

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)

Submission to
Department of Home Affairs on 'Australia's
2019-20 Migration Program'

January 2019

About MYAN

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those who work with them.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure that the particular needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised, and to support a coherent and consistent approach to addressing these in policy and service delivery. MYAN undertakes a range of policy and sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills and networks.

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds demonstrate high levels of resilience and resourcefulness and have the potential to be active participants in and contributors to Australian society. However, they can face particular barriers to accessing services and opportunities, including language, culture, limited social capital and unfamiliarity with Australian systems and processes (including the service system), racism and discrimination. These factors can place them at a social and economic disadvantage within Australian society, which can mean they are at higher risk of social and economic isolation. MYAN believes that a targeted approach to policy and service delivery is essential to addressing these barriers.

MYAN has developed the *National Youth Settlement Framework* to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

About this submission

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Home Affairs' discussion paper on 'Australia's 2019-20 Migration Program'. This submission provides a national perspective, drawing on the MYAN's breadth of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors across Australia. It has a focus on the rights and interests of young people (12 to 24 year olds) from migrant and refugee backgrounds in the Australian Migration and Humanitarian Programs.

This submission does not respond directly to individual questions posed in the Discussion Paper, but rather makes recommendations for consideration in future planning and programming of Australia's migrant intake that MYAN would like to bring to the Department's attention. The recommendations made here should not be considered in isolation from each other, but should be read as complementary. Annex I provides a snapshot of current data on young people arriving in Australia under different migration categories.

Introduction and Summary of Recommendations

Australia has a well-established and valued Migration Programme that aims to strike a balance between both national interest and international responsibility, recognising migrants and refugees make significant social, cultural and economic contributions to Australia. Australia's migration and settlement programmes are generally working well to achieve this balance and these programs are generally well supported by those who they directly service and the broader community.¹ Strengths of the Migration Programme of Australia have been recognized internationally in relation to integration and skills of migrants and their children in Australia, compared to other countries of immigration.²

Young people migrate to Australia with enormous strengths and capabilities, and are remarkably resilient in negotiating the various challenges of building a new life in Australia. Many arrive in Australia speaking multiple languages, including English, are highly aspirational and motivated to engage in education and employment and contribute to the future of Australia. They also play an important role in supporting successful settlement of their families. We know that most young people are doing well and navigate the settlement journey successfully. However, they commonly face particular challenges in accessing the support and opportunities they need to navigate the demands of settling in a new country and have particular needs distinct from adults and children. This is due to their age, the critical developmental stage of adolescence (negotiating these developmental tasks in the context of the migration and settlement experience) and the role they play in supporting their families in the settlement journey. They require targeted support that recognises their capabilities and addresses their particular needs.³

The most effective responses to supporting young people to settle well in Australia are those that fully invest in and support services and systems to remain flexible and responsive to the changing needs and challenges facing newly arrived young people over time. While Australia's settlement services system is globally recognised, MYAN would like to see a stronger focus on more targeted, coordinated and nationally consistent support for young people across settlement services, entering Australia through all migration categories.⁴ The lived experience of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds provide valuable insights into the design of policies, programs and services that meet their needs and create a more inclusive Australian society.⁵

With these considerations in mind, MYAN makes three key recommendations to the Department of Home Affairs;

- Recommendation 1: Continue to ensure young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have opportunities to benefit from the Migration Program, and provide support for young people from refugee-like backgrounds arriving under the Migration Program

¹ MYAN (2017) *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 2.

² OECD (2017) *Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD Publishing, p. 31-32.

³ MYAN (2017) *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 2.

⁴ MYAN (2017) *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 1.

- Recommendation 2: Recognise the importance of Family Migration, alongside Skilled Migration as part of the Migration Program, especially the importance of family for young people in a new settlement country and increase access of young people to family migration pathways to reunify with their family
- Recommendation 3: Adopt a long term view when planning for the migrant intake for ensuring successful settlement outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

Recommendation 1: Continue to ensure young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have opportunities to benefit from the Migration Programme, and provide support for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds arriving under the Migration Program

a) Young people arrive in Australia using different migration pathways

Young people made up an important part of the Migration and Humanitarian Programs of Australia. In the 2017/18 financial year;⁶

- Young people continued to make up an important portion of arrivals under the Humanitarian Program (26%), and Family (21%) and Skill (7%) streams of the Migration Program comprising 14% of all arrivals under all migration categories.
- Young people arriving under the Humanitarian Program made up 24% of all youth arriving under all migration categories.
- Young people aged 18-24 make up 59% of youth arrivals in all migration categories and more than half (51%) of the humanitarian youth arrivals.

In addition to the Migration and Humanitarian Program, uncapped demand driven child places were allocated as of 2019 financial year as part of the Migration Program. MYAN welcomes that these child places will be demand driven, as it will allow more young people to arrive in Australia to join their family and community. MYAN however considers that targeted support should accompany this increase, to ensure better settlement outcomes for young people.

Many young people who arrive in Australia through the Family and Skill streams of the Migration Program may also come from refugee or refugee-like backgrounds, with their experiences reflecting those of young people entering through the Humanitarian Program. They may however have less formal structures and supports in place when they begin their settlement journey in Australia. For example, young people arriving on 115 (Remaining Relative) and 117 (Orphan Relative) visas are typically living in Australia in kinship care arrangements. These young people may experience particular vulnerabilities related to their pre-migration experiences, and their transition to a new country and culture. As these young people have arrived through the Family stream of the Migration

⁶ Based on the data provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to MYAN on 5 November 2018 covering the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. Data presented is accurate as at this date within noted caveats of the Settlement Database (SDB).

Program they are not eligible for the same services as those arriving through the Humanitarian Program. This can place additional pressure on family and community supports and may mean that the needs of this group of young people are particularly complex.⁷ While new legislation was passed in the Parliament in late 2018 to increase waiting periods for newly arrived permanent residents to access welfare payments (and introduced new waiting periods for some payments), with MYAN's advocacy⁸ this legislation excluded young people arriving in Australia with 115 and 117 visas. While this has been a very welcome development, the current waiting period of two years continues to impact negatively young people arriving in Australia through the Migration Program as well as their relatives and communities.

b) Various factors influence and contribute to better settlement outcomes for young people, aside from employment levels

While the Migration Program has a focus on the skills Australia needs and contribution of these migrants to the economy, as stated in the Discussion Paper, migration experience entails much more than the specific skills migrants bring with them to Australia and their economic contribution to the country. Settlement outcomes of newly arrived migrants cannot be considered independent from the experiences faced upon arrival to Australia, and the country environment, including government policy (e.g. relatively limited family migration options); community and media attitudes towards young refugees and migrants; access to employment, education, housing and community services; and racism and discrimination.⁹

Research suggests that integration is closely related to experiences after arriving to country, is not solely depend on the prospective immigrant's own traits. According to a report focusing on the predictors of wellbeing among a cohort of young people over their first three years of settlement in Australia, "settlement specific policies and programs can ultimately only be effective if embedded within a broader socially inclusive society ... And this requires broader social reform relating to tackling issues of racism, discrimination, bullying, and increased flexibility in the ways these youth can access the social goods to which they are entitled."¹⁰ As put forward by the Productivity Commission, "A high level of acceptance is conducive to better integration."¹¹

⁷ Service providers may be unclear about what supports they can provide and what referral options exist, resulting in young people not accessing the support they need to navigate the settlement journey. In a 2013 report exploring the unique migration experience of young people on 117 visas, International Social Service (ISS) Australia recommended collaboration between kinship care services and the refugee and migrant settlement sector to specifically support the needs of this newly arrived group of young people. See Kavanagh (2013) *Home safe home: A report on children who migrate to Australia*. Available at <http://iss-ssi.org/2009/assets/files/news/ISSAustralia-HomeSafeHomeReport-May2013-web.pdf>, p. 5. Building on this study, in their 2016 study on the 117 visa holders, ISS also recommended greater recognition for the issues and needs of Orphan Relative visa holders and their carers in government policy, given multiple challenges faced related to lack of financial and other resources, accommodation, emotional and psychological issues and cultural differences. See Serr & Rose (2016) *New Beginnings: Issues and Needs in International Kinship Care*. North Melbourne, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, pp. 60- 69. The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) in Victoria have also developed a resource providing information about young people on a 117 or a 115 visa, their entitlements and referral options available to them. See, CMY (2014) *Young People on Remaining Relative visas (115) and Orphan Relative visas (117)*. Available at <http://www.cmy.net.au/publications/young-people-remaining-relative-visas-115-and-orphan-relative-visas-117>.

⁸ MYAN (2018) Submission to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee for the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill 2018 & Additional Information. Both available at the submissions page of the inquiry, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/self-sufficiency-migrants/Submissions.

⁹ MYAN (2016), *National Youth Settlement Framework*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 12.

¹⁰ Correa-Velez, I., Gifford, S.M., Barnett, A.G. (2010) *Longing to belong: social inclusion and wellbeing among youth with refugee backgrounds in the first three years in Melbourne, Australia*. Soc. Sci. Med. No. 71, p. 1407.

¹¹ Productivity Commission (2016) *Inquiry Report: Migrant Intake Into Australia, No. 77*. Canberra: Productivity Commission, p.11.

On the other hand, experiences of racism and discrimination can lead to mental health and wellbeing problems, including anxiety, stress, depression and poor quality of life¹², as well as negative effect on their sense of belonging¹³, and may lead to increased unhealthy behaviours which contribute to mental and physical ill health¹⁴ (Pascoe and Richman, 2009; Priest et al., 2013). In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the reported experience of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin and religion to 19% in 2018 from 9% in 2007.¹⁵ Around a quarter of young people between 18-24 years of age reported such discrimination and, people from non-English speaking backgrounds reported highest experience of discrimination (25%).¹⁶ Furthermore in the Multicultural Youth Australia Census 2017¹⁷, 66% of the participants mentioned they experienced discrimination based on race and 25% stated they were discriminated because of their religion. As a multicultural society, Australia can provide more spaces for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to find a sense of belonging in their new country and community.¹⁸

As stated in a 2018 paper by the Treasury and Department of Home Affairs;

“... the factors that drive the supply of prospective migrants are generally outside the influence of migration policy. These factors include economic, social and cultural forces, such as whether there are opportunities available for prospective migrants to meet professional, personal and family goals. These considerations therefore go beyond financial opportunities, to include factors such as a tolerant and safe society, environment and lifestyle amenities, and the social safety net in the country”.¹⁹

Recommendation 2: Recognise the importance of Family Migration, alongside Skilled Migration as part of the Migration Program, especially the importance of family for young people in a new settlement country and increase access of young people to family migration pathways to reunify with their family

Relationships with family often provide young people with a sense of belonging, support in negotiating difficult challenges and transitions, connection to shared values, culture and history, and play a key role in decision-making regarding a young person's choices. This is particularly important for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds given the impact of the migration

¹² VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 13.

¹³ Khanlou, N., Koh, J., Mill, C. (2008) *Cultural identity and experiences of prejudice and discrimination of Afghan and Iranian immigrant youth*, Int. J. Ment. Health Addict., No. 63, pp. 494-513.

¹⁴ Pascoe, E.A., Richman, L.S. (2009), *Perceived discrimination and health: a meta analytic review*, Psychol. Bull. No. 135, pp. 531-554.; Priest, N., Paradies, Y., Trenerry, B., Truong, M., Karlsen, S., Kelly, Y. (2013) *A systematic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism and health and wellbeing for children and young people*, Soc. Sci. Med., No. 95, pp. 115-127.

¹⁵ Markus, A (2018), *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2018*. Caulfield East: Monash University, p. 67.

¹⁶ Markus, A (2018), *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2018*. Caulfield East: Monash University, pp. 68-69.

¹⁷ The census is the first nation wide study of Australia's multicultural youth with 69% of participants aged 15 to 19 and 37% aged 20 to 25. For more see, Wyn, J., Khan, R., & Dadvand, B. (2018). *Multicultural Youth Australia Census 2017 Infographic Report*. Melbourne, Australia: Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the University of Melbourne. Available at: https://education.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2781535/Multicultural-Youth-Australia-Census-2017-Infographic.pdf.

¹⁸ VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) *Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 13. Also see, Mansouri, F & Kirpitchenko, L 2016, 'Practices of active citizenship among migrant youth: Beyond conventionalities', *Social Identities*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 307-23.

¹⁹ Papademetriou & Sumption 2013 in The Treasury and Department of Home Affairs (2018) *Shaping A Nation: Population growth and immigration over time* The Treasury Department of Home Affairs. Available at: <https://cdn.tspace.gov.au/uploads/sites/107/2018/04/Shaping-a-Nation-1.pdf>, p. 22.

experience and settlement on family configurations and relationships.²⁰ According to the recently released results of the Multicultural Youth Australia Census, participants of the Census mentioned family as an important source of support and friendship.²¹

Family separation, on the other hand, can be the most pervasive source of emotional distress for young people navigating the settlement journey alone and can compound the capacity to settle well. Limited and/or prolonged family reunion options often have significant implications for young people without any family in Australia, adversely affecting their physical and mental health and impacting on their capacity to imagine a future and build connections to support settlement, such as participation in education, training and employment.²² Multicultural Youth Australia Census results also support this indicating that receiving help or support was particularly difficult for migrant and refugee youth who lived apart from their families.²³

United Nations Expert Group on Family Policies for Inclusive Societies also provides a similar picture. According to their report, family members are not only a source of support, migrants also want to fulfil their responsibilities to their family therefore their proximity is vital. Prolonged familial separation however can have serious negative effects on family members, adding stress to intimate and parent-child relationships and creating or exacerbating economic difficulties. Families awaiting reunification may feel unsettled and find themselves devoting more resources to the immigration process and transnational relationships with family rather than on settling in their new homeland. Overall, the presence of family can enhance migrants' economic and social well-being.²⁴

Asking families to endure decades long waiting periods is considered as a way of declining certain forms of family reunification, which for applicants may have the effect of increasing their sense of social exclusion as well as affecting the distribution of domestic care work and formal labour market participation.²⁵ Sponsorship agreements, high income requirements set for sponsors and contributory visa types underscore how less affluent individuals are prevented from family reunification in practice. These policies have a disproportionate impact on young people, and other vulnerable groups: the elderly, the less educated and migrant women, given the relatively limited place these groups find in the labour market, compared to other groups of the society.²⁶

Families going through settlement together often have high levels of resilience and coping skills, and can be a great source of strength and support to each other in recovering from the impact of

²⁰ MYAN (2016), *National Youth Settlement Framework*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 18.

²¹ Wyn, J, Khan, R & Dadvand, B (2019) *Multicultural Youth Australia Census Status Report 2017/18*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Research Unit in Public Cultures, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne. p. 22

²² MYAN (2016), *National Youth Settlement Framework*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 9

²³ Wyn, J, Khan, R & Dadvand, B (2019) *Multicultural Youth Australia Census Status Report 2017/18*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Research Unit in Public Cultures, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne. p. 26.

²⁴ Denise L. Spitzer (2018) *Family Migration Policies and Social Integration, United Nations Expert Group Family Policies for Inclusive Societies*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Family-Oriented-Migration-Policies-and-Social-Integration.pdf>, p. 4.

²⁵ Denise L. Spitzer (2018) *Family Migration Policies and Social Integration, United Nations Expert Group Family Policies for Inclusive Societies*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Family-Oriented-Migration-Policies-and-Social-Integration.pdf>, p. 7.

²⁶ Denise L. Spitzer (2018) *Family Migration Policies and Social Integration, United Nations Expert Group Family Policies for Inclusive Societies*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Family-Oriented-Migration-Policies-and-Social-Integration.pdf>, p. 5.

migration and navigating the settlement journey in a new country. However migration, and particularly forced migration and the refugee experience, can have a profound impact on family units and lead to families being separated. The lack of family support networks for young people further contributes to settlement challenges, on top of navigating developmental tasks of adolescence. Family supports are critical in negotiating a range of settlement pressures and in the absence of such support, participating in employment or other community activities become difficult. This can be compounded by financial pressures, particularly if families are sending money overseas to support those left behind²⁷.

MYAN recognizes the direct link between family reunification, mental health and successful integration, and the need to overcome legal and practical obstacles to family reunification²⁸ to ensure better settlement outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. MYAN recommends consideration of increased pathways within the Family stream for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to reunify with their families in Australia under the Migration Program.

Recommendation 3: Adopt a long term view when planning for the migrant intake for ensuring successful settlement outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

It is important to take a long-term view of settlement, recognising that the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds continue beyond the first five years of settlement. This requires an investment in structures, policy and programs that ensure all young people, regardless of cultural background or migration history, can access the support and opportunities they need to feel they belong, and be active participants in and contributors to all aspects of Australian society.²⁹

Predictability is an important aspect of the migration process for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, who at the same time are experiencing significant physical, psychological and intellectual growth as they navigate the critical developmental stage of adolescence. The adolescence period is a distinct transitional stage in a young person's life, and is characterised by separation and individuation from parents and caregivers, major physical changes such as growth spurts and sexual maturation, identity formation, emotional and cognitive development and determining career and other life goals. This is a critical life stage, where these changes inform the development of a sense of identity, and where the brain undertakes significant growth. The refugee and migration experience, and the challenges of settling in a new country add into the challenge of navigating adolescence³⁰.

Predictability of policy environments highly impact the decision making process of migrants when choosing their destination³¹, whether they are skilled or not. Clear, fair, non-discriminatory and

²⁷ Centre for Multicultural Youth (2014) *Migrant & Refugee Young People Negotiating Adolescence in Australia*. Carlton: Centre for Multicultural Youth, p. 9.

²⁸ UNHCR (2016) *Better Protecting Refugees in the EU and Globally: UNHCR's proposals to rebuild trust through better management, partnership and solidarity*. Available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58385d4e4.html>, p.6.

²⁹ MYAN (2017) *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 2.

³⁰ MYAN (2016) *National Youth Settlement Framework*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 2.

³¹ Papademetriou, D. G., Somerville W. and Tanaka, H. (2008) *Talent in the 21st Century Economy*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, pp. 4-5.

transparently applied immigration rules and pathways to permanent residency and citizenship³² can turn Australia into a more conducive environment that best supports all young people to settle well and achieve good settlement outcomes.

In Australia, contrary to many other countries, second generation migrants³³ have skills comparable to skills of those who were born in Australia and whose both parents were born in Australia³⁴. In international research, the first strength of Australia has been identified as having “a large population of relatively skilled and well educated migrants that bring highly desirable and much-needed skills to the workforce.”³⁵ This large population is mainly young and they perform very well in terms of the level of basic skills they possess. The only exception to this is migrants from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, including from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds, and this may be improved through targeted policy interventions³⁶. Looking into how immigrants and their children integrated into the Australian society, this data provides evidence that the migration policies with a long term view of settlement had worked for Australia in the past.³⁷

³² Papademetriou, D. G., Somerville W. and Tanaka, H. (2008) *Talent in the 21st Century Economy*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, p. 26.

³³ That is native-born children of migrants and refugees.

³⁴ This finding is based on Australia's overall performance in the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills, which is a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), across literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills was conducted in Australia from October 2011 to March 2012, and Australia specific findings were released in a 2017 OECD report. For more see, OECD (2017) *Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

³⁵ OECD (2017) *Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD Publishing, p. 31.

³⁶ OECD (2017) *Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD Publishing, p. 35.

³⁷ This comparison is considered as an indicator for integration as children of immigrants born in Australia have been raised and educated in the host country and they should not be facing the same obstacles as their immigrant parents and outcomes similar to those of their peers of native-born parentage may be expected. For more see OECD/European Union (2015), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p.16.