



MIGRANT ISSUES AND NEEDS IN ROCKDALE

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INTRODUCTION

Overseas-born residents account for 40% of Rockdale's population. This report presents the findings of a three month research project conducted by Rockdale City Council to identify the issues and needs of its migrant community. The report outlines some of the key issues for migrant communities and considers a number of specific communities more closely.

The objective of the research project is to provide an accessible documentation of some of the significant issues facing non-English speaking background (NESB) migrants in Rockdale. It aims to develop a knowledge base of the Rockdale migrant community and set a foundation for future strategies. Both government and non-government service providers need to be aware of the issues and needs of migrants in order to provide more effective services to migrants and better support for new arrivals who are residing in the Rockdale area. This greater awareness is essential in planning and policy development and will help to inform funding decisions.

Most importantly, the report hopes to advocate for migrants, refugees and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities for the fulfilment of their needs.

METHODOLOGY

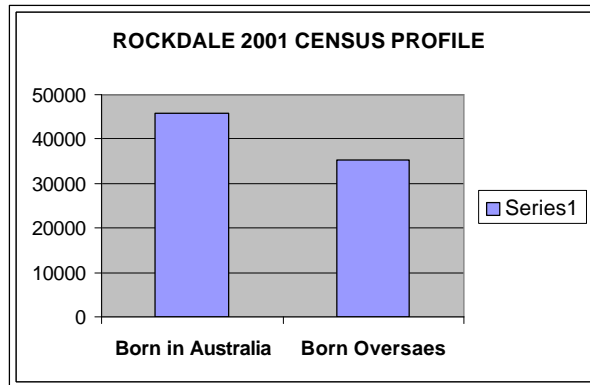
The methodology of this research project consisted of two main parts. The first was a review of existing literature and statistics. Secondly, a number of workers from the St. George Migrant Resource Centre Inc. and other welfare organisations were interviewed. A compilation of all the data and information gathered was produced in this report.

There are obvious limitations of this research. There was a particular focus on 'expressed' or 'felt' needs, only a small number of residents were consulted, and there was a lack of accessible documentation on emergent migrant and refugee communities, specifically in the Rockdale area.

The St. George MRC workers were highly qualified and informed and identified the perceived needs of their communities. However, some generalisations had to be made and some sections may seem reductionist or stereotypical. Obviously, some issues and needs, and some individual concerns may have been overlooked or compressed.

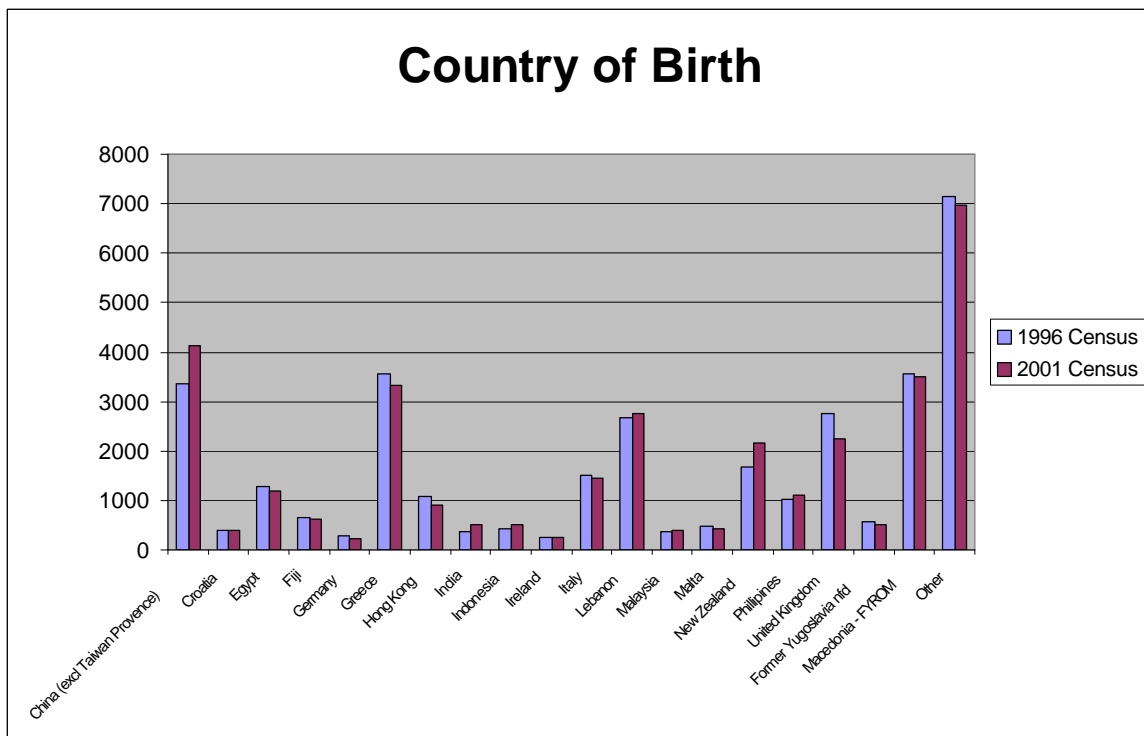
PROFILE OF OVERSEAS-BORN RESIDENTS

% Born Overseas

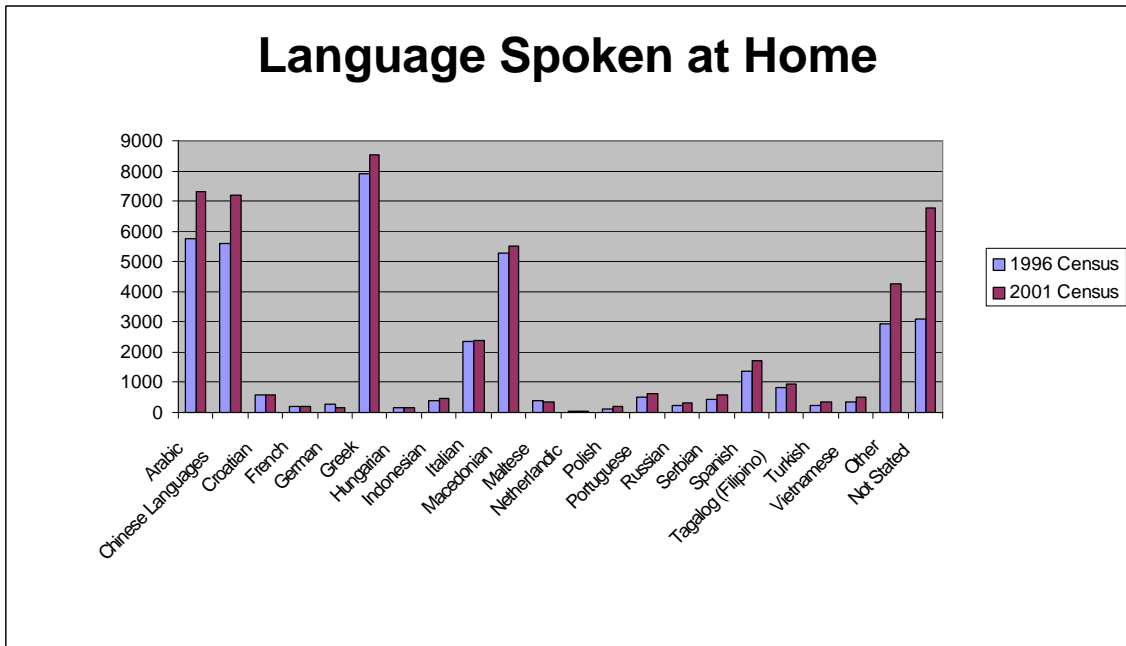


According to the 2001 Census, 40% of Rockdale's residents (35,264) were born overseas. This compares with 40% in 1996 and 38% in 1991.

Country of Birth



The above graph shows the top twenty countries of birth for residents in Rockdale in 2001. China, Macedonia and Greece were the three main countries of birth with 4,127 (4.7%), 3,499 (4%) and 3,326 (3.8 %) residents born in those countries, respectively, followed by Lebanon, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Italy, Egypt, Philippines and Hong Kong.



Languages Spoken at Home

48% of the population speak a language other than English at home. The three most common languages spoken at home other than English were Greek, 8, 533 (9.7%), Arabic, 7, 319 (8.3)%, and Chinese languages, 5, 989 (8.2%).

Recent
Arrivals
 -
Languages
Spoken

TOP 10 MIGRATION CATEGORIES		
Settlers in Rockdale Arriving May 1999 to April 2002		
Family - Spouse/Fiance		713
Skill - Independent		375
Skill - Australia / Regional Linked		153
Skill - Business		77
Family - Parent		67
Humanitarian - Special Hum Program		66
Onshore: Family - Spouse/Fiance		53
Humanitarian - Refugee		51
Family - Other		38
Family - Child		81
Others		81
Total		1, 713

Former Yugoslavia	48
Egypt	41
Pakistan	37
Thailand	36
Fiji	34
Iraq	33
Bangladesh	32
Croatia	29
United Kingdom	29
Bosnia-Herzegovina	27
HongKong (SAR of China)	27
Former USSR	24
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	23
Japan	21
Other	337
Total	1, 713

Recent Arrivals - Migration Categories

TOP 10 LANGUAGES	
Settlers Arriving in Rockdale from May 199 to April 2002	
Arabic	208
English	193
Mandarin	168
Chinese (nfd)	158
Cantonese	109
Serbian	64
Macedonian	61
Indonesian	54
Tagalog (Filipino)	41
Spanish	39

In the period between May 1999 and April 2002, a total of 1, 713 migrants arrived and settled in Rockdale. Most settlers came from China, Lebanon and the Philippines. The top ten languages for settlers arriving in this period are listed above with Arabic, English, and the Chinese languages rating the highest.

The top ten migration streams are also shown with the majority entering Australia from the Family and Skilled streams.

MIGRANTS' ISSUES AND NEEDS

Migrants come from different countries around the world, and thus come from different political, economic and social environments. Migrants enter Australia with different visas, some of the most common being the Business Skills / Skilled Stream, Preferential Family, Concessional Family, Independent and Humanitarian visas. This research project has focussed on migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds as this was the group perceived to have higher needs.

COMMON ISSUES AND NEEDS

Migrants are affected by many of the same issues that affect mainstream society. These include gambling, drug and alcohol and youth issues. However, there are a number of additional issues and

needs particular to migrant communities. Some of these affect some groups to a greater degree than others. The following are some of the more significant issues common to all communities:

- * **English Proficiency, Skills Acquisition and Language Barriers**
- * **Access to Information**
- * **Settlement Issues**
 - **Housing and Accommodation**
 - **Immigration**
 - **Income and Finance**
- * **Employment and Education**
- * **Health**
- * **Racism and Discrimination**
- * **Social, Emotional and Cultural Issues**
- * **Children and Youth**
- * **Women**
- * **Aged**

In the Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) for settlers in Australia in 1999-2000, conducted by the Department for Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), the types of help required since migration (by primary applicants) were outlined. These included assistance in the following areas: looking for work, financial matters, taxation, housing and accommodation, education and training, qualifications recognition, learning English, interpreting, translating written documents, information about immigration sponsorship, legal advice, social security services, health services and insurance, child minding, aged care, and torture and trauma counselling. Of these, enquiries concerning employment, social security services, taxation, housing and learning English were the most frequent.

Another report, 'New Settlers Have Their Say', 1999, documented the experiences of migrants in the early years of their settlement. Seven broad issues were discussed. These were labour market experiences, English language skills, income, housing, sponsorship of relatives, health status and satisfaction with life in Australia.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, SKILLS ACQUISITION AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

The lack of English proficiency is possibly the most significant challenge for migrants. The language barrier permeates throughout all other issues relating to migrants' settlement and life in Australia. In the LSIA survey, the ability to communicate in English was found to be associated with labour market success, accessing education and training opportunities, gaining information about services and finding suitable housing.

For all the ethnic communities in the Rockdale area, the English language barrier was identified as either a key issue or one that effected many community members. Humanitarian visa entrants were far more likely than other groups to have poor English.

Many community members reported that the 510 hours of free English tuition was not enough for some to adequately learn the language. Many community workers also discussed clients' concerns

that the amount of free English classes was insufficient and many people reported having to pay for further studies or attend community classes.

ACL (Australian Centre for Languages) is the local AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) service provider in the Rockdale area. English classes are run by ACL which also provides childcare services, a home tutoring service as well as evening classes. However, some residents are not entitled to ACL classes. This may be because they are not permanent residents, have been in Australia for a number of years, or have already used up their 510 free hours.

Some migrants attend English classes organised by community centres, Churches or volunteer groups (usually free or minimally charged) or the St. George and Sutherland Community College. Others attend TAFE English courses, especially if they are studying other courses there too, or the University of NSW Institute of languages, which provides special focus courses.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information dispersal to migrants from NESBs is a major concern. Accessing information about what services are available and how to find them is essential for the successful settlement of new arrivals. Obtaining information on a variety of subjects and issues is one of the most common reasons why migrants visit Migrant Resource Centres. Migrants who have been in Australia for longer periods also require access to information on a number of issues. Some examples of the information needs of migrants are information on health services, Medicare, immigration issues, the sponsorship of relatives, Centrelink, Housing, education, schools for children, employment, skills and qualifications recognition, legal aid information, transport and childcare.

Translated materials of information on all the above issues was a high need for all communities. While some services do cater for some of the major language groups, the demand for information in community languages remains high. Also, it was highlighted in a number of reports and by a number of workers, that better and more frequent use of the telephone interpreting service by service providers was needed. The simplification of books and information for migrants (by avoiding the use of jargon) may also be useful. The need for continual information sessions and support groups to share information and experiences also remains high.

Advocacy when dealing with government departments was also required by migrants. Some government departments were criticised for inadequately explaining information or informing clients of the availability of interpreters.

In 'A Report on the Information Needs of NESB Communities,' 1993, it was found that the use of ethnic media, such as community language newspapers and ethnic radio, was considered to be the most effective method of information dissemination (also suggested in 'Fine Tuning The Reception,' 1997, a study conducted by Rockdale City Council on communication issues with non-English speakers).

SETTLEMENT ISSUES

Newly arrived migrants and refugees need information and assistance to enrol in English classes, apply for Medicare, open a bank account, obtain a tax file number, find and rent accommodation, find employment, and gain information on how to enrol children in schools. The St. George Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) assists migrants in Rockdale with their settlement needs, and settlement issues were reported as being the service of greatest demand for the MRC in 2001 (St. George MRC Annual Report, 2001).

Migrants may also require emergency material relief assistance (checking their eligibility and referring them to charity organisations such as the Smith Family, Salvation Army, and Backstop), information on settlement services, information kits for new migrants, linking refugees with services (for example, STARTTS - Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors), and making referrals to relevant services that can assist them.

Migrants who are not entitled to government funded English classes (AMEP), for example, if they are not permanent residents, may also require information on other local English classes run by community organisations, local neighbourhood centres and other volunteer groups.

Migrants also have to learn to adjust to new ways of living, cultural differences, dealing with bureaucratic organisations and the use of technology, for example.

HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

Locating and securing affordable and suitable housing is one of the major tasks undertaken by migrants in their early settlement years. LSIA data indicated that approximately nine out of ten migrants lived in shared accommodation with either relatives or friends when they first arrived in Australia. Living in public housing was found to be fairly uncommon in the LSIA.

There is a general lack of public housing, community housing and affordable housing in the St. George area. High rent prices and the long waiting lists for public housing and community housing make it difficult for migrants to find affordable accommodation, especially for those experiencing financial hardship. Recently arrived migrants also encounter difficulties obtaining reference letters from employers for real estate agents especially if they do not have previous renting history. Although housing in Rockdale is relatively unaffordable for some migrants, many would prefer to stay in the area because they have already established local support networks.

Migrants have often required information sessions to obtain information about the different housing options that are available to them, the Department of Housing's priority housing criteria, applying for public housing, tenancy issues, getting repairs done, rehousing, and payment of rental bonds. The St. George MRC has held numerous information sessions on this issue due to the high demand.

Newly arrived migrants may also require assistance with support letters, reference letters, referrals to refuges and other emergency accommodation services.

IMMIGRATION

Changes in immigration law often need to be explained to migrants, who may also require other immigration information and advice, or referral to migration agents. There are also many requests for information on and assistance with the sponsorship of relatives and spouses.

The misconduct of migration agents regarding the overcharging and exploitation of clients was identified as an issue by a number of workers. The relatively high fees of migration agents were said to aggravate financial hardship for some migrants.

INCOME AND FINANCE

Issues of income security, finance management, Centrelink issues and financial hardship are common issues for many migrants in the Rockdale area.

Income levels are a sign of economic and social well being and will thus have an impact on other aspects of migrants' lives. Many recently arrived migrants find themselves under financial hardship because of the two-year waiting period in which they cannot receive unemployment and other benefits. Some find that the resources they brought with them are used up more quickly than expected.

Migrants often require assistance from settlement officers in approaching Centrelink, and charitable organisations are often enlisted for help in providing material assistance (food, clothing) to migrants experiencing extreme financial difficulties. Migrants may also require referral to financial management services.

Because a social security system did not exist in many of the countries migrants have come from, they are often unaware of how the social security system works. Some are reluctant to access Centrelink services because of the associated stigma (consider it as taking charity). Others may require interpreters and/or an advocate or worker to be present with them when they approach the service.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Employment plays a major role in shaping the experience and life satisfaction of migrants. Migrants face many of the same issues as other Australians in terms of seeking suitable employment. The surplus of people seeking jobs over available jobs makes it difficult for many Australians to obtain adequate employment. However, migrants face additional challenges. These challenges have been documented by government departments including DIMIA (Department of Multicultural, Ethnic and Indigenous Affairs).

In the 'New Settlers Have Their Say' report, 1999, the differences in labour market success were found to relate to migrants' English language speaking skills and post secondary qualifications. With greater speaking skills, the likelihood for employment increases. Conversely, the poorer the English skills, the higher the likelihood of migrants being overqualified for their jobs (and not utilising their highest skills and qualifications).

In terms of the types of employment held by migrants, a polarisation of job occupations was observed. A third of all migrants were in skilled jobs, a quarter held semi-skilled jobs and just over 40% of migrants surveyed were in underskilled jobs. That is, migrants were more likely than average to hold either skilled or unskilled jobs, and less likely than average to hold jobs that were semi-skilled. This was to a large extent dependent on the type of visa category they entered Australia with (for example, the Business Skills visa or Humanitarian visa).

The Specialist Migrant Placement Officer (SMPO) at the St. George MRC also identified a number of issues for migrants. In particular, newly arrived migrants require assistance in the following areas: they may require help in gaining assessment and conversion of their overseas qualifications to Australian standards (such as through using the Overseas Skills Advisory Service and/or NOOSR , the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, and the Vocational Training Board). They may require assistance to increase their skills and qualifications, obtain information on available options, what educational opportunities exist, information about TAFE courses, English courses and bridging courses as well as other services that are available to them such as NSW AMES (Adult Migrant English Service) language and literacy services and ACL.

Migrants often need help with jobsearch and interview skills, writing resumes and job application letters, the development of training and employment plans, arrangement and supervision of local work experience placements, counselling and support, and referral and advice on educational and training issues.

The main problems migrants face in attaining employment are English proficiency, language difficulties and the need for better communication skills. Even if migrants do speak English, their accent or lack of fluency hamper their employment opportunities. Employers also indicate preferences for people with local work experience (something many migrants often do not have). Cultural differences were said to be significant also. Even with migrants coming from English-speaking countries, there may be different cultural and professional practices.

Discrimination was not identified as a major issue by the SMPO worker, however, some community workers reported having had clients who have encountered racism and discrimination by employers.

Confidence and status issues are also involved. Migrants confidence levels may decrease as a result of coming to a country where they may not be able to find work or where they may have to work in lower paid and lower status positions.

The needs of migrants in regards to employment and education were identified in the St. George MRC Annual Report, 2001 as:

- * assistance in preparing job applications and preparing for job interviews,
- * assistance in gaining (relevant) work experience.
- * a greater awareness of the culture of the Australian workplace, and
- * better communication skills for casual and formal workplace interaction

The NSW Working Women's Centre also identified migrant women's need for help with issues such as entitlements, harassment, contracts, and maternity leave.

Greater education for businesses and employers on the benefits of employing skilled migrants (for example, migrants tend to have great motivation to work hard and are bilingual) is also needed in order to achieve a greater willingness to accept migrant employees.

The St. George MRC Annual Report, 2001, also listed some further strategies for improving employment opportunities for migrants. These included more government initiatives to assist migrants, greater links with local businesses to create work opportunities for migrants, raising awareness of issues and barriers faced by NESB migrants and refugees, lobbying for changes in Government policy which impose restrictions on accessing training and education, running training and interview workshops, and the referral of youth to relevant employment assistance services (such as Reconnect Youth Services in Rockdale).

HEALTH

In the LSIA it was found that those people with poor English language skills were less likely to consider their health as 'good', and Humanitarian visa entrants were more likely to have suffered from a minor mental health problem.

A report produced in 2002 by the St. George Hospital and Community Health Service documented some issues surrounding health for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. These issues included:

- * access issues,
- * dissatisfaction with medical explanations and care,
- * dissatisfaction with the type and method of information provision,
- * concern about inappropriate and insensitive communication,
- * lack of knowledge of how to access and use services,
- * need for interpreters,
- * waiting times and waiting lists,
- * transport and parking, and
- * a sense of lack of respect for patients and fear of discrimination

The above concerns were also identified by a number of workers as affecting migrants' use of health services.

The report also referenced a number of improvements that need to be made including:

- * improve the effectiveness and amount of information dispersal to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities,
- * greater utilisation of interpreters,
- * training for medical staff on effective communication with clients from CALD backgrounds, and
- * address cultural issues such as mixed wards, food issues and privacy

There were also a number of quality assurance issues effecting all clients (including those not from CALD communities) that needed to be addressed.

A few MRC workers also commented on the fact that many migrants only seek medical attention when their condition has reached a critical or severe stage. They often do not actively seek medical prevention, or visit their family doctor regularly. This is due to a number of reasons including the language barrier, fear of authority, feeling intimidated by medical staff and a lack of understanding of the health system. Lack of education about general health care and the health care system was also conveyed as a concern.

Another problem migrants encounter are Health practitioners not adequately explaining treatments and conditions and making assumptions about the level of English understood by immigrants.

Mental health issues (such as depression, anxiety, adjustment disorder) also affect migrant communities.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Racism and discrimination was reported to be an issue to varying degrees for different communities. All communities identified racism as an issue but not all considered it a major issue. More established communities, such as the Greek, Macedonian and Italian communities did report racist incidents as still occurring but were not affected by it to the extent of the South Pacific Islander, Eritrean and Arabic-speaking communities.

In consultations with NESB youth by The Department of Women and the St. George Youth Workers Network, youth reported suffering from racism, and raised racism as one of the most significant issues affecting them (Sydney Morning Herald, August 2001).

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND CULTURAL ISSUES

Like other Australians, migrants need a level of emotional stability in order to maintain good mental health. Acceptance by the wider community is perceived to be very important by many migrants. At the same time, the maintenance of their own culture was considered equally important as it provides a sense of belonging and identity.

There are many differences between the Australian society, culture and lifestyle and the cultures of some migrants. Many migrants have cultures that are more community-based, where the extended family plays a major role in an individual's life, a more communal way of living exists, and there are stronger familial networks.

It is often the experience that migrants have come from a feeling of belonging, community connectedness, and having strong family and social networks, to a country where they have (at least initially) no social supports, have often left part or all of their family behind, and are now expected to be self sufficient and adapt quickly to the Australian lifestyle.

Some become isolated, are unable to cope with the transition, and feel that there is a strong clash in cultures. Because of these cultural differences, some may feel an inability to relate with others except with those from their own communities. Others may experience a loss of cultural identity where there is less association with one culture in favour of the new 'Australian' culture. A dislocation in identity and culture (especially in 2nd, 3rd and future generations) may also lead to a diminished influence of culture.

Conflict between 'traditional' and 'Australian' ideologies, values and beliefs (especially within the family unit) was seen to contribute to dislocation and conflict between parents and children, as well as older and younger generations of migrants.

A common example of this (seen as a problem for many communities including the South Pacific Islander and Arabic-speaking/background communities) is parenting practices and expectations. In more 'traditional' practices, children often have more restrictions placed on them in terms of their freedom and independence. They may also have extra expectations of them, such as caring for other siblings and responsibilities related to their extended family.

The expectations of children by their parents may also be in conflict with the edicts of 'Australian' culture which allows for more freedom and independence for children and young people. This disparity may cause contention and conflict between parents and children, and youth and older generations (that is, inter generational conflict).

Isolation, feelings of loneliness, and depression were also identified as considerable issues for some migrants, especially those in their early years of arrival. Social support is a significant need for all members of society, not excluding migrants.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a need for more childcare services in the Rockdale area and in particular, childcare services that cater for NESB children. Many residents and workers have identified a lack of specialised and affordable childcare services.

A number of workers commented on the major role grandparents play in childcare. Grandparents are often primary caregivers and have a great contribution in childrens' upbringing and emotional and cultural make-up. Grandparents should thus be identified as key stakeholders for any information strategies for children and youth.

At a Youth Week social action training workshop, 30 youth identified three issues of concern. These were the environment, discrimination and the need for more youth facilities. Youth also communicated that they wanted somewhere to skate, hang out and have social gatherings and a better resourced youth centre (Sydney Morning Herald, 2001).

Students from all local schools identified racism as an issue and combating racism as a need (August 2001). Many also called for an increased awareness of youth issues. A St. George Youth Workers Network study with young women at local high schools found youth identifying the need to

overcome racism and cultural barriers, and to have greater awareness of these issues (St. George Leader, 28th August 2001).

A number of studies have reported a lack of job satisfaction for a significant number of NESB youth (for example, Spanish and Macedonian youth, in the Macedonian Youth Report, 1998) and generally males tended to experience greater pressure to continue further studies than females.

Children of migrants (especially first generation) can often feel caught between two cultures and two sets of values which may confuse their sense of being and identity. They often perceive a pressure to make a choice between the two cultures. This can also result in conflict between parents and children.

Identity was an issue for most migrant youth. Some said that they identified themselves as Australian but were not accepted as such by others (mainly Anglo-Australians). Others reported finding it difficult to place themselves, as they were not accepted as entirely Australian or completely Chinese, Lebanese or Islanders, for example, as they had lived most, if not all, their lives in Australia. Many did not have very good native language skills which also contributed to the tension in identity.

Youth suggested that more Multicultural Days and cultural activities in schools would be useful in combating some of the problems youth faced in regards to racism, culture and identity.

WOMEN

Migrant women face a number of issues particular to them. Migrant women find it even harder to find employment and are especially vulnerable to exploitation by employers. They also experience multiple forms of discrimination (racism and sexism, for example).

Women's health was identified as an issue as was the need for more information, and the English language barrier.

Some migrant women have come to Australia on a Spouse visa. In the case of relationship breakdown, there are obvious needs for financial and social support.

Other issues migrant women share with other women include issues around domestic violence, safety (Sydney Morning Herald, August 2001), childcare responsibilities and the cost and quality of public transport which was said to increase the isolation of women with children and the elderly.

AGED

Rockdale's migrant aged population is significantly large. The language barrier is a major issue for elderly migrants. Most speak little or no English. They cannot read or understand letters, and other relevant information to them. Often the elderly require a bilingual worker to accompany them to the doctor, hospital or bank or assist them to arrange interpreting and translating services.

Isolation is another significant issue. As identified by three aged care workers, including the Community and Aged Care Packages (CACP) co-ordinator, in the Rockdale area, there is a high need for more social and culturally appropriate activities and outings for the elderly from all the language groups (for example, picnics, visits to local clubs and shopping centres).

There are also some cultural factors that require consideration when dealing with elderly migrants. In some cultures, such as the Pacific Islander and Arabic cultures, it is often not acceptable to place the elderly in nursing homes as caring for the elderly is considered to be a family responsibility. Also some groups (such as the Chinese) are often less expressive and placid, while the Greeks, Macedonians and Italians for example, tend to be more expressive and vocal.

There is also a need for the wider community to have greater understanding and sensitivity when dealing with migrants. Unlike the majority of Anglo-Australian elderly, elderly migrants do not understand how to use the system, are not aware of the services, their rights, cannot read or write, and often need to have letters, pamphlets, contracts and other documentation explained or translated.

A number of aged care workers have identified access to mainstream services as a significant problem. An example of this is the Rockdale Meals Service which is not easily accepted by some clients (for a number of reasons including stigma). However, this service has been able to provide meals services to a large number of clients from diverse backgrounds and initiatives to make the service more accessible to NESB migrants have been made.

Also, language specific Home Care and other HACC services have been introduced as a result of this problem. The Ethnic Access Program also aims to make HACC funded services more accessible, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and sensitive to Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds.

There is a high need for the provision of Aged Care services that are linguistically and culturally specific. In the St. George area, care packages for elderly living at home are currently being provided in the Italian, Greek, Chinese, Arabic, Macedonian/Former Yugoslavian and Spanish languages. However, there is a need for more language specific packages to be provided and for the service to be extended to include the Maltese and Russian languages. Currently there are Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, and Macedonian bilingual aged workers but other groups, such as the German, Maltese, and Balkan groups, are yet to be catered for. In response to these growing needs, funding has recently been granted to provide Bosnian, Croatian, Russian, Spanish and German packages.

There are also few culturally and linguistically specific nursing home facilities. This makes it difficult for elderly and frail migrants to accept a nursing home place.

SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES

The following communities identified in Rockdale have been examined more closely and their specific issues and concerns have been explored. These communities are the Chinese, Arabic, South Pacific Islander, Greek, Macedonian, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian and the Refugee communities including the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities.

While many migrants share common experiences, it is important to note that these are general categorisations and not homogenous groups.

“Putting us all together as in a melting pot because we (come from) migrant backgrounds doesn’t mean that we’re all the same” (19 yr. old Macedonian female, Macedonian Young People Report, 1998)

CHINESE

There were 7, 201 Chinese speakers living in Rockdale in 2001 (ABS Census Statistics, 2001). Most recently arrived Chinese migrants enter Australia under the Family Reunion stream (and are primarily from mainland China).

The main service provided to the Chinese community at the Migrant Resource Centre in the last year was settlement services. The most frequent inquiries and common problems were related to income support, immigration issues, housing and accommodation, learning English and language problems, education and further study, training and employment, and enrolling children in schools. A ‘Settlement Information and Services for Chinese New Migrants in St. George Area’ booklet has been produced and distributed in both the Chinese and English languages.

In the ‘Report on the Settlement needs of Chinese New Migrants in the Southern Region of Sydney’, 1999, conducted by ACCA (Australian Chinese Community Association), it was found that the most significant difficulty faced was the language problem. 81% of survey respondents identified this problem, followed by 35.7% listing employment, 22% listed transportation, 19.2 % (each) listed finance and the recognition of overseas qualifications, and 12.9 % listed difficulty with children’s education.

The majority of respondents (78%) indicated that they had difficulty accessing information on services, 39.6% were unaware of where to get information and 38.4% had difficulties because information was not translated into Chinese. The top four services requested by respondents were English classes (23.5%), information seminars (22.6%), employment services (22.6%) and social/recreational activities (20.9%).

Service providers and community leaders identified a need for more language and culturally specific community services, bilingual counselling and family support services (addressing domestic violence, family breakdown, stress and relationship issues), bilingual English classes for women and the elderly, services for the unemployed, social activities for youth, women and the elderly, updated and translated information on mainstream services, and general educational programs for migrants. Better use of Chinese media was also suggested.

The Chinese settlement worker identified the English language barrier as a key problem especially for older people, along with the issues of isolation and the two-year waiting period, which was said to create much hardship. Employment was seen as another major issue. Migrants who had little employable professional skills and lacked sufficient English proficiency obviously found it difficult to

gain employment. Community safety was also identified as an issue and Chinese residents reported robbery, break-ins, and bag snatchings to be a problem.

Racism and discrimination was cited as an issue but it was noted that migrants expected a certain level of racism. The government quota on sponsorship, and the consequently long waiting times for Chinese families who wanted to sponsor elderly parents, was also an issue.

Housing was a significant problem especially for the elderly who may have relied on their children or relatives to sustain them and provide accommodation for the two-year waiting period. After this time, they may be expected to find somewhere else to live by their children or relatives (for example, in the case of overcrowding or relationship breakdown). Because social support networks have been established in the area, the elderly will seek accommodation in the area. However, with high rental prices, insufficient income, and no rent history, many find this extremely difficult. Public housing is also not easily accessible so many seek Community Housing or shared Housing options. Overcrowding is not uncommon and many live in overcrowded premises because they cannot afford to live anywhere else.

There are also a number of parenting issues in the Chinese community. The clash of cultures and values between the Chinese and Australian culture may result in conflict. Some Chinese parents, for example, tend to place a strong emphasis on education and becoming a professional, and have very high expectations of their children. Parents can also experience problems if they lack English skills and cannot communicate well with schools or read and understand relevant documents or information that may affect their children (for example, school newsletters).

The issue of youth was identified as the key area where more resources and attention is needed by the Chinese settlement worker at the St. George MRC. More social and recreational activities and more youth services were highlighted as major needs, especially because of the growing number of youth and young families in the area.

The need for culturally appropriate services and activities for young people was justified because of the language needs of some youth and other cultural issues and differences (such as Chinese youths' preference for certain types of sports, for example, badminton over rugby).

Other needs that were identified were more settlement services, family counselling, family support services, groups for older people, women and mothers, and day care and community care packages for the elderly.

ARABIC

The Arabic community is a large and diverse community. There were 7,319 Arabic speakers in Rockdale in 2001 (ABS Census Statistics, 2001). Migrants from this community come from a number of countries including Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, and the two main religions are Islam and Christianity. A large proportion are Shiite Muslims and there is a large Arabic-speaking Coptic community consisting of migrants mainly from Egypt and Sudan.

The St. George MRC assisted Arabic-speaking migrants with housing and accommodation, income support, immigration matters, education and training, English classes, childcare and employment, with the highest number of enquiries in relation to housing issues (MRC Annual Report 2001).

In the 'Arabic Women Report', 2002, produced by the St. George Lebanese Joint Committee, a number of issues and needs were identified for Arabic-speaking women. These were health, refugee women, employment, further education, English classes, safety, discrimination, stress, depression and self-esteem, isolation, family and children, housing, income and childcare.

The 'Youth Report,' 2001, also produced by the St. George Lebanese Joint Committee, outlined issues facing youth. These were education, employment, language, discrimination, drugs and alcohol, and family/youth conflict.

One of the primary issues for this community is unemployment. The lack of employment opportunities was considered a major concern and discrimination was cited as a significant contributor to this, especially for women. Some skills and qualifications (from certain countries) are not recognised, and many were reported to have to do extra study to practice in their field. The need for work and income was often more immediate, and thus many settled for lower skilled and lower paid jobs rather than taking up further study. Financial survival was identified as an issue for a large number of Arabic speaking migrants and many required referral to financial advisory services to assist them with their monetary problems.

Discrimination was cited as a major issue for the Arabic-speaking community. Many forms of racism and discrimination were reported (including verbal abuse, physical abuse, and obscene phone calls). It was also mentioned by a community development worker that many people still felt they were discriminated against by employers because they had 'ethnic' names. This issue was said to have a great impact on peoples' lives. Many felt they were made to feel uncomfortable, inferior, 'different', or like perpetrators and criminals. Negative stereotypes led to negative and sometimes aggressive treatment by others. Many found this very distressing and used this to explain reactionary and antisocial behaviour by some members of the community.

The St. George Hospital and Community Health Service, "*Health is Everything*" Report, 2002, reported that people from Arabic Speaking Backgrounds were reluctant to access hospitals and other services for fear of discrimination and humiliation (being laughed at and spoken to in a derogatory manner, for example).

Identity issues were also said to be significant by three community workers. Confusion concerning identity is an issue for many, especially youth, who consider themselves as both Australian and Arab. Young people also reported experiencing peer pressure, pressure from the wider community, and their own community, as to who they should be and how they should behave. It was conveyed that

most members of the community had a desire to be accepted and included as part of the broader community.

The needs for social groups and recreational activities are being addressed. There are a number of women's groups, sporting and arts and craft activities, vocational and educational groups and sessions, social groups, and family picnics and gatherings are being organised and attended.

Other needs include counselling for mothers, family counselling services (culturally specific and appropriate), a help and services Hotline, appropriate and affordable sporting facilities, workshops for parents and children and more preventative and educational initiatives (for issues such as drugs, which seems to be emerging as a problem) where ethnic communities are included in the planning and implementation of strategies.

Combating discrimination and racism through better understanding of cultural and individual differences was proposed, as was avoiding generalisations, and acknowledging people as individuals, as well as members of a certain ethnic community or culture.

Parent-child conflict was another issue that affects the Arabic-speaking community. The clash of cultures, the generation gap and parents' greater emphasis on morals, behaviour, religion, and higher education was believed to lead to considerable dissonance for some families.

SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Migrants from the South Pacific Islands include people from Maori, Tongan, Fijian and Samoan backgrounds. While the Maori group is the largest, followed by Cook Islanders, Fijians, Tongans and Samoans, there are also other minority groups. Approximately twenty five (25) Islander and Maori communities were identified in the St. George area. Accurate numbers of migrants from the South Pacific Islanders are difficult to ascertain and are often underrepresented as many migrants from this region enter Australia via New Zealand and are thus classified as coming from New Zealand with no further reference into their ethnic backgrounds. However, 1,135 people in Rockdale reported having Maori ancestry in the 2001 Census.

In a recent report, produced by the St. George MRC, a 'Profile of the Pacific Island and New Zealand Maori population in the St. George region,' a number of issues which affect the Pacific Islander population were identified and explained. The community worker for South Pacific Islanders also identified these issues which were also documented in the St. George Migrant Resource Centre's Annual Report, 2001.

The issues of significance for this community include:

- * racism and discrimination,
- * a lack of culturally specific and appropriate services,
- * a lack of information about services and in target languages,
- * high level of juvenile justice issues,
- * low school retention rates, high levels of suspension and expulsions at school,
- * lack of appropriate parenting strategies,

- * drug, alcohol and gambling problems, especially amongst men (including drinking Kava),
- * tenancy issues (many rent as they are often on low incomes), and
- * cultural conflict, identity, and adapting to the Australian lifestyle, society and culture

The issue of racism, discrimination, ‘generalisations’ and stereotyping was conveyed as possibly the most significant issue.

The cultural diversity of migrant entrants from New Zealand is not recognised. Also, the cultural diversity of the various Pacific Islander groups is not recognised despite significant differences in language, heritage, belief systems, and country of origin. New Zealand Maori’s are not categorised as Polynesian and there is also a misconception that all Pacific Islanders come to Australia via New Zealand.

Some believe the term ‘Pacific Islander’ is problematic as it holds negative connotations, is misused and used in a derogatory sense by the media. It is perceived that the public perception of the term is negative and thus has a negative effect.

One of the differences between Australian and some Pacific Islander cultures is that Australian society tends to place more emphasis on individuality and self sufficiency whereas the Maori culture, for example, is more community and family focussed. The loss of cultural influences and loss of cultural identity was a major issue for many Pacific Islander communities. Some may find themselves having financial problems due to commitments to send money back home to families, having large families, and paying rent.

The Church plays a large and significant role in the life of South Pacific Islanders. It provides a forum for social cohesion, social activities, religious instruction, and serves as a point of gathering and community base which caters for the social and spiritual life of its members.

English proficiency was identified to be a problem for a significant portion of South Pacific Islanders. This was combined with a misconception and expectation that that all people from the South Pacific Islands or New Zealand speak English.

Some of the information needs of this community include information about nursing homes, HACC services, help and respite for carers, and Housing options.

A housing issue for some South Pacific Islander families is the difficulties faced in renting large homes (for large families, often with members of the extended family living with them).

Some Pacific Islander groups were identified as some of the groups that tended to seek medical attention only when their condition reached a critical or severe stage.

There are a number of issues in relation to Youth in the Pacific Islander communities. These include: problems with discipline, identity, clash of ideologies, girls being relatively restricted, and peer pressure.

Young people are perceived to be targeted by police and are often approached and searched (often because they are socialising in groups, but not necessarily involved in criminal activity). This leads to young people becoming defensive and having a negative attitude towards police and authorities. A number of issues were discussed in a recent forum for South Pacific Islander and Maori youth held by the MRC's Pacific Islander community development worker. South Pacific Islander students and young people outlined the following issues:

- * a lack of respect and understanding of culture by teachers,
- * Church, family and cultural activities (such as hosting visitors, child minding and other family responsibilities) are often prioritised before school and education,
- * lack of encouragement to continue further education and the financial costs of education,
- * truancy, peer pressure, bullying, and lack of motivation
- * discrimination and stereotyping (in the general community and by police, teachers and in schools), and
- * parenting techniques and the differences in the values and beliefs held by parents and children

Of the needs expressed, a need for better understanding and tolerance was one of the most important. This was needed between ethnic groups and AngloAustralians and within ethnic communities themselves. Initiatives around tolerance, understanding and harmony, especially those targeting youth (who were considered to have a greater capacity for tolerance than older generations), were identified as being useful in achieving greater life satisfaction for migrants.

The need to run parenting groups and parenting skills workshops was identified by the MRC worker and in the report. These are intended to help parents share experiences, learn from each other and learn better parenting and disciplinary skills. Information regarding Australian laws in regards to child abuse and unacceptable disciplinary techniques could also be discussed.

A number of other suggestions for improvement were made by youth and the MRC worker. These included greater cultural sensitivity by teaching staff, better relationships between students and teachers, greater flexibility in school subjects offered, tutorial programs for Islanders, drugs and alcohol education in schools, a financial support system for families with financial problems, improved relationships (and positive interaction) between police and other authorities and youth, and education for young people on the law and the role of police.

GREEK

The Greek, Macedonian and Italian communities are the more established communities in the area and thus the issues and needs of these communities differ from those which are less established. There were 8, 533 residents who spoke Greek in Rockdale in 2001 (ABS Census Statistics, 2001).

The Greek Orthodox Welfare Centre employs a number of sessional workers to address the issues and needs of migrants. There is currently no Greek community worker at the St. George MRC. However, the MRC's premises and facilities are used by Greek social groups. One Greek community worker commented that currently, many of the problems facing the Greek community are similar to the problems facing Anglo-Australians and the mainstream community (for example issues such as drugs and alcohol, family problems, and mental and general health issues).

The information needs of this community are still high and information sessions are held on topics such as health and well being, legal issues, and employment. There is also a significant demand for counselling services.

There are a number of groups running for Greek migrants, including women's groups, social groups and Church groups. GROW groups (self-help groups that are minimally facilitated by workers) also continue to be run on a regular basis.

Language was identified as an issue but mainly for the older population with younger people speaking English quite fluently. Racism was not regarded as a major problem but still affects many migrants' lives.

The practice and maintenance of culture was stated to be of extreme importance for the Greek community and, like other communities, problems were sometimes encountered due to the cultural differences between the Greek and Australian cultures. The strong emphasis on families in the Greek community was reported to have remained.

MACEDONIAN

5, 498 residents of Rockdale speak Macedonian (ABS Census Statistics, 2001). The majority of issues for the Macedonian community were related to obtaining settlement information, immigration and citizenship matters, youth issues, aged care issues, women's issues, domestic violence matters, general and mental health matters and access to services for learning English (St. George MRC Annual Report, 2001). The Macedonian Australian Welfare Association of Sydney Inc. has five workers based at the St. George MRC catering for the needs of this community.

Other issues identified by the Macedonian community worker include drugs and alcohol, gambling, Housing, education and training, the elderly, information and referral, assistance with completing forms, inter generational conflict, the difficulties of being bicultural, social isolation, and racism and discrimination (which is not considered to be a major concern but still occurs).

Language was more of an issue for older people, with most younger people speaking fluent English. Macedonian language maintenance for younger people was also of concern to the Macedonian community. The traditional family life is still important for Macedonians, as is the role of the Church as a social and cultural centre.

There is a need for more youth and family services, information about services, activities for youth, more social and sporting activities, more community development initiatives and greater use of community radios and newspapers.

In a report titled 'Macedonian Young People. A Report on Their Needs and On Issues That Affect Them', produced in 1998 by the Macedonian Australian Welfare Association of Sydney Inc., a number of issues affecting Macedonian youth were explored. These included:

- * a lack of culturally appropriate and sensitive services for Macedonian youth - mainstream services were considered inappropriate,
- * racism and discrimination - approximately 20% of respondents to a survey experienced racism, often recurrent, in schools and from teachers, or were targeted by police,
- * family problems and inter generational conflict, including a lack of communication and understanding of the internal and external pressures on young people, a perceived 'lack of control' of children (disciplinary issues), peer pressure from the dominant culture, and expectations of children (how they should take advantage of the educational and other opportunities that parents did not have, and how children should maintain and practice their culture and language),
- * smoking, drug use and drinking alcohol (32% of respondents indicated drug taking/smoking and 23% reported alcohol consumption as issues which affected them),
- * education, employment (lack of employment opportunities) and training,
- * lack of understanding of the Macedonian culture and history by many education staff (thought to interfere with the educational / academic capacity of youth)
- * access to information (for example, on health, recreational activities) and services
- * confusion and depression,
- * language difficulties (English and Macedonian), and
- * relationship and sexual problems

Consequently, a number of needs were outlined by the worker and in the youth report. These included the need to fund culturally appropriate workers to address youth issues, information sessions for young people and parents, the provision of outreach services to isolated young people and improved networking between relevant service providers and agencies.

ITALIAN

The Italian community is one of the more established communities. 2, 392 residents in Rockdale spoke Italian (ABS Census Statistics, 2001). There are currently no Italian settlement or community workers based at the MRC. However, there are Italian bilingual aged care workers, and the Italian welfare organisation Co AS IT has a number of workers catering for this community including a youth worker, two psychologists, a drugs and alcohol worker, and three social workers.

Access to services was identified as one of the key issues for Italian migrants. There is a lack of awareness of available services and where migrants can go for help. Transportation is also an issue as well as gaining access to information (especially for elderly migrants). The telephone interpreting service (TIS) was reported as not being very widely used. Conversely, bilingual interpreters and workers were more commonly used. The community was also said to be generally unaware of multilingual services.

Most Italian migrants understand English relatively well, and have a good level of functional English. However, many did want to find out more about bilingual workers and services for Italian speakers. Racism and discrimination was not identified as a particularly significant issue.

Workers have also assisted migrants with moving into nursing homes, help with pension payments, dealing with the Department of Housing, referrals to law services such as legal aid, citizenship

enquiries, isolation (carers and the elderly), organising carer respite and dealing with mental health issues.

One of the major needs was an extension of already existing services. There is a need for more aged and home and community care services, day care and community aged care packages (the waiting lists for aged care packages are extremely long and some waiting lists have had to close), more social activities and outings, and the continuous facilitation of support groups.

SPANISH

The Spanish community is quite diverse and Spanish-speaking people living in Rockdale come from a number of countries including Chile, Uruguay and Colombia. There were 1, 719 Spanish speakers in Rockdale in 2001 (ABS Census Statistics, 2001).

In a Snapshot Report produced by the NSW Spanish and Latin American Association for Social Assistance Inc. (SLASA), in 2001, post 1990 settlement issues were surveyed. 43% of survey respondents reported that language difficulties were a problem, 19% listed employment and training as a problem, 16% said access to information, 11% stated Housing and 8% reported health issues to be a problem. Other issues that were identified included financial problems, low levels of English, the recognition of qualifications and an overall general lack of access to information about services and rights in the workplace and elsewhere.

Furthermore, issues such as social isolation (especially recent arrivals), family breakdown due to having to work extended hours, exploitation in the labour market (mainly due to low English levels), desperate need for employment, extreme financial hardship, and occupational health and safety issues (working long hours without rest and being underpaid) were all identified as significant issues for the Spanish community. Many SLASA clients reported that when they had used health services including specialists, doctors and hospitals, they did not sufficiently understand the information they were receiving about their health and treatment.

The vulnerability and potential of abuse of migrants who have entered Australia with the Spouse or Independent Visas was also identified as a significant issue. Spouses who have experienced abuse remain financially dependent on their Spouse and are not entitled to support services. Parents waiting to have their Aged Parent Visa granted are vulnerable to abuse or extreme work and pressure placed on them by their sponsoring children.

A number of needs and service gaps were also identified in the 2001 Snapshot report. These included the need for assistance in relation to domestic violence cases (information about rights and where to go for help and better access to services in the NSW police services), and information (in Spanish) and assistance for parents about their rights and the services that may assist them. In broader terms, it was suggested that the causes of the poverty situation of some migrants be researched, and the issue of the lack of adequate and affordable Housing options be explored.

The need for continued casework, dissemination of the New Arrival Leaflet, the resourcing of and initiating support groups and advertising services through various media was also expressed. The need to establish a Nursing Home for Spanish speakers and greater respite care for the aged with

Spanish speaking personnel was also identified in SLASA's 1999 Annual Report, along with the need for continued information sessions on a variety of topics.

The Spanish community has a large aged population. Most have poor English proficiency (which leads to an exasperation of problems) and have poor access to resources and services available to the aged. Older Spanish-speakers also may require assistance with understanding and completing government forms, wills, and making funeral arrangements. The SLASA report also documented a need for greater availability of respite care at home with Spanish speaking personnel, information sessions for the aged, and greater casework management.

The two-year waiting period, the lack of recreational activities for young people, drug problems, access to mainstream services, a lack of services for Spanish speaking people, and divorce related issues were also identified.

The difficulties facing Spanish humanitarian entrants in regards to finding employment and accommodation, the fact that some became homeless and had to rely on charitable organisations for survival, and the torture and trauma issues for refugees (from the late 70s) were also discussed.

EMERGING COMMUNITIES

INDONESIAN

There were 510 migrants born in Indonesia living in Rockdale in 2001 (ABS Census Statistics, 2001). The Indonesian community worker at the St. George MRC provides assistance with immigration issues, completing forms, citizenship issues, housing issues, education, employment and training, referrals, TAFE courses information, qualifications recognition, and English classes. It also organises information sessions for women (on topics such as menopause, breast screening and osteoporosis), and runs groups for pregnant women and mothers of young children. Indonesian migrants also require information on legal issues (unfair dismissal, compensation matters), domestic violence and tenancy information.

Youth was the identified area where more work is needed, especially in regards to providing more social and sport activities for youth. The closing down of the 'Gamelan' (an Indonesian Magazine) because of a lack of funding was also highlighted as a concern for the Indonesian community.

REFUGEES AND HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

170 Humanitarian entrants settled in Rockdale in the period of May 1999 to April 2002. Humanitarian entrants came from the Former Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Iraq (DIMIA Settlement Database, 2002) and Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Refugees are people who have been forced to leave their countries because they have been persecuted. Refugees have settlement needs additional to and distinct from those of migrants, particularly in relation to torture and trauma counselling, securing housing and medical care (Refugee Council of Australia, 2001).

AUSTCARE has identified the following needs for refugees:

- * resettlement needs,
- * help in learning English,
- * torture and trauma counselling,
- * therapy and counselling, and
- * humanitarian needs

In the St. George MRC Annual Report, 2001, the main issues and needs presented were in relation to immigration matters (immigration and citizenship advice), accessing affordable housing, financial hardship and income support, health issues, family issues, material assistance and emergency relief.

Refugees sought information on issues such as managing financial difficulty, health, counselling, housing, family law, immigration, Medicare, material assistance, domestic violence, women's support groups, youth issues and employment, and the disability pension.

In addition, the MRC humanitarian worker assists refugees with emotional problems, post traumatic disorders, isolation, seeking employment and provides other relevant information and support to help refugee's settlement. The worker also makes referral to other services such as STARTTS, financial services, immigration agents, employment agencies, and assists clients with dealing with Centrelink and other government (and non-government) departments and obtaining material assistance from charitable organisations such as the Salvation Army and St. Vincent De Paul. The worker facilitates women's groups and holds information sessions, takes refugees on excursions (both social and informative) and provides some minimal interpreting services.

Finding appropriate employment is one of the major hurdles encountered by humanitarian entrants. In many cases they cannot attain recognition for their skills and qualifications (for a number of reasons including the destruction or loss of documents), they do not have local work experience, and lack English proficiency. In the 'New Settlers Have Their Say' report, 1999, it was found that just over three quarters of Humanitarian entrants hold unskilled jobs.

Humanitarian entrants also have much lower incomes, on average, than other migrants and spend a greater proportion of their income on basic items such as food, clothing, housing and transport. Long term health conditions are also a significant issue for Humanitarian migrants (more than one third suffer from at least one long term medical condition and one in five suffer from nerve or stress problems). They also have poorer general health and visit the doctor more often (LSIA 2). Most, if not all, humanitarian entrants have torture and trauma issues. However, some will not access STARTTS services (for a number of reasons, for example, for fear of speaking out, are unaware of services, language issues, distrust, or do not feel ready). Some need lengthy and intense counselling while others require only minimal counselling.

Some other issues include the loss of self esteem and former status, urgency to obtain employment and loss of motivation. Also, temporary protection visa (TPV) holders are not eligible for a number of services including On Arrival Accommodation (and are not considered priority clients by the Department of Housing), and MRCs are not permitted by DIMIA to provide them with assistance. They are also ineligible for AMEP and other English classes. The SLASA Annual Report, 1999, also stated that dealing with the significant number of asylum seekers in need of resources to survive while applying for refugee status was a significant issue.

Some of the most pertinent needs for refugees were outlined by the humanitarian worker as emotional support and guidance, obtaining accurate information about rights and services, greater social interaction and contact (especially isolated older people) and more contact with people from their own backgrounds and those who have had similar experiences.

There is also a need for more services to assist refugees and new arrivals, more ongoing support, and access to more material assistance. The worker also believed that greater realisation by the community that refugees can be constructive members of society (become consumers, get educated and send children to schools) would also improve refugees' settlement experiences.

ERITREAN AND ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITIES

The Eritrean and Ethiopian communities are relatively small. However, they have little internal resources and have a number of basic needs that require fulfilment. Almost all Eritreans arrive in Australia as refugees with virtually no resources. Their main settlement needs include obtaining information concerning immigration (especially family reunion) visas, legal issues, housing and domestic violence. They require assistance in completing application forms and getting access to interpreters and translators.

Language issues are the main issues for these communities. There is a lack of availability of translators and translated material in the relevant languages (the Tigrinya language for the Eritrean community), and there are long delays in arranging interpreters and translators when dealing with government bodies. This had led to many problems. Applications for benefits and services have been seriously delayed and many people become reluctant to access services. Some government service providers have not informed clients of the availability of interpreters or have not explained the client's rights and responsibilities.

Finding accommodation for newly arrived refugees is difficult. Public Housing is in high demand and not easily or immediately available. Private rental also poses a challenge as many of the new arrivals will have had no previous renting history or referees and many landlords are reluctant to accept them as tenants. Discrimination was also noted as a problem for Eritreans and Ethiopians seeking private rental and in other areas.

Gaining employment is also an issue as refugees generally have poor English proficiency. Health services tend not to be accessed very well, except in serious situations. The use of traditional medicinal methods and remedies is preferred possibly due to the difficulties in accessing health

services and organising interpreters. Many who require torture and trauma counselling are not accessing services such as STARTTS.

Isolation is also a major concern and the problem is exacerbated when migrants attempt to find more affordable accommodation (both private and public) in more remote areas. Also, because of language and cultural reasons, community members tend to socialise within their own community.

There is an obvious need for more effective dispersal of information. It was suggested by an emerging communities MRC worker that this would be best achieved through the use of a community radio which could provide information in community languages. Translation of written materials and information regarding settlement and mainstream services should also be available.

It was also suggested that a female worker may best help address the needs for a women's group, mediation and counselling for couples experiencing marital problems, women's health issues and domestic violence issues.

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