the variety of

'more opportunities outside of school to learn English and have other connections with people',

'we want more opportunities to have activities with people who come from other places'

'different foods, religions and cultural celebrations in Darwin'. Many felt *'Darwin is welcoming of many different people'* a nice place to live with friendly people and - due to its small size - easy to make friends.

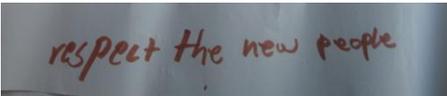
Conflict

While young people seldom mentioned racism directly they spoke of wanting others to *'respect... new people, and not say bad words about them'* and said things would be better if people *'treat everyone as equal'*. They spoke about the fighting which occurs at Casuarina Square between young people of different ethnic

backgrounds. A number of factors may contribute to this fighting including discrimination, lack of understanding, territorial issues and youth boredom and frustration. Some community leaders suggest this it is less about inter-group conflict and more about individual factors and youth rites of passage.

In the MyNT *Youth Issues Survey* of 2010, where 31 of 44 respondents reported their cultural background as being other than 'Australian', discrimination was given as the most important concern for 23.8% of respondents.²⁴ Discrimination *'can diminish a young person's sense of connection and belonging to their community and broader society... [It] can create a sense marginalisation and isolation and diminish participation in education, employment or recreational activities'*.²⁵

Cross cultural understanding



Young people said it is important that they learn about the new culture they are living in, asking for *'an Australian culture course'* or to *'learn the national anthem'*. They showed a strong wish to *'understand the Australian way of life and mentality'* and saw a need for 'both-ways' learning through *'cultural issues education and programs'* to educate the public about refugees and migrants.

Many young people and service providers mentioned that before arrival, they had little or no understanding or even awareness of Aboriginal people's cultures. Both Darwin and Alice Springs respondents said they did not even know there were black people in Australia and spoke of having limited contact after arrival. This is consistent with the findings from the *Youth Facilities Team (2007)* that *'there is a need for people who enter Australia, particularly as refugees, to have an awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture(s)'*.²⁶ The FICT program run by Melaleuca explores the cultural experiences of new families. In Darwin it includes an additional welcome to country cultural tour, picnic and family day conducted by local Larrakia families that has been received very positively. Indigenous and refugee groups have relished the chance to learn about each others' experiences and

Bn ²⁴ Multicultural Youth Northern Territory. Report on Online Youth Issues Survey, p.3.

²⁵ Mansouri et al 2009, p.7.

²⁶ Youth Facilities Team. Report from Youth Facilities Team, p.3.

share stories. In Alice Springs ongoing efforts by Aboriginal elders and African community leaders working together to address violence amongst young people exemplify small initiatives that can be supported and extended.

This highlights the need for programs that develop sophisticated rather than simplistic opportunities for understanding cultures. Further work can assess the ways newly arrived young people understand indigenous culture(s) and explore and develop appropriate strategies to shed more light on social cohesion and promote it.

In the 2007 *Multicultural Youth Forum*, key issues noted were racism - specifically in employment, housing and education, and stereotyping and discrimination. Participants in that forum said they saw the major factors being a *'lack of understanding from wider community; refugees and migrants being branded as different; the media portrayal of ethnic groups; a lack of concern and awareness for other cultures; language and cultural barriers; and people being judged by their skin colour'*.²⁷

During this current project, service providers proposed that at all levels, issues of inequity and discrimination can best be addressed through seeing them in terms of human rights. They suggested that in addition to a legal charter to protect rights, the NT requires programs and policies to make these rights relevant to people's lives through education, advocacy and rights-based approaches.

'we know everything in our country. We come here and everything is different'.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Racism and Discrimination

3.3.1 NT Government in consultation with the people should develop an NT Charter of Human Rights and embed rights based approaches in all Government activities to ensure the rights of all Territorians regardless of cultural background are recognised, protected and promoted.

3.3.2 Governments, academics and service providers should form partnerships to conduct further research into:

- (i) intercultural understanding between Indigenous and newly arrived young people focussed on identifying social cohesion solutions to conflict among culturally diverse young people, and*
- (ii) cultural change and intergenerational conflict*

and develop appropriate responses with the community's participation.

3.3.3 DIAC should continue and extend the integration of off-shore and on-shore cultural orientation & settlement information to ensure consistent messages are conveyed to new arrivals particularly:

- (i) Australian laws (rights of young people and responsibilities of society towards them) and*
- (ii) education about diversity, Australian history and cultures and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*

3.3.4 Arts and community cultural development funding bodies should invest in the development of community language-based media programs, such as the MyNT Tectonic Youth Radio Show and Territory FM's Cultural Village which serve to highlight the positive contributions of young people in multicultural Darwin and disseminates information to community groups

²⁷ Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory. Multicultural Youth Forum Report, p.6.

3.4 Community Safety

Police and young people

The majority of young people spoke of feeling safe in Australia and safe with police. *'most people treat us with respect'* and *'it's all a safe area'*. However, some young people said that they encountered problems when they first arrived because they *'didn't know the law'*. Police officers at the Casuarina Police Station echoed this idea: *'When young people come here they often don't understand what police expect of them, for example they do not know that they must give their name and address when asked'*. Sometimes police felt a lack of respect from young people attributed to fear of police in countries of origin where the rule of law is not strong and where the police force is corrupt. They felt this made it harder to build trusting relationships with newly arrived youth - a long process in which school-based engagement has been seen as highly effective. NGO workers agreed that young people's attitude to the justice system is linked to past experiences in places where there are very different expectations of police. Also *'when coming from a country where you have been persecuted, it is natural to feel that you are [at risk of] being persecuted here too'*.

There is some anecdotal evidence of a rise in young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds being involved in the youth justice system. Exploring this further with legal and youth services will establish if this is significant in frequency and impact and what are the appropriate prevention and early intervention responses to reduce the occurrence and seriousness.

Youth conflict

The major challenges the police force discussed in working with newly arrived youth were the conflict between ethnic groups – predominantly between Aboriginal and African young men. They believe this occurs for many reasons though primarily as an assertion of identity and economic tensions such as *'African youth are often engaged in part-time work whereas Aboriginal youth are usually not ...'* Further discussion is needed to clarify if this conflict is social or economic – based on 'jealousy' or attempts to redistribute income.

The *Report from the Youth Facilities Team, (2007)* found that racism, misunderstanding of refugees, protection of territorial areas, misinterpretation of behaviour, a lack of services and family conflict were key issues for young people living in Darwin's Northern suburbs.²⁸

Boredom and lack of activities may contribute to fighting which mainly is seen as happening around Casuarina Square in Darwin where police believe it is essentially a 'safe space' so people choose to fight there because they know they will be stopped before it gets too violent. Ironically, once young people are banned from Casuarina, they find they have no other place to go.

The short video created in 2011 by MyNT titled 'Safe Spaces' highlighted that Casuarina Square is a place where many young people hang out and thus a space where many youth conflicts and interactions with police take place.²⁹ This is consistent with understandings from the large body of work on youth and public space.³⁰

²⁸ Youth Facilities Team. *Report from Youth Facilities Team Regarding Youth Issues in the Northern Suburbs of Darwin*. Darwin: Youth Facilities Team, 2007.

²⁹ MyNT 'Safe Spaces' short video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2IF8ZJByrI>

³⁰ See eg NCP, 1999, *Hanging Out*, and Tyler et al 1998 *Making Space*

Police believed that violence and conflict (as discussed above in 5.) would decrease if there were more opportunities to meet with groups of young people to develop mutual respect. The Police Ethnic Advisory Group was disbanded in 2009 for reasons unknown and this strong and effective community engagement tool would assist to coordinate activities at a policy level to address many of the above issues.

The Centralian³¹ young people consulted reported being confronted by Aboriginal people when first coming to Alice Springs and that they experienced racism from Aboriginal people including some physical confrontations. Although only described as tension - no actual violence - there are anecdotal reports by agencies of physical violence between Aboriginal and African youth.

Parenting

In dealing with the parents of newly arrived young people, the police reported that '*parents often don't know what their kids are getting up to*'. Police said that sometimes when parents are informed, they '*threaten to take the kids back to their country of origin to show them what they struggled through to come here*'. Often parents talk about the issue of how to discipline their kids in this new environment. Police reported that '*girls are often being marginalised by African boys and that many families also treat girls differently*'. However, despite all this talk of this conflict from the Police, NGO workers reported that the majority of young people in this client group who have issues with the justice system do so for traffic-related offences.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Community Safety

3.4.1 NT government (DoJ) should invest in community-based approaches to addressing justice issues for newly arrived migrants and refugees through:

- (i) re-establishing the Police Ethnic Advisory Group and ensuring youth representation on this,
- (ii) the provision of appropriate and accessible legal education workshops for both young people and their families.

3.4.2 The NT Education Department should develop alternative school-based programs to engage newly arrived young people who are alienated by formal schooling, (similar to the Clontarf³² scheme)

3.4.3 Youth, multicultural and legal services to gather and analyse data on newly arrived refugee and migrant youth involvement in the justice system to identify gaps and needs and appropriate responses.

³¹ Neutral colloquialism commonly used to refer to people from Central Australia.

³² See <http://clontarf.org.au/> for information on this program.

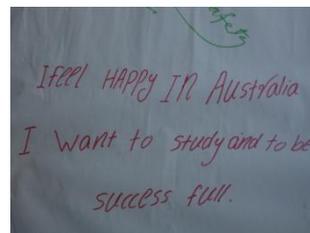
3.5 Education, Employment and Training

Service providers and young people discussed the importance of education to young people settling in the NT. The majority spoke highly of their school and expressed the importance of getting a good education in Australia. They were highly optimistic about their education; and reported feeling very motivated at school, enjoyed the range of subjects they could choose and felt that their schools provided many opportunities.

Language

Language barriers were commonly reported as making access to services, finding employment and social inclusion more difficult. Young people commented that:

- the Australian accent is difficult to understand,
- the English language learnt in their home country was not at a level to enable easy communication; and
- there should be more diverse opportunities to learn English in the form of extra classes outside school hours / in community settings and more hours available at the Adult Migrant English Program.



In Alice Springs, while there is a specific ESL stream at secondary school, support is minimal, under-funded and does not meet the current need. There is no bridging program for older young people with ESL needs seeking to pursue tertiary or vocational studies. More one-on-one English tutoring in schools and intensive assistance for ESL students in general has been identified by service providers and educators as well as young people consulted.

School support

Being able to practice English with friends who speak English fluently is something that many young people really value. The students at Darwin High School in the Intensive English Unit (IEU) said they feel segregated from mainstream students as all of their classes are separate; some suggesting this sets up possible discrimination. Many want more chance to mix with mainstream students, as it is *'hard to make friends from outside of IEU'*. Many recommended a mentoring or 'buddy' system in which each new IEU student is paired with a student from mainstream classes. They believe that they would be better able to integrate with a friend within the main student body to look out for them and assist them learning about life in Darwin. Generally, young people felt the transition from IEU to mainstream, was not smooth and lacked support. They wanted these programs to improve though they did not give specific strategies beyond the above.

At Sanderson Middle School, bilingual / bicultural workers are employed to assist students in their early stages of English acquisition and all students found them very helpful recommending that there should be more people in these roles because there are not officers for all languages and so not all students access the same support.

The majority of students spoke fondly of their teachers, saying they provided a great deal of support. However some comments suggested that young people had experienced discrimination and

disrespect from their teachers: *'send teachers back to school; they need to know that we do have an education, and not to treat us separately'* and that *'teachers can be nasty, put you down, not supportive, not helpful, don't explain things properly – do not take into consideration language barriers'*.

Likewise school welfare services such as counsellors were seen as generally good, however, one person commented that *'if you are African you are forced to go to an African teacher when you have a problem, but you don't necessarily want to go to that person because it may not be confidential – community stuff should be left outside of school'*. It was also noted that school counsellors don't warn that there are some things that they must report on, with young people wanting reporting obligations to be made more clear and explicit.

Understanding a different system

Some young people observed that it was difficult adjusting to schools that are much less strict than they are used to. In their countries of origin, physical discipline was acceptable and so they admitted to non-attendance or misbehaviour because the threat of beating was not there. This difference was also reported to be a common source of family conflict. Some young people also felt that there is less study pressure here as where they had come from. Nonetheless all agreed the importance of school needs to be communicated to newly arrived youth.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

Young people arriving in Australia above 18 years of age reported that they would have liked to go to high school but instead were sent to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP): *'I was at Darwin High School in the Intensive English Unit, I'd turned 18, they said I was too old to be at school and I should be attending AMEP. I didn't want to attend AMEP'*. Many of these young people did not feel ready for university or the workforce. Due to their migration and refugee experiences they had not had the chance to fully participate in schooling and felt in a state of limbo. They recommended some kind of preparatory or bridging class for students in this situation. This was echoed by students in Alice Springs where ESL teaching resources are scarce.

Training opportunities

Some young people felt that specialist vocational training opportunities for people of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds should also be provided for young refugees. This perception of inequity may be linked to tensions between communities *'...as is often the case in communities where resources and access to resources are already stretched, the perceived special needs of a sub-population or the special service delivery given to one sector of the community can sometimes breed resentment'*.³³

Accessing employment

The majority of young people said it was *'easy to get a part-time job'* and that there were many choices and opportunities in employment including the chance to do work experience. Some however reported that it was hard to get a job due to not having references, experience, a driver's license or not speaking English fluently. Some reported on the interview process as being very

³³ Danielle Campbell and Roberta Julian. A Conversation on Trust: Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia (Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies: Tasmania University, 2009), p.19.

difficult while others lacked confidence due to their language. Some spoke of the minimum wage as being 'too low to afford food'.

Accessing university

When speaking about university, some people reported that their qualifications were not recognised in Australia and that they could not afford university. There were comments that, aside from scholarships to study nursing, there are not enough scholarships at Australian universities to recognise the hardships of people from refugee background. Students without citizenship attending university spoke about the disadvantages of their status and suggested the Government should '*give the same facilities to PR holders as to citizens*' and that '*if government allow PR visa holders to use HECS-HELP it could be very nice*'

Education In detention

Currently 15-17 year olds are provided with a basic education program (delivered by the NT Department of Education and funded by the Commonwealth Government) in local schools but with no contact with local students and is limited in time and scope to 2 hours a day. Many choose not to participate because they see it as a waste of time. There is no education program for older young people 18 – 25 years old and although they have different developmental needs they are treated as adults in detention and experience associated boredom, frustration and often acute mental health issues including self-harm. Asylum seeker advocates argued for meaningful offsite education opportunities to be provided to young people who are in detention especially those 15-17 years of age and 18- 25 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

*3.5.1 Commonwealth and NT Governments to jointly provide funding to **build the capacity of the education sector** and other service providers to better meet the needs of newly arrived migrant and refugee young people. This should include training for staff of schools and other educational institutions in areas of cross cultural competency, understanding trauma and other areas of relevance. (links to Recommendation 3.7.3)*

*3.5.2 DIAC to fund settlement services to provide **peer-to-peer mentoring programs in the NT**, in schools and at AMEP, as a model of good practice for supporting young people in the settlement process.*

*3.5.3 Education departments at both NT and Federal levels should improve **targeted support for newly arrived young people** to increase their engagement in and access to education, training and employment, not confined to but including PARTICULARLY:*

- (i) 'out-of-school hours' programs (e.g. Homework and other support)*
- (ii) increased flexibility and numbers of eligible hours within the AMEP,*
- (iii) English language courses which are embedded in VET / TAFE course programs for young people who undertake vocational training pathways.*
- (iv) targeted scholarships, or other financial assistance, for university entrance and*
- (v) increased staffing of transitional and bilingual/bicultural support at school to cover all client language groups*
- (vi) increased intensive ESL study and support programs at schools particularly in Alice Springs*

3.5.4 DIAC to ensure that **meaningful offsite education opportunities** are provided to young people who are in detention including those 15-17 years of age and 18- 25 years.

3.6 Health

Coordination and education

Refugee Health Clinic staff spoke of the need to coordinate better with other health services and other sectors such as schools to ensure that both the clinical and educational side of health services are covered. One major health issue identified by the clinic was nutrition, lack of understanding of the link between change in diet, exercise and weight gain and the associated use by some young people of unhealthy means of weight control such as appetite suppressants. Strong health education and promotion programs embedded in communities and schools could prevent such health risks.

Sexual Health

Sexual and reproductive health needs such as teenage unplanned pregnancy and lack of knowledge around STI's was another major concern identified by health services and attributed to community attitudes: *'young women need to be encouraged to take on other roles and responsibilities in Australia, aside from mothering, such as having a career, like their male counterparts'*[sic]. These issues require specialist projects to identify specific needs and culturally appropriate responses.

Cultural appropriateness

Young people said that many health messages such as those about mental health and sexual education are designed to target people with typically 'Australian' attitudes, and do not consider the cultural sensitivities or language and other barriers for migrant families. A particular challenge faced was around finding interpreters for all languages and particularly people to interpret in health consultations with young females.

Some expressed concerns for older young people taking on family responsibilities and the unnecessary pressure it places on individuals as well as intergenerational conflict when parents' authority is challenged. One case described was of an older sibling who did not tell parents a younger sister was pregnant but tried to resolve the issue. When young people accompany younger siblings to medical appointments it is not clear if the parent / guardian is taking responsibility for their child's health.

Trauma and mental health

Young people of refugee background spoke about their need for emotional support as people *'coming from the war and seeing peace'* and *'starting life all over again'*. Some young people also articulated trying to *'blend in'* and their difficulties in *'understanding a different way of life'*, and feeling isolated and sad. NGO workers spoke about the lasting impacts of torture and trauma on mental and physical wellbeing and the vulnerability of young survivors for whom experiences of violence may be more profound and normalised than their Australian born counterparts. Violence in the home may also be a common occurrence as families experience cultural transition stresses without conflict management skills or support.

This gives a sense of young people's diverse overt responses to trauma. Trauma in young people can cause developmental harm to physical, social, mental, emotional and other faculties.³⁴ In addition many young people experience 'secondary trauma' after beginning to heal then being exposed to arriving family members stories or fresh experiences of trauma. All these vulnerabilities have strong links with mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and depression. A lack of understanding about mental health and behavioural issues can result in people being ostracised from their community. The financial stress experienced by many young people in terms of working to help family and send money back home coupled with the stress of school and adolescence can also lead to mental health concerns. Additionally, the impact of cramped housing can also add to mental and physical health concerns³⁵.

Some informants noted that youth specific mental health services in Darwin that claim to be accessible to all are not accessed by refugee young people because of geographical and transport challenges and the lack of outreach efforts on the parts of said services. While it is difficult enough to encourage young people to seek mental health support this is compounded when rigid models of service delivery further exclude them. There are no services in Alice Springs with specialist capacity to provide counselling or other support work on torture and trauma. While newly arrived young people in Central Australia tend to not be in their place of first settlement, issues of torture and trauma can be ongoing.

Asylum seeker young people who contributed, spoke about trauma and suffering while in detention at the same time showing a strong sense of hope and resilience for their '*new life in Australia*'. Mental health experts have described the detention of children as a '*form of institutionalised child abuse*'. The negative impact of detention and the psychological distress seen in refugee and asylum seeker children is well documented.³⁶ This is exacerbated by the policy of moving young people into adult detention on their 18th birthday. The Government's stated policy of no children in detention has not been adhered to and needs extension to include vulnerable young people up to age 25.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Health

*3.6.1 Health services shall ensure **representation of, and consultation with, young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in public education campaigns** such as those targeting mental or sexual health issues. This should be supported by ongoing community education targeted to the needs of young people (and their families), particularly in relation to promoting mental health in the community and supporting people living with mental health challenges.*

3.6.2 Education institutions and health services to work collaboratively to ensure appropriate and consistent health promotion messages are provided to newly arrived young people and that both the clinical and educational side of health are covered.

*3.6.3 NTG should provide funding and sector development programs to **develop the capacity of a broader range of service providers** - especially in remote areas such as Alice - to support survivors of torture and trauma.*

³⁴ Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre. 2001.

³⁵ See also MYAN Australia 2011:16-17

³⁶ See for example Bronstein & Montgomery 2011; Robjant et al 2009.

3.7 Housing, Homelessness and Income support

Housing

Young people and service providers sought increased financial assistance as well as support in finding housing. They complained of lack of housing stock and expensive costs of housing in the NT. Comments such as *'most of our money goes to rent'* indicate families experience financial difficulties. The fact that housing stress was raised indicates the tendency for newly arrived youth to have greater family financial and other responsibilities including contributing to or paying rent, 'interpreting' or liaising with Centrelink and housing providers on behalf of their parents. Service providers also mentioned the barriers young people face in securing rental housing such as the fact that realtors do not tend to use interpreters to ensure access.

'I would build more houses in Darwin because they have less houses in Australia'

Service providers also spoke about the *'excessive cost of housing'* and homelessness as major issues for this client group, linked to economic participation and difficulties finding secure livelihoods. They described difficulties finding secure accommodation for refugee and migrant families due to size of families, affordability and discriminatory attitudes of private rental agents.

This high cost of housing tends to push newly arrived families into cheaper outer suburbs or smaller, poorer accommodation compounding issues of isolation, transport and access to services as well as health and conflict.

Appropriate services

Assisting newly arrived families to secure housing, requires services to be both culturally and linguistically appropriate as well as to take into account the impact trauma may have on seemingly 'everyday' issues. The difficulties associated with employment, education and housing are often more severe for young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds due to their past experiences which may include torture, upheaval, insecurity and trauma in its many forms.³⁷

The Centrelink 'Basics Card' was universally condemned as causing great difficulty for families to manage their money. NGO workers cited income management as a major reason for some newly arrived people moving interstate especially when this policy was extended from Aboriginal clients to all NT welfare recipients more than a year ahead of the rest of Australia. Many newly-arrived families, who were already stressed by the high costs of living in the NT, chose to uproot their families again to join community members elsewhere.

Understanding Centrelink was a major challenge cited, particularly understanding written letters in English and the lack of consistent access to necessary interpreters. It was recommended that there should be *'More multicultural people in Centrelink'*.

³⁷ Francis & Cornfoot. Multicultural Youth in Australia.

Homelessness

Homelessness for newly arrived young people in Darwin is rising. The YWCA's CASY House, a youth refuge to support young people aged 15-18 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, is one of few crisis accommodation centres in Darwin. In 2006, only 2.5% of the total number of young people accessing CASY House services were of migrant or refugee background. In 2010 this figure was 8.6% and in 2011 the figure rose again to 12.8%.³⁸ This is consistent with national research including CMY's 2010 work on homelessness for young people from refugee backgrounds- 'Finding Home in Victoria'. Another report succinctly explains the dynamic:

*'The needs of young refugees are diverse, complex and significant, and they tend to compound each other. Young people of a refugee background are likely to suffer considerable socioeconomic disadvantage in the short term, and there is a particularly high risk of homelessness among refugee young people, this being some six to ten times greater than for school students generally.'*³⁹ Coventry et al. (2002)

RECOMMENDATIONS – Housing, Homelessness and Income Support

3.7.1 NTG to fund liaison staff to ensure better service coordination between school & community-based services to avoid duplication and deliver more targeted services to newly arrived migrant and refugee young people. This would ensure prevention of and early intervention for homelessness and other housing and income related stresses

3.7.2 Policy and advocacy services shall undertake further work to gather specific information on the risks of housing and homelessness related stresses for newly arrived young people and their families and recommend strategies to address these.

3.7.3 Service agreements shall mandate training for service providers who work with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and their families this training should include cross cultural competency, the impacts of torture and trauma, strategies for working effectively with the client group. (link to 3.5.1)

³⁸ YWCA. Youth Housing Program (YWCA: Darwin, 2012).

³⁹ Louise Coventry, Carmel Guerra, David Mackenzie and Sarah Pinkney. Wealth of All Nations: Identification of strategies to assist refugee young people in the transition to independence (Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies: Hobart, 2002), p.56.



3.8 Youth Participation and Engagement

In the MyNT *Youth Issues Survey* (2011), young people asked for increased opportunities to come together and *'share ideas and activities, with an emphasis on advocacy and campaigns'*.⁴⁰ This form of youth participation, in which young people have a voice and opportunity to effect change through being included as active participants in decision making processes as well as planning and implementing projects, is a well-established tool to build social capital with *'positive effects on health and wellbeing, social connectedness, identity, and developing interpersonal skills'*.⁴¹

Arguably, newly arrived youth need even greater input to ensure appropriate services and to rebuild social capital during their cultural adjustment to a new country. However, as the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2007) report articulates, *'refugee and migrant young people may have more urgent priorities of coping and adapting to the new society, and lack the financial resources and time to access participation processes'*⁴² and as such may require additional support in accessing meaningful participation such as transport, skills and confidence building. The NT has never had a well funded and resourced peak advocacy body representing youth or youth services limiting coordinated approaches to youth advocacy, community education and policy work.

In the *Multicultural Youth Forum* young people saw themselves as key agents of change, seeing the formation of youth committees as an important means to advocate for their concerns.⁴³ During this project, young people requested more opportunities to form representative groups eg of and for migrant or refugee young women. They spoke of the importance of maintaining culture and language, regretting how *'... you can lose your own language after you speak English for five years...'*

Throughout the project and in discussions regarding all of the above emerging issues, a persistent theme has been the need for young people to be actively engaged to identify and develop solutions for their own settlement, family, health, education, safety and other rights to be fully realised.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Youth Participation and Engagement

3.8.1 *The NT government to adequately resource peak bodies to effectively represent the rights, needs and interests of young people from migrant, refugee and newly arrived backgrounds.*

3.8.2 *NTG to increase investment in youth-led organisations, youth participation initiatives and ensure participatory approaches in existing youth programs and projects, e.g. social initiatives, women's groups, youth-led organisations (such as MyNT, UN Youth Association and African Youth Connection) and youth committees (such as City of Darwin or Red Cross Youth Advisory Group)*

3.8.3 *Service provider networks (such as the RSN, SPC, MSF) to ensure newly arrived young people's voices are included recognising that young people have unique experiences and knowledge and should be supported to articulate the issues impacting on their lives and identify and build appropriate solutions.*

⁴⁰ Multicultural Youth Northern Territory. Report on Online Youth Issues Survey (MyNT: Darwin, 2010), p.3.

⁴¹ Francis, Steve and Sarah Cornfoot (2007), p.17.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory. Multicultural Youth Forum Report (MCNT: Darwin, 2007).

*3.8.4 OMA to provide specific support to facilitate and fund the establishment of **an NT Refugee Association** dedicated to representing the rights and interests of refugee communities in the NT including an affiliated **Young Refugee Association**.*

Section 4 - Conclusions and Next Steps

This paper represents a large scope of work for a jurisdiction such as the NT. It has captured some of the key issues facing newly arrived young people in Darwin and Alice Springs in order to highlight the specific needs and concerns of this group of young people. It is the intention of the project working group that this paper will provide the basis for further policy and advocacy work and implementation of key recommendations. . It is hoped that the youth and multicultural sectors in the NT will consider the issues raised, and associated recommendations, and determine priorities for future policy and advocacy work (acknowledging the limitations associated with this work). This could include the development of an action plan to progress key recommendations.

Future work engaging the communities and community service sector in Darwin and Alice Springs will need to continue to test the information and garner additional understanding through engagement with broader stakeholder groups. Some of the recommendations in this paper came from the service provider sectors and young people's participation is needed to implement these effectively. Likewise sector and government feedback should be included to complement young people's voices.

Since consultations for this project were held, a number of new initiatives have emerged such as a network forum for agencies working with asylum seekers to share information and collaborate. Changes in the policy setting occur regularly. However, despite the dynamic nature of the sector, the priority areas that were consistently reiterated and remain unchanged should be noted carefully:

- The **need for specialist youth settlement support services** – currently either non-existent in some areas or too limited in their resources and scope to be fully effective. In particular the lack of appropriate skills and training to work with the specific client group across the NT but especially in regional areas such as Central Australia.
- The specific need for ensuring that generic, youth and multicultural services of all types create welcoming and **inclusive culturally and youth friendly environments** and implement strategies to improve newly arrived youth access and inclusion wherever possible such as outreach, partnerships and youth engagement / participation.
- The need for an approach to settlement of newly arrived youth that puts **youth engagement and participation approaches** uppermost both as a proven effective means to ensure good practice and as useful goals in developing youth capacity for leadership, resilience, self-confidence and self-determination.
- The need for **dedicated policy / advocacy work to investigate further the key concerns** and facilitate strategic collaborative policy and program development.

While many of the ideas recommended in this report are sound public policy suggestions grounded in current best practice in youth and multicultural services in Australia, the unique NT conditions require ongoing development work in the specialist area of multicultural youth affairs to ensure they are implemented appropriately for the context.

It is envisaged that this paper will be a living document that will continue to develop and influence programs and policies through the following initial activities to commence in the latter part of 2012.

1. Circulate the document widely to stakeholders;
2. The networks that supported the development of this paper - the MYAN NT and the MYAN Australia should continue to be the key drivers of this work.
3. MYAN to present finding and discuss the issues in this paper in public forums such as the first NT youth affairs conference held in October 2012
4. A working group to progress the ideas in this paper should be formed consisting of the MYAN NT working in close collaboration and partnership with key Government and community bodies including:
 - a. The NT Government Department of Chief Minister's Office of Multicultural Affairs. OMA provides a number of specific services to assist culturally and linguistically diverse communities and has a leadership role in the NT on Multicultural policy.
 - b. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's regional office in Darwin undertakes community liaison and settlement service planning activities and funds a number of settlement services through the SGP and DSCP grants programs.
 - c. The Multicultural Council of the NT is the peak community advocacy body in the NT representing the interests, concerns and aspirations of people of non-English-speaking backgrounds (and is the current auspice body for MyNT); and
 - d. the NT Office for Youth Affairs which as the NT government lead on youth policy issues also funds programs and projects and facilitates youth leadership and other development programs.
 - e. Youth run / youth led organisations to be included, engaged and consulted meaningfully as appropriate in the ongoing development of this work.
5. The paper should be presented to and discussed with youth run organisations, diaspora community organisations of newly arrived communities and networks of service providers working with newly arrived youth and their communities. The latter networks should include at minimum:
 - a. the local youth service networks in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs,
 - b. local multicultural services networks such as the SPC, MSF, RSN, PEAG,
 - c. Other stakeholders as appropriate.

The initial work of this working group should focus on:

1. Prioritising areas of work in consultation with the sectors;
2. Progressing the high priority recommendations and initiatives.
3. Identifying which of the emerging themes in section 3 above should be areas for further investigation or development of specialised briefing papers and seeking resources to undertake this development work.

Bringing together the key players in youth and multicultural services in the NT can begin to address a number of the issues related to communication and coordination, disseminate information to the appropriate responsible bodies as well as ensure a mechanism for sustainable follow up of the efforts already begun. A review of progress against this report should be undertaken annually.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1	PROJECT OUTLINE (PDF)
APPENDIX 2	METHODOLOGY (BELOW)

APPENDIX 2: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This investigation into challenges faced by newly arrived young people in the Northern Territory was undertaken by MYAN-NT network members during their existing work roles with limited time and resources. This limitation needs to be considered when analysing material presented in the paper. As for many community-sector social research activities an Action Research approach was used.⁴⁴ Participation by informants in turn informed the process and iterative stages evolved different ways of collecting input and problem solving. Information was gathered through:

1. Direct consultation with young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds, through 15 semi-structured focus group discussions conducted by staff of Melaleuca Refugee Centre, MyNT and NTCOSS. These involved over 125 young people from Intensive English Unit classes at Sanderson Middle School, Darwin High School, Nightcliff Middle School, Centralian High School, Adult Migrant English Program students at Charles Darwin University and various young people involved in MyNT and the Melaleuca Refugee Centre's programs. Additional interviews were held with young people when specific opportunities/issues arose.
2. Interviews with 20 adult stakeholders from organisations with whom such young people interact: Casuarina Police, the Refugee Health Clinic, Melaleuca Refugee Centre, MyNT, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC), Anglicare NT, Mission Australia, Catholic Care's Drug and Alcohol Intensive Support program for Youth (DAISY), TEAMHealth, the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT), Headspace Top End, NT Legal Aid, Darwin Community Arts (DCA), Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia (MCSCA) and the NT Council of Social Services (NTCOSS).
3. The analysis of material gathered from past research conducted both locally and nationally.

Focus Groups

Semi-structured focus group discussions were deemed to be the most efficient primary data collection method to access a broad range of people's views in a short amount of time. Opportunities were also provided for individuals to contribute outside the focus group setting. Groups begun by introducing the facilitator, explaining the purpose and the importance of young people's voices being heard and that respondents would not be identified in the paper. Groups were asked:

- *'What do you like about living in the Northern Territory (or Darwin/ Alice)?'*
- *'What is challenging about living here/what was challenging when you first came here?'*
- *'What could be done to make it easier for young people coming to live in Darwin?'*
- *'If you were the Prime Minister, how would you make it easier for young people?'*

Open-ended questions enabled in-depth discussion of experiences and diverse qualitative responses. Questions were reworded or clarified to ensure comprehension and clarity. Opportunities for discussion were provided in both large and small group settings. In groups where English skills of respondents were limited, interpreters were utilised. Young people were also given the option to draw pictures and visually express their ideas.

⁴⁴ See Wadsworth, Y (1997), *Do it yourself Social Research*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.