

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia)

Submission to the Joint Committee of
Public Accounts and Audit on Australian
Government Funding: Schools and
Indigenous Health - Inquiry based on
Auditor-General's reports No. 18 and 50
(2017-18)

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About MYAN

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia) is Australia's national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government and non-government agencies at the state, territory and national levels to ensure that the particular rights and 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 to influence the national and international agenda. MYAN believes that children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have enormous potential to be active participants in and contributors to Australian society but need targeted support to realise this.

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

About this submission

MYAN (Australia) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit on *Australian Government Funding: Schools and Indigenous Health – Inquiry based on Auditory-General's reports No. 18 and 50 (2017-18)*. This submission focuses on young people's experiences in schools and lack of accountability for funding for English as an Additional Language (EAL) cohorts in schools, as well as the inability of current funding allocations to schools to meet the specific needs of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This submission has a focus on the rights and interests of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds aged between 12 and 24 years old.

MYAN has made several submissions over the years focusing on education and EAL students, such as Submission to the Department of Education, Employment And Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for *Review Of Funding For Schools (2011)*¹ and Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes (2017)*.² Education provides necessary job-related skills and knowledge for young people, as well as the capacity to be autonomous, have self-confidence and empathy, and be able to problem solve. These skills and assets are increasingly essential to navigating a rapidly changing economic, technological, social and global environment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.³ EAL support is considered to be a critical area for ensuring children and young people acquire these skills through education and navigate settlement into Australian society successfully.

¹ MYAN Australia (2011), *Submission To The Department Of Education, Employment And Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Review Of Funding For Schools*. Available at: <http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/policy/MYAN%20Schools%20Funding%20Review%20Final.pdf>

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

³ MYAN Australia (2018) *MYAN National Conference 2017: Young people in a multicultural world*. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tBVtMsQYlabRECXowSqMni5u3uNBN6k3/view>, p.18.

This submission provides a national perspective, drawing on MYAN’s breadth of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors across Australia. Settlement or integration trajectories and supports for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are one of MYAN’s key policy priorities – as identified by both young people and service providers.

This submission has been informed by MYAN’s expertise in this field as well as by the views of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and others working with them.

1. Profile of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia

Young people aged between 12 and 24 comprise a sizable portion of Australia’s Migration and Humanitarian Programs.⁴ In the 2016/17 financial year, 17,446 young people aged 12 to 24 years settled permanently in Australia.⁵ Young people, aged 12 to 24 years, represented 15% of all permanent arrivals to Australia in 2016/17.⁶ 41% of all youth arrivals to Australia in 2016/17 were of school age (aged between 12 and 17 years).⁷ In the 2016/17 financial year, young people continued to make up an important portion of arrivals under the Humanitarian Program (23%), and Family stream (21%) and Skill stream (16%) of the Migration Program.⁸ Young people from refugee-like backgrounds also arrived in Australia under the Migration Program, which is utilised widely for young people to unify with their family members in Australia.⁹ In addition to new arrivals, in 2016, 45% of young people in Australia were either first or second-generation migrants.¹⁰

2. Impact of settlement on young people

Young Australians from refugee and migrant backgrounds are a diverse population group who commonly display immense resilience. They come to Australia with an array of strengths and capabilities and are often highly motivated to succeed in education and embrace the opportunities available to them.¹¹ However, they also face particular challenges in accessing the support and opportunities they need to navigate the demands of building a new life in a new country.

⁴ Humanitarian Programme and Migration Programmes are managed separately by the Department of Home Affairs. While the Humanitarian Programme is made up of an offshore and onshore component; the Migration Programme is made up of two predominant streams, i.e. Family and Skill streams and a small Special Eligibility stream. For more on the Migration Programme see, Department of Home Affairs (2018) *Managing Australia’s Migrant Intake*. Available at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/discussion-papers/managing-australias-migrant-intake.pdf>, p.2; and for more on the Humanitarian Programme see, Department of Home Affairs (2018) *Discussion Paper: Australia’s Humanitarian Programme 2018-19*. Available at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/discussion-papers/2018-19-discussion-paper.pdf>, pp. 3-5.

⁵ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 9. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

⁶ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 6. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

⁷ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 10. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

⁸ MYAN (2018) *Youth Settlement Trends in Australia: A Report on the Data 2016-2017*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 6. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final\(2\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Youth%20Settlement%20Trends_2016-2017%20Final(2).pdf).

⁹ MYAN (2018) Submission to the Department of Home Affairs on ‘Managing Australia’s Migrant Intake’. Available at: [http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Australia%20Submission%20for%20Discussion%20Paper%20on%20Managing%20Australia's%20Migrant%20Intake\(1\).pdf](http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20Australia%20Submission%20for%20Discussion%20Paper%20on%20Managing%20Australia's%20Migrant%20Intake(1).pdf), p. 5.

¹⁰ 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. 6.

¹¹ See Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson (2009). *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, p. 15

Their settlement needs are distinct from adults (due to their age, developmental stage, position within the family and role they often play in supporting the settlement of family members) and they commonly face additional and more complex transitions than their Australian-born counterparts. The challenges young people face navigating the settlement journey are compounded by the developmental tasks of adolescence and include:

- Learning a new language and negotiating unfamiliar education and employment pathways (sometimes with a history of disrupted or no formal education)
- Understanding and negotiating a new culture/cultures and cultural values
- Establishing new peer networks; navigating unfamiliar and relatively complex social systems and laws, including new rights and responsibilities
- Negotiating new or changed family structures, roles, responsibilities and relationships in the context of new concepts of independence, autonomy, freedom and child and youth rights
- Negotiating (multicultural) identity
- Juggling family and community expectations;
- Managing grief and loss associated with separation from peers or family, and
- Building social capital as a young person in their new context.¹²

3. Young people in schools and English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Education is largely the responsibility of state and territory governments in Australia. Most young people and their families arrive in Australia with high aspirations and education success as a key goal. However, succeeding in mainstream education and training can be challenging. Younger people typically spend their first twelve months in Australia in an English Language School (ELS) or Intensive English Language Centre (IELC), designed to help prepare them for mainstream schools or further study, training or work. The rationale behind this model is to provide necessary English skills to be able to make a successful transition into mainstream education and employment.¹³ This is particularly significant given government's increasing emphasis on the 3Es (English language, Education and Employment) in the settlement and migration context.¹⁴

MYAN believes that the absence of a national framework to guide and direct funding allocations for English language learning potentially limits access to this important support program. Adequate and targeted support in English as a Second Language (ESL)/ Additional Language (EAL) learning in the mainstream school setting are critical to young people settling well in Australia. As put forward in the final report of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration as part of its *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes*, English language, or the ability to quickly and effectively acquire the English language is an important factor in successful settlement outcomes.¹⁵

¹² MYAN (2017), *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 12.

¹³ Beadle (2014). *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY.

¹⁴ Department of Social Services (2015) *Pathways to participation for migrants Productivity Commission Inquiry Migrant Intake into Australia*. Available at: https://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/190815/sub062-migrant-intake.pdf, Appendix C: Importance of the 3-Es, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 55.

MYAN believes that English language provision in schools with newly arrived students should operate within nationally consistent definitions, measurements and cost structures that reflect the education needs of students. While there are many examples of good practice across Australia, there is also a need to ensure that all schools with an ESL/EAL cohort allocate adequate funding to meet the learning needs of young from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Specifically, education funding allocations must ensure:

- Loading for students with limited English skills is targeted to those students who are most vulnerable
- The current loading for all students of Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) sufficiently targets English as an Additional / Second Language (EAL/ESL) students who are vulnerable and more likely to experience disadvantage.

As detailed in the report of the Auditor-General, only New South Wales, South Australia and Australian Capital Territory has been part of the National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) of 2013, and therefore are bounded by the needs-based funding model for school education, while the rest of states and territory continue to operate under the National Education Agreement (NEA) and are not required to have in place this funding model.¹⁶ While MYAN recognises this, we also believe that there needs to be nationally consistent accountability mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of English support programs delivered in schools.

There needs to be better methods of identifying and reporting on EAL learners' needs and outcomes - as stated by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration in relation to a lack of transparency in school funding - especially considering that there are over 300,000 EAL students across all systems.¹⁷ MYAN echoes the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration on this issue and agrees that schools should be required to submit annual reports showing the allocation of funding to ensure that funding is specifically being used to enhance the learning of EAL students.¹⁸ The COAG Education Council provides a forum through which strategic policy on school education can be coordinated at the national level. For better coordinated education services and outcomes for EAL students in schools and funding - as recommended by the Joint Standing Committee – the National Settlement Framework should be used as a basis for annual reporting to COAG ensuring that settlement service needs of all migrants and refugees are considered, specifically those of EAL learners in schools.¹⁹

4. Funding for supporting young people in schools for better settlement outcomes

Research shows that some young people can struggle to understand and navigate the Australian education system, resulting in challenges in meeting educational requirements, while those

¹⁶ Australian National Audit Office (2018) *Monitoring the Impact of Australian Government School Funding, ANAO Report No.18 2017–18*. Available at: https://www.anao.gov.au/sites/g/files/net4981/f/ANAO_Report_2017-2018_18a.pdf, p.17.

¹⁷ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 62.

¹⁸ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 62.

¹⁹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 63.

transitioning into mainstream schools from English language programs can feel less supported by their teachers and often experience a drop in their levels of perceived achievement at school.²⁰

Under the Australian Education Act 2013, funding is allocated to schools based on six loadings – student with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student; low socioeconomic status student; low English proficiency; location; and size. These determine the amount of funding schools receive based on the number of students at a school that qualify for that loading.²¹ Students from refugee and migrant backgrounds are most likely to fall under ‘low English proficiency’ and/or ‘low socioeconomic status student’ loadings. This broad categorisation defines the needs of refugee and migrant students’ at schools based on their English language skills and socioeconomic status, which therefore limits the supports the schools can offer to them. MYAN is concerned that this categorisation of loadings also risks overlooking the supports young people need at schools as it misses the broader context of settlement and its impact on young people.

a. Views and recommendations of young people for better education outcomes in schools

Many young people from refugee backgrounds have experienced disrupted education prior to arrival in Australia, commonly resulting in a particularly difficult transition into an education system where age is the marker for skill level. Additionally, many young people report that they have not yet acquired a sufficient level of English to enable them to engage successfully when they transition out of compulsory education.²²

Recommendation from a young person;

“Mandatory traineeship/apprenticeship in government funded infrastructure projects, legal requirement for educational providers to establish support programs to support those with special needs, adequate (i.e needs based hours instead of cap at 500 hrs) and multi-dimensional English classes that also provides support to address underlying causes/issues that prevent from English learning.”

Inflexibility within schooling systems and a lack of support to schools to identify and respond early to the needs of newly arrived young people, can result in young people leaving without completing secondary school and making it more difficult to seek further technical training or employment.²³ Early disengagement from school is a key factor impacting youth.²⁴

Views and recommendations of young people;

“As a refugee I grew up with a different system of education and being thrown into the Australian education system without understanding how it works was very difficult. I spent my

²⁰ Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson (2009). *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre.

²¹ Australian National Audit Office (2018) *Monitoring the Impact of Australian Government School Funding, ANAO Report No.18 2017–18*. Available at: https://www.anao.gov.au/sites/g/files/net4981/f/ANAO_Report_2017-2018_18a.pdf, p.26.

²² Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson (2009). *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre.

²³ Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson (2009). *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre; Beadle (2014). *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People*. Carlton: CMY.

²⁴ CMY (2014). *Fair and Accurate: Migrant and Refugee Young People, Crime and the Media*. Carlton: CMY.

first 3 years of primary education trying to grasp the new system and that made it difficult to focus on learning.”

“Making a good school orientation program base on child's vision and talent.”

“Maintaining a good mentorship school program for children’s success and achievement.”

“Training teachers to deliver curriculum to students who have diverse learning methods rather than imposing structural/bureaucratic methods on them and expect everyone to turn out the same.”

“I think they should focus on every young people long term goal rather than school process. Providing additional English lesson support for young people with migrant and refugee background to catch up with the education system.”

MYAN is aware of significant concerns about the continuity of education for young people turning 18 while in high school. There are currently few alternative options for finishing high school outside of the school system for young people over the age of 18, as current school education policy gives schools the discretion over the enrolment, re-enrolment and payment of higher fees after this age. While MYAN understands that most of schools continue to enrol and waive fees for students up to the age of 21, this is not guaranteed.²⁵

Families are also commonly not adequately supported and informed about vocational pathways (available from Year 11 covering young people aged 16+) as a good alternative to university. This may lead to intergenerational conflict between young people and their parents due to family’s unmet expectations. Education success can be significantly impacted by how well a family understands the education system and is connected into networks important to support young people to do well.²⁶ Supporting parent/carer engagement in young people’s educational journey can promote their engagement and participation and improve educational success.²⁷

Recommendation from a young person:

“Create programs that focus on defining cultural principles, increasing awareness and harmonising differences of the emerging culture between young migrants and refugees and their parents or guardians.”

Young people are commonly not supported sufficiently in understanding different education pathways available to them, such as vocational pathways. They are either not encouraged to pursue further education by their schools in vocational pathways or only provided with the option of university education, which may not necessarily meet their needs for future employment. The Centre for Multicultural Youth found that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds (and their

²⁵ MYAN (2017), *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 23.

²⁶ MYAN (2017), *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration: Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes*. Melbourne: Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), p. 24.

²⁷ This is true for all children and young people. Department of Education and Training (2016). *State of Victoria's Children Report – 2015*. Melbourne: DET.

families and communities) lack critical but unseen knowledge and understanding of the links between education and employment in the Australian context.²⁸

Recommendation from a young person;

“Support community organisations to provide assistance to children with special education needs and allow access to existing education opportunities to those children and young people.”

Young people, as well as their parents/carers may have limited social capital upon arrival to Australia which may restrict their understanding of the education system. Schools need to recognise such limitations, and support young people to develop a better understanding of the Australian education system and possible education pathways for them (especially vocational education and training, and apprenticeships and traineeships).²⁹

Recommendations:

MYAN fully agrees with the recommendation of the Auditor-General that the Department of Education and Training needs to effectively monitor the impact of school funding and should provide greater transparency and accountability to support better education outcomes,³⁰ specifically for EAL/ESL students and ensure that funding is allocated to schools based on the needs of students. This recognises that newly arrived students from refugee and migrant backgrounds require specific supports in schools for English learning as well as for navigating a new education system and settling in a new country.

MYAN makes the following additional recommendations:

1. Adopt a national framework to guide and direct funding allocations for English language learning in English as a Second Language (ESL)/ Additional Language (EAL).
2. Develop nationally consistent definitions, measurements and cost structures that reflect the education needs of students to guide English language provision in schools with newly arrived students.
3. Ensure that all schools with an ESL/EAL cohort allocate adequate funding to meet the learning needs of young from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
4. Ensure school funding is utilised to support young people in acquiring sufficient levels of English to enable them to engage successfully in mainstream education and transition out of compulsory education successfully, including: through the provision of professional development to teachers and other school staff to help them best support young people.

²⁸ Kellock, W (2016) *The Missing Link? Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, social capital and the transitions to employment*. Carlton: CMY.

²⁹ MYAN Australia (2018) *MYAN National Conference 2017: Young people in a multicultural world*. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tBVtMsQYIabREXowSqMnI5u3uNBN6k3/view>, p.18.

³⁰ Australian National Audit Office (2018) *Monitoring the Impact of Australian Government School Funding, ANAO Report No.18 2017–18*. Available at: https://www.anao.gov.au/sites/g/files/net4981f/ANAO_Report_2017-2018_18a.pdf, p.8 and p.10.

5. Implement recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration as part of its *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes* for more accountability of funding for ESL/EAL students (including through annual reports and utilising the National Settlement Framework as a basis for annual reporting to COAG for better coordinated education outcomes).³¹
6. Ensure school funding is utilised for supports in schools to identify and respond early to the needs of newly arrived young people, especially with a view to prevent early disengagement from education.
7. Provide support to children and young people (as well as their parents/carers) to understand and navigate the Australian education system, as well as the links between education and employment pathways and possible transitions to work from school.
8. Investigate the extent to which the current loading classifications under the Australian Education Act 2013 meet the needs of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds in schools – especially needs arising during navigating settlement and a new education system.

³¹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian: Report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 63.