

# **Final Report**

## **Australian Research Council Linkage Project**

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### **A Conversation on Trust: Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia**



**Supported by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and  
Citizenship**

**TILES Mission:**

To conduct and promote evidence based research that improves the quality of law enforcement and enhances community safety.

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## List of Acronyms

ARC	Australian Research Council
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship

It should be noted there have been name changes in recent years in the Federal Government department overseeing immigration. They are all cited in the bibliography and as well as DIAC, are as follows:

DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DIMIA	Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
DPEM	Department of Police and Emergency Management (Tasmania Police)
IHSS	Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme
SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
TILES	Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Danielle Campbell is a PhD student in the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies at the University of Tasmania. While conducting this research she was the recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry). The research reported here is based on her PhD dissertation. Danielle has an undergraduate degree in political science and languages, as well as a Masters in Development from Murdoch University in Western Australia. Danielle has worked as a TESOL teacher for many years and worked extensively in the community sector in both refugee settlement and as a cross-cultural trainer.

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## Definitions

### Australia's Humanitarian Program

The Australian Refugee and Humanitarian Program comprises 13 500 places per annum in two major visa categories: Refugee and the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). This program includes two categories: on-shore (people applying in Australia) and off-shore (people applying in a country of asylum). It offers resettlement as a means of protection and a durable and permanent solution for people overseas without other options. The off-shore program consists of the SHP visa holders who are all permanent residents on arrival in Australia.

The SHP attempts to assist those who are not refugees within the strict legal definition, but who are in refugee-like situations and are at risk of human rights abuses. The overall Humanitarian Program now accepts 13 500 annually: 6 500 under the Refugee visa category and 7 000 under the SHP.<sup>1</sup>

### Refugee

The refugee visa is issued to people who have been subjected to persecution in their home country and have reason to believe it would continue if they returned. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website 2006 states:

A refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his (or her) nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself (or herself) of the protection of that country ...' (The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees).<sup>2</sup>

In Australia the refugee category comprises 6 000 places per annum and was increased to 6 500 in 2008.<sup>3</sup> The SHP visa is for people who have been subjected to and fear substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country. SHP applicants need to be proposed by a person in Australia. SHP entrants account for 7 000 places per annum. In this report the term 'refugee' refers to Refugee and SHP visa entrants from the off-shore Humanitarian Program.

This report uses the term 'refugee' as a reference to the person's background because it is highly relevant to this research. We do not advocate that people who arrive in Australia on a Refugee or Special Humanitarian visa should be labeled 'refugees' in an ongoing capacity after they have become Australian

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<sup>1</sup> DIAC. Fact Sheet 60. *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Programme*. 2007 [accessed 6th March 2007]; Available from: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR. *Basic facts, Who is a refugee?* 2004 [accessed 11th July 2006]; <http://www.unhcr.org>

<sup>3</sup> DIAC, Fact Sheet 60 - *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program*, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm>, [accessed 14 October 2008]

permanent residents or citizens.

### **African Australian**

African Australian is a new term used by services providers and also by the African Australian community as a self-reference.

### **Community**

The concept of community is being used here in its policy context not in its sociological and/or anthropological sense. The use of this term does not imply the existence of a single homogenous, bounded social entity. It is recognised that community formation involves a complex process of identification by 'self' and 'other' such that the category of 'African refugees' comprises a number of distinct communities that have established themselves in different parts of Australia. These processes are addressed in the PhD dissertation that will result from this research but cannot be discussed in any detail in this report. The term wider community refers to the Australian community more generally.

### **Regional**

The definition of regional shifts depending on the categorisation utilised by the various state and federal government agencies. For the purposes of this paper it will refer to non-metropolitan areas that do not have significant metropolitan centres within easy commuting distance.

### **Integration**

The term integration is rising in popularity and is currently being utilised in many forums. The UNHCR refers to integration as:

... a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and ongoing process. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population. (Adapted from the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Policy on Integration, 1999)<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in Australia refers to integration in terms of promoting inclusion and participation in Australian society and assisting new arrivals in interacting with, and understanding, the broader community while also encouraging the wider community to be responsive to new

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<sup>4</sup> UNHCR. *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration 2002* [cited 2007 1st March]; Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/template?page=PROTECTION&src=static/rh2002/rh2002toc.htm>.

arrivals.<sup>5</sup>

Other concepts used in this discussion paper:

### **Culture**

Culture is 'an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in a symbolic form by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes to life'.<sup>6</sup>

### **Cultural competence**

Cultural competence can be defined 'as a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, policies and structures that come together in a system or agency or among professionals and enables the system, agency or professionals to work effectively in cross cultural situations'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> DIAC. Fact Sheet 92. *Settlement Grants Programme 2007* [cited 2007 5th March]; Available from: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/92funding.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Geertz, C, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 1973, Basic Books, New York

<sup>7</sup> (Cross et al, cited in Flakerud, 2007; 121)

## Executive Summary

This is the final report for the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project, *Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia - A Case Study of Tasmania* (LP0455618). The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the research and recommend strategies to encourage and enhance positive relationships between refugees and police in regional Australia.

The research demonstrates that community policing can provide strategies and reassurances to support newly arrived refugee communities to Australia particularly with respect to their understanding of rights and responsibilities under Australian law. These understandings can profoundly affect whether the settlement of individuals and families from newly arrived refugee communities is successful.

The research offers an understanding of both the perspectives of police and the members of newly arrived African communities in regional Australia. It identifies strategies that can be adopted by residents of regional Australia to create, maintain and sustain relationships with newly arrived refugee communities. It explores the necessity of these strategies particularly due to the lack of specialist resources in regional Australia to support the complex dynamics of settlement.

The research reveals that an understanding of experiential difference (individual) and community (dynamics) is crucial to positive police and refugee relations. These underpin the three distinct themes emerging from the research around barriers and enablers; namely, background and transition; knowledge acquisition and education; and reactions to present experiences.

The findings on background and transition highlighted that past experiences were still relevant, that there was a diversity of coping strategies and that there often exists gender and intergenerational stress and a lack of balancing agents within newly arrived refugee families. In terms of knowledge acquisition and education, there exists the potential for confusion, hesitancy and extreme reactions, and people wanted to know *why* the law existed. Reactions to present experiences encompassed community mythology, a feeling of limited access to justice or limited follow through and issues with reporting: both over and under reporting.

Barriers and enablers from the police perspective included strategies at the organisational foundation level. These included police awareness of the refugee experience and how it may impact on police contact; for example, how fear of police and being in 'survival mode' due to past experiences of war (including torture and trauma) can influence the reactions of newly arrived refugees. Language and access to resources including interpreters, time and training, particularly in the regional context, were also cited by police officers as possible barriers. There were also concerns raised about how to initiate a positive agenda for refugee and police relations.

The report concludes with a framework and strategies to enhance positive relationships between police and members of refugee communities. The framework outlines principles that underpin the potential success of adopting strategies to support these relationships. The principles are concerned with:

1. The refugee journey
2. Complexity
3. Access
4. Active requests
5. Two way relations
6. Multidimensional communication
7. Whole of community education
8. Consistency and quality
9. Agents of change

The strategies are presented in two sections: first, for refugee communities and non-police organisations and secondly, for policing organisations. The report offers strategies to strengthen, maintain and sustain relations between police and refugees. These strategies relate to the following broad themes:

1. Communication;
2. Education and training;
3. Maximising organisational intelligence and expertise;
4. Positive partnerships; and
5. Promotion of positive images of newly arrived communities.

The report essentially explores ways to expand community involvement in a range of safety and crime prevention initiatives by increasing the flow of information between refugee communities and police, and improving the feelings of safety and security for individual refugees, refugee communities and police.

The strategies outlined at the end of the report seek to increase the capacity for community engagement and reassurance to encourage positive relationships between police and refugee communities. The result is intended to have a positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of police work.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Objective of the research

The purpose of the research was to explore the dynamics of the police/refugee relationship and refugee/police relationship in regional Australia using Tasmania as a case study.

## 1.2 Purpose of report

This report is intended for Tasmania Police and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). It is the final report for the ARC Linkage Project, *Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia - A Case Study of Tasmania* (LP0455618). The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the research and recommend strategies to encourage and enhance positive relationships between refugees and police in Australia, particularly in a regional context.

## 1.3 Structure of the report

This report is divided into three main sections:

**Section 1** explores the context of police and refugee relations in Australia. It presents background on the refugee experience, the regional context, community acceptance and the media. It discusses the reasons why this relationship between police and refugees is so important and why it is crucial that proactive steps are explored to ensure it is created and maintained as a positive relationship. It outlines how the research was conducted.

**Section 2** presents the findings of the research exploring the barriers and enablers in the relationship between police and newly arrived refugee communities. These barriers and enablers are presented from the police perspective and the refugee perspective. Quotes typical of the research findings are included to provide support for an evidence-base and an understanding of the different perspectives.

**Section 3** presents a framework and strategies that encourage positive police and refugee relations. The framework includes a set of principles for and key objectives for the successful development of positive relationships between police and newly arrived refugee communities. The strategies include suggestions for police. It also presents strategies for the African Australian communities and for service providers in the refugee settlement sector.

## **2 Why is the relationship between refugees and police so important?**

Although Australian police were not the perpetrators of the profound violation of trust that characterises the refugee experience, they are one of the key agencies in settlement to assist in the restoration of trust. In many ways this can be undertaken within the normal parameters of daily policing interaction. The first key to achieving this goal of restoring levels of trust is a level of professional consciousness that involves using cultural competency tools in any interaction between police and the refugee community.

The second key to the restoration of trust is an appreciation of the impact of and the ability to maximise each interaction as an educational opportunity for the individual present and in many cases for the newly arrived refugee community more generally. People's expectations of police are based on their experiences, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. This is true for the mainstream community generally but for a community that has not been socialised into the ways in which 'things work' in Australia, these personal experiences can exert even more influence on the construction of reality.

The responsibility to contribute positively to these relationships is particularly important in the current climate where negative images have been created, either accurately or inaccurately of a whole community of people. These can arise from public opinion and they can be influenced by the media. The impact of negative portrayals of African Australian community members in the media has resulted in a daily backlash in the streets (both verbal and physical) that has culminated in an increased reluctance to report incidents to police. Both of these trends increase the complexity of the relationship between police and newly arrived refugee communities and create difficulties for police in performing their job.

There are three distinct reasons for police prioritising relationship-building through community policing:

1. Professional obligation;
2. Extraordinary opportunity; and
3. Positive influence.

As police officers, there is a professional obligation to service everyone in the community. There exists an extraordinary opportunity for police to influence the difficult process of settlement. There are opportunities in maximising the education for humanitarian entrants in day-to-day policing and specific community policing strategies. These opportunities translate into a relatively small effort for great gains for refugees, their communities, the mainstream Australian community and the police service. The research demonstrated the positive influence of community policing in the context of newly arrived refugees in regional Australia.

## 2.1 Why is the relationship important?

There are many reasons why management should prioritise resources to affect the relationship between refugees and police in a positive way:

1. The recognition that public support is critical to police effectiveness.<sup>8</sup>
2. Policing is already a demanding profession; diversity adds another layer. Police need to feel confident working with complex situations to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.
3. The impact of negative media which is detrimental to all in the community including police organisations.
4. The changing nature of our 'communities'.
5. Part of an all pervasive prevention strategy including equity of service so that all people have equal access to the law and its enforcers.
6. Reflexive policing strategies require complex adult learning strategies to bridge theory and practice, classroom and street in an environment that can be complex and has competing priorities where decisions need to be made quickly and concisely.
7. These relationships offer signposts for police in their job in assisting them to cope with competing concerns in an incident.
8. Establishing community policing relationships with newly arrived refugee communities can support positive interactions in the context of specific incidents.
9. Effective community policing can support returning a proportion of the responsibility for crime prevention to the community.<sup>9</sup>

This report investigates ways in which refugee-police interactions can influence successful settlement. In addition to discussing the processes of inclusion and exclusion in refugee settlement, it provides an overview of issues concerning police and particular laws in Australia as experienced by the individuals and families who are members of newly emerging refugee communities.

It can be argued that refugee-police interactions are particularly complex for refugees, who have experienced high levels of trauma in their backgrounds. The research focused on the refugees coming to Australia from Africa, due to the protracted nature of their flight experience, the high levels of trauma experienced, their visible difference and the fact that they made up a majority of the Australian humanitarian immigration intake at the time when the research commenced.

The types of interaction with police that are identified through the research are not vastly different to the experiences of the mainstream community and therefore we are not suggesting that refugees who have experienced trauma necessarily have more contact with police than any other groups, as data on this

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<sup>8</sup> Segrave, M, & Ratcliffe, J, *Community Policing: A Descriptive Overview*, 2004, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Segrave, M, & Ratcliffe, 2004, *ibid*

is not available. Nor is it being suggested that high numbers of refugees or a larger proportion of refugee communities have contact with police.<sup>10</sup> To be realistic, however, there will always be a small proportion of members of any community that will end up in contact with the law. What may be unique is the effect that these interactions have on the individuals and families in African Australian communities.

## 2.2 The importance of trust

All refugees have had a long history of mistrust. The period of threat, flight and the places of asylum such as refugee camps are experiences characterised by mistrust. Refugees mistrust as a matter of survival. Many African refugees have been victims of state sanctioned violence. Survival, fear of betrayal and unknown allegiances with opposition groups were the reason that mistrust was necessary.

In this unstable period, it has been necessary for refugees to mistrust government officials, police, uniformed officials, soldiers, border guards and informers. In the period of asylum, mistrust may extend to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), non-government organisations and camp committees. The rebuilding of trust in the time of reception, resettlement and post settlement will depend on three criteria: whether the individual can begin to trust other individuals, the ability to participate in society and any discrimination encountered.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from long periods of profound danger, another defining feature of the refugee journey and lack of safety is that refugees have been mistrusted by multiple actors. This mistrust is due to the fact that all people are in a state of mistrust.<sup>12</sup> So apart from the types of people mentioned that refugees mistrust, virtually anyone encountered on the refugee journey will be mistrusted out of a need for survival. This means that the process of successful settlement is directly linked to the rebuilding of trust to counteract these past experiences.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses trust as a key indicator of social capital.

Trust refers to confidence in the reliability of a person or a system. It is based on the expectation that people or organisations will act in ways that are expected or promised, and will take into account the interests of others.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> RCOA. *Humanitarian Need must take Priority in Refugee Program*. [www.refugeecouncil.org.au](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au), 2007 [cited 2007 15th March].

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> ABS 1378.0 *Measuring Social Capital, An Australian Framework and Indicators*, ABS, Canberra, 2004

The ABS identifies three types of trust: generalised trust, informal trust and institutional trust. The rebuilding of trust for refugees must occur in relation to all three types, but institutional trust is most relevant to the refugee-police relationship.

Institutional trust refers to trust that individuals have of societal institutions, including government, police, hospitals, and the courts.

It also refers to confidence in the capacity of these institutions to take reasonable actions in the administration of their duties, which enhances the ease of acceptance of the results of these actions. Institutional trust is seen as important for the functioning of society, as many vital services may be under-utilised, to the detriment of members of the community, if trust of institutions is deficient.<sup>14</sup>

Given the past experiences of refugees in new and emerging communities and the ABS framework on trust, the findings of this research are valuable for considering how trust impacts on the relationship between the refugee communities and police organisations. The findings of the research also support the notion that a lack of trust (particularly institutional trust) is a significant barrier to social inclusion and has a strong influence on processes of social exclusion for individuals, families and communities. The establishment of institutional trust should be considered a fundamental key to long-term successful settlement.

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<sup>14</sup> ABS 1378.0, *ibid*

## 3 Refugee Immigration and Settlement

### 3.1 Australia's Humanitarian Program

Australia's refugee policy, particularly in relation to off-shore refugee settlement in Australia, has always supported those in greatest need. Most refugees are referred directly by the UNHCR. Addressing the highest need, as defined by the UNHCR, involves targeting different parts of the world where the durable options for particular refugees have all but diminished. In these cases, the UNHCR suggests that the risks are too high for those refugees to be sustained in the region. The Australian Government prioritises regions based on these UNHCR recommendations. Individual refugees must prove a well-founded fear of persecution.<sup>15</sup> With this as the basis for the refugee program, the origins of Australia's refugee population are in many ways defined externally.

In 2004–05, the Australian Government's regional priority was Africa, followed by the Middle East and South West Asia.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, recent refugee and humanitarian settlement in Australia has resulted in high numbers of refugees from Africa entering Australia. In the last five years, 32 356 individuals arrived from Africa and in the 2004-05 year, refugees from Africa comprised 71.1% of the program intake.<sup>17</sup> In 2005-06 the intake from Africa comprised of 55.65%.<sup>18</sup> In 2007–08, 30.48% of offshore humanitarian visas were granted to people from Africa. It included 1 158 Sudanese, 410 Liberians, 348 Congolese, 303 Burundi and 267 from Sierra Leone. In 2008–09, the offshore regional composition of the Humanitarian Program will be evenly distributed with intake from Africa, the Middle East and Asia.<sup>19</sup>

In recent history, Australia's refugee program has seen a dramatic increase in the proportion of refugees with experiences of high levels of trauma;<sup>20</sup> first in the 1990s with refugees from Eastern Europe and then refugees from Africa. The wave of refugees from Africa into Australia has increased dramatically in the last few years due to Australia's use of the 'highest needs' criterion to decide the refugee source. African countries have been regarded as in highest need.

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<sup>15</sup> DIAC. Fact Sheet 97. *Humanitarian Settlement in Regional Australia*, 2007 [cited 2007 5th March]; Available from: [http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/97humanitarian\\_settlement.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/97humanitarian_settlement.htm).

<sup>16</sup> DIMIA. Fact Sheet 60 *Australia's refugee and humanitarian program*, 2004 [cited 2006 10th July]; Available from: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> DIMIA. Fact Sheet 60, 2004, *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> DIAC. 2007, *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm#e>, Accessed 9 Sept 2008

<sup>20</sup> Iredale, R., et al., *Ambivalent Welcome: The Settlement Experiences of Humanitarian Entrant families in Australia*. 1996: Canberra.

**Table 1: Humanitarian Arrivals from Africa**

1998-99	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08,
1 552	2 801	5 616	8 353	8 486	7 100 <sup>21</sup>	5 695 <sup>22</sup>	3 291 <sup>23</sup>

This means that most of the refugees from Africa who are currently living in Australia have arrived in the last six to eight years. Thus, African refugees comprise a new and emerging community<sup>24</sup> with specific issues and challenges that are only now beginning to be understood.

Most African refugees have experienced high levels of trauma. In many ways it is this background that creates the challenges to successful settlement for them. The high levels of trauma in their backgrounds are often characterised in media portrayals of refugees and can become a source of fear for the wider population. The attitudes of the host population can have a strong impact on the success of settlement.<sup>25</sup> This is of concern because Australia is responsible for delivering people the best and most appropriate support for integration and maximising their opportunities to become active Australian citizens. As Jupp asserts, 'the overall objective of policy should be the avoidance or amelioration of disadvantage rather than simply easing the passage into Australian society'.<sup>26 27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> DIMIA. Fact Sheet 60, 2004, *ibid*.

<sup>22</sup> DIAC. 2007, *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> DIAC, Fact Sheet 60 - Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm>, [cited 14 October , 2008]

<sup>24</sup> The concept of community is being used here in its policy context not in its sociological and/or anthropological sense. The use of this term does not imply the existence of a single homogenous, bounded social entity. It is recognised that community formation involves a complex process of identification by 'self' and 'other' such that the category of 'African refugees' comprises a number of distinct communities that have established themselves in different parts of Australia. These processes are addressed in the larger study but cannot be discussed in any detail in this paper.

<sup>25</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 'It is a different war to fight here in Sweden'- the impact of involuntary migration on the health of refugee families in transition', *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 2002. 16(3): p. 292-301.

<sup>26</sup> Jupp, J., *Exile or Refugee? The Settlement of Refugee, Humanitarian and Displaced Immigrants*. 1994, Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, AGPS: Canberra. This is a quote from pg xiii

<sup>27</sup> Jupp, J., 1994, *ibid*

### 3.2 Settlement in Australia

Refugees have specific settlement needs.<sup>28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35</sup> Fundamentally it is necessary to create an environment for individuals and their families that enables them to become fully participating members of society<sup>36 37 38</sup> so that they are no longer perceived as 'refugees'. The term 'refugee' is in itself problematic in this context. In this report, the term 'refugee' has been used particularly as a reference to background; we make no claims about the long-term status of individuals and/or families. The psychological element of labelling is a significant risk, and the concern of many refugee entrants is: 'When do we stop being refugees and who decides?'

There are significant differences between refugee settlement and migrant settlement. The specific needs of refugees stem from the nature of the refugee experience itself,<sup>39 40 41 42 43 44</sup> and pose the greatest challenge to any settlement process. This challenge can be even more significant in a regional settlement context.<sup>45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52</sup> Different sectors within the refugee community will

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<sup>28</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> Iredale, R., et al., *Ambivalent Welcome: The Settlement Experiences of Humanitarian Entrant families in Australia*. 1996: Canberra.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, J., *Refugees and Social Exclusion: What the literature says*. Migration Action, 2004. XXVI(2): p.16-31.

<sup>31</sup> DIMIA, *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian entrants*. 2003: Canberra.

<sup>32</sup> DIMIA, *Refugee and Humanitarian Issues: Australia's Response*. 2005: Canberra.

<sup>33</sup> Omidvar, R. and T. Richmond, *Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada, in Perspectives on Social Inclusion*. 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Jupp, J., A. McRobbie, and B. York, *Settlement needs of small newly arrived ethnic groups*. 1991, Bureau of Immigration Research, AGPS: Canberra.

<sup>35</sup> Nsubuga-Kyobe, D.A., Possible Antecedents and Implications to African-Australians Participating in the Proposed Pilot Program of Settlement in Rural Victoria: A Study of Strategic Management of Service Delivery to Emerging Community in Rural Areas: A Critical Review, in The African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) Annual Conference 'African Renewal, African Renaissance': *New Perspectives on Africa's Past and Africa's Present*. 2004: University of Western Australia.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> Jupp, J., 1994, *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Iredale, R., et al, 1996, *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Jupp, J., 1994, *ibid*

<sup>40</sup> Iredale, R., et al, 1996, *ibid*

<sup>41</sup> DIMIA, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>42</sup> Jupp, J., A. McRobbie, and B. York, 1991, *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, D., *Neighbourhood Experiences of New Immigration: Reflections from Evidence Base*, J.R. Foundation, Editor. 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, J., *Refugees and Regional Settlement: win-win?* in *Australian Social Policy Conference*. 2005: University of New South Wales.

<sup>45</sup> Omidvar, R. and T. Richmond, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, J., 2005, *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> Nsubuga-Kyobe, D.A., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>48</sup> Withers, G. and M. Powall, *Immigration and the Regions: Taking Regional Australia Seriously: A Report on options for enhancing immigration's contribution to regional Australia 2003*, Chifley Research Centre.

<sup>49</sup> Stanovic, D. and J. Talyor, *Refugees and Regional Settlement: Balancing Priorities*. 2005

<sup>50</sup> Boyce, J. and K. Madden, *Promoting the Development of Sustainable Refugee Communities in Tasmania*. 2000, Social Action Research Centre, Anglicare: Hobart

<sup>51</sup> Simich, L., *Negotiating Boundaries of Refugee Resettlement: A Study of Settlement Patterns and Social Support*. The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 2003. 40(5): p. 575-591.

also have particular needs and experiences. For example, in 2004-05, women at risk accounted for 15.1% of total refugee entrants,<sup>53</sup> and as female-headed households, often with multiple children in their care, they often have a very difficult situation. Youth, who comprise a large proportion of the refugee intake, also have specific issues.<sup>54 55</sup>

The use of ethnicity as a predictor of behaviour can trigger a dangerous process of creating assumptions about refugees that simplify a set of complex processes.<sup>56</sup> Refugees' experiences cannot be explained in terms of ethnicity alone. An individual refugee's situation is best analysed through the lens of a number of layers: ethnicity, refugee experience and personality characteristics. An awareness of these layers assists service providers to support the negotiation of individual needs and personalities in a cross-cultural environment. As Kennedy states, 'acculturation is embedded in a complex social environment that increasingly is creating more self-styled versions of identity'. The creation of a sense of connectedness and belonging is different for each individual.<sup>57</sup>

The characteristics of the refugee background are valuable for understanding the needs of refugees and the issues they experience in settlement. Refugees arriving from Africa are considered to be highly traumatised.<sup>58</sup> Many have had extended stays in camps and endured high levels of danger and vulnerability during their flight in search of safety and asylum. Family compositions are diverse, with many female-headed households, a number of very large families and a lack of community members over 45 years of age. In 2004, the average age was 24 years, and 63% of assisted cases included children.<sup>59</sup>

For some refugees, these characteristics exacerbate complexities particularly in terms of roles in families, intergenerational relations, and a lack of clarity in community leadership. It is reasonable to assume that pre-migration factors and experiences for African refugees are quite critical to their process of successful settlement. High vulnerability, low safety for long periods of time, in some case generations, is the 'norm'. Subsequently, settlement service providers dealing with African refugees are presented with new complexities that may not have been exhibited in the same way before.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Samarasinghe, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> DIMIA *Refugee and Humanitarian Issues: Australia's Response*. 2005.

<sup>54</sup> White, R., et al., *Somalian Young People*, in *Ethnic Youth Gangs in Australia, Do They Exist?* 1999, Australian Multicultural Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>55</sup> Cunneen, C. and R. White, *Juvenile Justice: Youth and Crime in Australia*. 3rd ed. 2007, Melbourne Oxford University Press.

<sup>56</sup> Kennedy, W. and J. Hall, *Identity in Multicultural Societies*. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 2006. 6(2): p. 123-133.

<sup>57</sup> Kennedy, W. and J. Hall, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Campbell, D., *Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia: A Police Perspective*. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 2007. 6(4):

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, J., 2004, *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Campbell, D., 2007a

Despite these similarities within the African community, there exists considerable diversity. The countries of birth of African refugees include Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Tanzania, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia.<sup>61</sup> All have very distinct cultures. In 2005-06, 3 726 Sudanese, 888 Liberians, 460 from Sierra Leone, 363 Congolese (DRC) and 274 Eritreans arrived in Australia.<sup>62</sup> Even within these country groups there exist many different languages, often with a number of dialects associated with distinct ethnicities.<sup>63</sup> In 2007-08, 1 158 Sudanese, 410 Liberians, 267 from Sierra Leone, 348 Congolese (DRC), and 303 Burundi arrived in Australia.<sup>64</sup>

The individual refugee may also have spent many years in a country of asylum where conditions and experiences may have been different again to both country of origin and Australia.<sup>65 66</sup> The refugee journey of fleeing conflict may have resulted in families comprised of members with multiple ethnic origins over time.<sup>67</sup> Kennedy argues that often the notion of cultural identity used in practical service delivery models is too simplistic - that an individual's identification as 'ethnic' and the associated acculturation process are collapsed too easily. Over time this greatly influences the way an ethnic group is viewed in a multicultural society such as Australia.<sup>68</sup>

The educational background of African refugees is equally diverse and the levels of English proficiency varied. Interruption to education is a common experience.<sup>69</sup> The level of educational or professional qualification may or may not necessarily correspond to the individual's ability to speak English. The average number of years of education for refugees from Africa (over five years of age) is six years. At least 42% have poor or no literacy in their own language, and 64% state that they require an English language interpreter.<sup>70</sup> This may depend on country of origin, country of asylum, camp conditions or the nature of the process of flight for an individual. The diversity in the refugee community is broad, from a lack of literacy in their own language to people with higher degrees from university and specialised professional qualifications.<sup>71</sup>

For African refugees, pre-migration experiences inevitably include being exposed to torture and trauma. The UNHCR has stated that studies have revealed that one in four refugees being offered permanent resettlement have experienced

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<sup>61</sup> DIMA, *Annual Report 2005-06*, 2006, [http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2005-06/DIMA\\_AR/performance/Outcome\\_2\\_1.html](http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2005-06/DIMA_AR/performance/Outcome_2_1.html)

<sup>62</sup> DIAC, Fact Sheet 92, *Settlement Grants Programme 2007* [cited 2007 5th March]; Available from: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/92funding.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> Nsubuga-Kyobe, D.A., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>64</sup> DIAC, Fact Sheet 60 - *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program*, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm>, [cited 14 October, 2008]

<sup>65</sup> Campbell, D., 2007a

<sup>66</sup> DIMA, *Annual Report 2005-06*, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>67</sup> Kennedy, W. and J. Hall, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>68</sup> Kennedy, W. and J. Hall, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>69</sup> UNHCR, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>70</sup> Taylor, J, 004, *ibid*

<sup>71</sup> Campbell, D., 2007a

torture or severe human rights violations. Seven in ten have been subject to traumatic events such as prolonged political repression and the loss of family members in violent circumstances.<sup>72 73</sup> In addition, most have experienced poor health, primarily from living in hardship, deprivation, and lack of access to medical support.<sup>74 75</sup>

Many African refugees have been in basic survival mode with feelings of fear, helplessness and dependency, leading to a limited sense of meaning and purpose, which affects an individual's ability to plan, hope for, and trust in a future.<sup>76</sup> The loss of dignity, shame and guilt as a result of torture and trauma create issues of personal boundaries and undermine a strong sense of identity. This includes the silence of refugee women who are victims of rape.<sup>77</sup> Another common experience is leaving family and friends behind and the guilt associated with feeling that they should have done or should do more for them.<sup>78</sup>

The table titled 'The Experiences of Integration' identifies the correlation between refugee experiences and their needs in settlement. It presents the potential sources of stress in the integration environment linking it directly to possible personal and emotional consequences for individual refugees. It is a useful heuristic device to understand integration and the climate that police need to consider in their interactions with refugee communities.

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<sup>72</sup> UNHCR, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>73</sup> Iredale, R, et al, 1996, *ibid*

<sup>74</sup> Iredale, R, et al, 1996, *ibid*

<sup>75</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>78</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

**Table 2: The Experiences of Integration**

<b>Potential sources of stress in the integration environment:</b>	<b>Possible personal and emotional consequences:</b>
ongoing danger in country-of-origin	fear and anxiety
continuing separation from family members	loss of trust
lack of understanding/hostility on the part of government officials	grief lack of family support
injustices	guilt
minority status in a dominant culture	loss of a sense of belonging
limited community support networks	cultural, racial or religious integrity undermined
prejudice and hostility on grounds of ethnicity, race, religion	identity undermined
limited access to cultural and religious institutions	lack/loss of social support
poor social status	family conflict and tension
gender role and status adjustment	
intergenerational adjustment	
unemployment underemployment	fear about the future and of not coping
difficulties in accessing education and health care	altered capacity to plan the future
insecure housing	social and economic dependency
new and unfamiliar environment	poor health
lack of proficiency in the language of the receiving society	

**Source: UNHCR (2002) Refugee Resettlement and International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration**

Individual refugees have different ways of settling with individual styles and coping mechanisms.<sup>79</sup> There are, however, some basic needs that are universal. Basic physical needs include housing, access to income, schooling, food, employment and knowledge of services.<sup>80</sup> Meeting basic needs assists refugees to regain a sense of security, predictability and control over their lives. To achieve these outcomes, access to income, accommodation and health care are fundamental.<sup>81</sup> There is a need for both knowledge and understanding to gain the ability to negotiate the basic systems of the host community, in both the public and private arenas of life.<sup>82</sup> These can be in relation to banks, schools, employment, health care, education, childcare, shopping and other requirements for running a household such as electricity, gas, water, and telephone service.

<sup>79</sup> Colic-Peisker, V. and F. Tilbury, "Active" and "Passive" Resettlement: The Influence of Support Services and Refugees' own Resources on Resettlement Style. *International Migration*, 2003. 41(5): p. 61-91.

<sup>80</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>81</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>82</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

If the practical needs of refugees are met, this provides an important system of support which also has significant psychological benefits. Psychological needs include safety,<sup>83 84 85</sup> coupled with an understanding and hope for the future (via education, employment<sup>86</sup>). The regaining of trust, dignity and self-esteem are crucial for participating fully in a new life.<sup>87</sup> Studies show that meaningful relations are fundamental to settlement being successful.<sup>88 89</sup>

Real barriers exist for refugee individuals and families. These include diverse language needs and issues associated with being visibly different.<sup>90</sup> An ability to communicate is fundamental to participating in social and economic institutions and in establishing social connections.<sup>91</sup> Changes in family structure<sup>92</sup> are one of the most powerful challenges for refugee individuals and families, and one of the most complex areas in terms of the provision of support in settlement.

It is difficult to appreciate the physical and psychological reassurance needs of individual refugees and their families in the process of settlement. The premature withdrawal of support for refugee families often leads to frustration among service providers and the refugee communities themselves. It leaves issues unaddressed that may confirm or heighten fears expressed by the mainstream public and host communities.

The individual resilience<sup>93</sup> of individuals and families should never be underestimated but transition is difficult and stressful: it requires significant support systems. For most refugees, governments in their country of origin and often the country of asylum have at best failed to protect their rights; at worst many have experienced state-sanctioned violence and human rights abuses. Negative perceptions of positions of authority, especially people in uniform can lead to stressful interactions. An understanding of, and sensitivity to, this issue is crucial to positive settlement experiences.<sup>94</sup> This is an important element of the backdrop for police and other emergency managers in their interactions with refugees, especially during early settlement.

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<sup>83</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, *The Indicators of Integration: Final Report, in Development and Practice Report* Number 28. 2004, Home Office: London.

<sup>84</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, *The Experience of Integration: A Qualitative Study of Refugee Integration in the Local Communities of Pollokshaws and Islington*, in Home Office Online Report 55. 2004: London.

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Racist Violence. Report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence*. 1991, AGPS: Canberra.

<sup>86</sup> Boyce, J. and K. Madden, 2000, *ibid*

<sup>87</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> Rees, S. and B. Pease, *Refugee Settlement, Safety and Wellbeing: Exploring Domestic and Family Violence in Refugee Communities in Violence against Women Community Attitudes Project*. 2006, VicHealth: Melbourne.

<sup>89</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>90</sup> Colic-Peisker, V. and F. Tilbury, *Refugees and Employment: The Effects of Visible Difference on Discrimination: Interim Report*. 2005, Centre for Social and Community Research, Murdoch University: Perth.

<sup>91</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>92</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>93</sup> Colic-Peisker, V. and F. Tilbury, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>94</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

## 4 Regional Context

### 4.1 Regional versus metropolitan

There are particular issues associated with refugee settlement in regional Australia. A regional settlement context is a very different context to that of metropolitan settlement. Overall, neither is better or worse for the communities being settled or the host communities. However they are distinctly different environments.<sup>95 96</sup> For the refugee being settled within the regional context, there may be differences in settlement needs from those settled in metropolitan areas. This refers to a difference in access and/or a difference in strategy and these therefore require different policy foundations.<sup>97</sup> In some cases this has quite dramatic implications for service delivery.<sup>98</sup> Service providers in regional areas are unlikely to be specialist service providers, so mainstream services are required to offer specialist services. This requires extreme dedication from staff and support by the organisation they work for, to cope with these service delivery demands and to enable quality services to be delivered to the client.

Statistics on refugee regional settlement are difficult to access because there are two processes by which refugees find themselves in regional Australia. Refugees are either directly settled as their first location on arrival in Australia, or they relocate from the city. Individuals or families may choose to move for opportunities of employment or to be closer to friends who may have already relocated.<sup>99</sup>

Since 2004 the Australian Government has actively aimed to double the number of refugees settling in regional Australia recommended in the May 2003 Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants. This review sought to further opportunities to settle humanitarian entrants in regional Australia.<sup>100</sup> Specifically, it recommended settling some 'unattached' refugees<sup>101</sup> (without friends or family in other areas of Australia), and particularly those who come from a rural background or who have skills related to employment opportunities available in those areas.<sup>102 103</sup> Refugee settlement is a complex area of policy making<sup>104</sup> and highly charged politically. As highlighted by Taylor,

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<sup>95</sup> Taylor, J., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>96</sup> Withers, G. and M. Powall, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>97</sup> Stanovic, D. and J. Talyor. 2005, *ibid*

<sup>98</sup> IWDVS, *The Right to be Safe from Domestic Violence: Immigrant and Refugee Women in Rural Victoria*. 2006, Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, Melbourne.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor, J., 2005, *ibid*

<sup>100</sup> DIMIA, *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian entrants*. 2003: Canberra.

<sup>101</sup> DIMIA, Report. 2003. *ibid*

<sup>102</sup> DIMIA, Report. 2003. *ibid*

<sup>103</sup> DIAC. Fact Sheet 97. *Humanitarian Settlement in Regional Australia*. 2007 [cited 2007 5th March]; Available from: [http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/97humanitarian\\_settlement.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/97humanitarian_settlement.htm).

<sup>104</sup> Withers, G. and M. Powall, *Immigration and the Regions: Taking Regional Australia Seriously: A Report on options for enhancing immigration's contribution to regional Australia 2003*, Chifley Research Centre.

the regional settlement debate is influenced by population strategy, economic development in regional areas and the obligations to humanitarian goals that support successful refugee settlement.<sup>105 106</sup>

## 4.2 Strengths and challenges

As noted, the Australian Government is encouraging regional refugee settlement<sup>107 108</sup> and its intention is that 45% of refugees may be regionally located.<sup>109</sup> In order to analyse the police-refugee nexus, it is important to understand some of the more general implications of regional settlement. DIAC is currently working to identify new regional areas for the settlement of 'unattached' refugees and refugees from rural backgrounds with appropriate employment skills. To identify new regional locations, a range of factors is considered, including opportunities for early employment, population size and diversity, appropriate housing, the availability of mainstream and specialist settlement services, and whether the location can provide a welcoming environment.<sup>110</sup>

Regional communities are often isolated and therefore have a need to be self-reliant. This situation can create both strengths and challenges for refugee settlement. There is a potential positive in the connective nature of smaller communities and their capacity to welcome newcomers into the area in a very active way. There is a claim that people have time to help one another.<sup>111</sup> The regional environment can also offer refugees ease of access to services that in larger centres would prove difficult.

For refugees, the challenges of regional Australia include isolation from people with shared experiences of the refugee background or people from the same culture, in terms of country of origin, language or ethnicity. There may be a lack of understanding of the refugee background and therefore a limited capacity among members of host communities to connect with new community members from different backgrounds.<sup>112 113</sup> Accessing services can be difficult in some regional areas as can accessing employment opportunities.<sup>114</sup>

Recent funding increases demonstrate that the Government has recognised

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<sup>105</sup> Taylor, J., 2005, *ibid*

<sup>106</sup> Stanovic, D. and J. Talyor. 2005, *ibid*

<sup>107</sup> DIMIA, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>108</sup> Birrell, B., Redistributing migrants: the Labor agenda. *People and Place*, 2003. 11(4): p. 15-26.

<sup>109</sup> Withers, G. and M. Powell, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>110</sup> DIAC. Fact Sheet 97. *Humanitarian Settlement in Regional Australia*. 2007 [cited 2007 5th March]; Available from: [http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/97humanitarian\\_settlement.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/97humanitarian_settlement.htm).

<sup>111</sup> Boyce, J. and K. Madden, 2000, *ibid*

<sup>112</sup> Taylor, J., 2005, *ibid*

<sup>113</sup> Colic-Peisker, V., 'At Least you are the Right Colour': Identity and Social Inclusion of Bosnian Refugees in Australia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2005. 31(4): p. 615-638.

<sup>114</sup> Boyce, J. and K. Madden, 2002, *ibid*

some of the resource issues in regional Australia. The 2004-05 Federal Budget provided \$4.9 million over four years (\$1.02 million in 2005-06) for Community Settlement Services Scheme grants to assist humanitarian entrants to settle in rural and regional Australia. This initiative is aimed at increasing humanitarian settlement in targeted regional locations.<sup>115</sup>

The importance of strengthening host communities has been highlighted by the UNHCR. It argues that refugees will integrate themselves in a facilitated environment in which people can be empowered. To achieve this outcome, it recommends equitable partnerships in a community and that the host community, and the general public, need accurate and timely information about refugee situations as well as specific information closer to arrival. This argument also highlights the important role the media has to play.<sup>116 117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> DIMIA, *Refugee and Humanitarian Issues: Australia's Response*. 2005: Canberra.

<sup>116</sup> Robinson, D., 2006, *ibid*

<sup>117</sup> UNHCR. *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*. 2002 [cited 2007 1st March]; Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/template?page=PROTECTION&src=static/rh2002/rh2002toc.htm>

## 5 Community Acceptance and the Media

### 5.1 Community acceptance

The importance of community acceptance for refugee settlement is becoming clear.<sup>118 119</sup> Community acceptance requires the transfer of knowledge and understanding as a two-way process.<sup>120</sup> Its foundations are based on relationships and associations.<sup>121 122</sup> The expectations of the host community must be higher than just that of tolerance. Tolerance equates to 'putting up with' and in terms of the long-term health of both the host and refugee communities, a goal of achieving tolerance is aiming very low.<sup>123 124</sup> Commonly, settlement situations are characterised by 'no trouble' attitudes<sup>125</sup> where acceptance occurs when there are no obvious problems; this is possibly characterised by limited interaction. However, a more interactive relationship-orientated environment is most supportive of successful long-term settlement.<sup>126</sup> Processes of inclusion and exclusion are also important in refugee settlement. There is a small body of research in Australia that highlights the existence of exclusion in refugee settlement and how that impacts on individuals and families.<sup>127 128 129 130</sup> This research concludes that the inclusion/exclusion experience has a crucial impact on the success of refugee settlement.

In the context of refugee settlement equity is obviously very important. In the case of refugees, this may require individuals to be treated differently in order to gain equal access to services. As is often the case in communities where resources and access to resources are already stretched, the perceived special needs of a sub-population or the special service delivery given to one sector of the community can sometimes breed resentment.<sup>131</sup> This is not surprising or easily avoidable.<sup>132</sup> It is important that such a trend is acknowledged and the impact of that resentment is not felt by the individuals who are receiving the necessary, timely and quite specialised support at a time of acute transition. There also needs to be attention paid to the concept of rural

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<sup>118</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>119</sup> Colic-Peisker, V., 2005, *ibid*

<sup>120</sup> UNHCR, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>121</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, 2004b, *ibid*

<sup>122</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, 2004b, *ibid*

<sup>123</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, 2004b, *ibid*

<sup>124</sup> Burchell, D., Multiculturalism and its Discontents: Majorities, Minorities and Toleration. *Ethnicities*, 2001. 1(2): p. 233-249.

<sup>125</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, 2004b, *ibid*

<sup>126</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>127</sup> Taylor, J., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>128</sup> Omidvar, R. and T. Richmond, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>129</sup> Colic-Peisker, V., 2005, *ibid*

<sup>130</sup> Garland, J. and N. Chakraborti, 'Race', Space and Place: Examining Identity and Cultures of Exclusion in Rural England. *Ethnicities*, 2006. 6(2).

<sup>131</sup> Robinson, D., 2006, *ibid*

<sup>132</sup> There exists an extensive political debate and academic literature in this area that can not be addressed here.

racism,<sup>133</sup> where communities hold dear a strong and fixed ideal about their area. This is a phenomenon that makes the act of 'othering'<sup>134</sup> outsiders more likely to occur and less likely to be acknowledged.<sup>135</sup> <sup>136</sup> This also requires the acceptance of realistic timescales in refugee settlement and the recognition of negative community attitudes as an active barrier<sup>137</sup> to successful settlement.

The process by which refugees enter Australia and are allocated a primary place of residence, results in the unpredictability of arrival and the concentration of communities. This arrival process creates difficult timelines for the transfer of knowledge and understanding to promote the acceptance of refugees by host communities. The arrival process also means that developing relationships between police and newly arrived communities is an ongoing project. Individual refugees are continuously arriving and consequently services need to be in a constant state of reaction. This leads to a tendency to be predominately reactive rather than proactive in the process of refugee settlement.

It can be seen that the development of community acceptance is complex and vital. The reactions of a host community are important. Studies have found that a friendly and understanding attitude is one of the major factors in promoting health in the successful settlement of refugees.<sup>138</sup> <sup>139</sup> If an individual thinks they are part of the community and can be accepted as 'normal', it increases their sense of self-worth and therefore enhances that individual's potential. Recent studies have highlighted issues around losing one's identity in the transition<sup>140</sup> and settlement process.<sup>141</sup> For some refugees, this will lead to dramatic changes in intra-relations (loneliness, identity), inter-relations (roles in family), and extra-relations (employment).<sup>142</sup>

Research findings suggest that meaningful relationships<sup>143</sup> <sup>144</sup> are pivotal to successful refugee settlement and positive integration. The refugee experience is characterised by weakened relationships<sup>145</sup> with family members, family support networks and community. For refugee individuals the 'survival values'<sup>146</sup> created in the flight from conflict need to be replaced by solid, dependable and predictable relationship networks. The nature of this dislocation is even more

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<sup>133</sup> Chakraborti, N. and J.e. Garland, *Rural Racism*. 2004, Devon: Willian Publishing.

<sup>134</sup> Riggins, S., *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*. 1997, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

<sup>135</sup> Garland, J. and N. Chakraborti, 'Race', Space and Place: Examining Identity and Cultures of Exclusion in Rural England. *Ethnicities*, 2006. 6(2).

<sup>136</sup> Chakraborti, N. and J.e. Garland, *Rural Racism*. 2004, Devon: Willian Publishing.

<sup>137</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>138</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>139</sup> Robinson, D., 2006, *ibid*

<sup>140</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>141</sup> Kennedy, W. and J. Hall, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>142</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>143</sup> Rees, S. and B. Pease, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>144</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>145</sup> Nsubuga-Kyobe, D.A., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>146</sup> Nsubuga-Kyobe, D.A., 2004, *ibid*

pronounced for 'unattached' humanitarian entrants,<sup>147</sup> for without either friends or relatives in Australia they are, in many ways, more vulnerable. After a refugee transition, how do individuals normalise perceptions based on their experiences and create realistic expectations<sup>148</sup> and, furthermore, what support do they need to assist this process? This will be addressed in the barriers and enablers and the strategies sections of the report.

## 5.2 Media

The media has played an interesting role in the acceptance of immigration in Australia. Australia's immigration history has been characterised by debate and controversy, both politically and within the mainstream community.<sup>149</sup> The issue of refugee settlement in Australia has prompted interesting debate. It is an area that is in a constant state of flux depending on the origin and needs of refugees entering Australia at any one time.<sup>150</sup>

In 2007 concerns over refugee settlement in regional Australia were voiced and are present in the example of the Tamworth Council commentary over five Somali families settling in the region.<sup>151</sup> Although Tamworth Council resolved to move ahead with this settlement, the portrayal of African Australians in the media has been noteworthy.<sup>152 153</sup>

Equally important is the public's negative reaction to media reports of Sudanese youth and alleged criminal activity in Melbourne in early 2007.<sup>154 155 156 157 158</sup> These examples highlight the impact of mainstream public perceptions and misperceptions of immigration in shaping debate within the mainstream community.<sup>159</sup> In addition, the murder of Liep Gony in Melbourne in October 2007, ignited strong views across the Australian community. They highlight the role and responsibility of the media in shaping those perceptions. It is important to be conscious that public opinion is an important component of the environment

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<sup>147</sup> DIAC. Fact Sheet 60. *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Programme*. 2007 [cited 2007 6th March]; Available from: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm>.

<sup>148</sup> Nsubuga-Kyobe, D.A., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>149</sup> Iredale, R., 1996, *ibid*

<sup>150</sup> Iredale, R., 1996, *ibid*

<sup>151</sup> RCOA. *Time for Tamworth council to reject Fear, Says Refugee Council*: Media Release 15th December. 2006 [cited 2007 14th March].

<sup>152</sup> RCOA. *Refugee Council Welcomes Tamworth Council Decision*: Media Release 27th January 2007 [cited 2007 14th March].

<sup>153</sup> Campbell, 2007b, *ibid*

<sup>154</sup> Kerbaj, R., *Warning on African Refugee Gangs*, in *Australian*. 2007: Melbourne. p. 5.

<sup>155</sup> Kerbaj, R., *Refugees 'turning to crime for kicks'*, in *Australian*. 2007: Melbourne. p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> Kerbaj, R., *Police say Sudanese a Gang Threat*, in *Australian*. 2007: Melbourne. p. 4.

<sup>157</sup> Mitchell, N., *Yes, There is a problem with young Sudanese: Drunk and Driving*, in *Herald Sun*. 2007: Melbourne. p. 23

<sup>158</sup> Dore, C., *Inquiry into Rampage Refugee*, in *Australian*. 2007: Melbourne. p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> Burchell, D., 2001, *ibid*

in which police undertake their duties everyday.<sup>160 161</sup>

These events are important indicators of the volatility of public opinion and its impact on communities in a vulnerable state of transition into a new country. It is also important to remember the role that this environment creates for policing. A highly political environment creates a more difficult environment for police work.

The role of the media<sup>162 163 164</sup> is a core factor in influencing community acceptance. The media portrayal of sectors of the Australian community, in this case newly arrived refugees, can have an impact on the level of acceptance those communities may experience. Refugee settlement will always create a level of controversy and as such will remain highly political. While controversy and emotion (especially fear) 'sells papers', it remains an unnerving influence on public opinion.<sup>165</sup> Other methods to increase the depth of practical knowledge and understanding of the refugee experience and settlement among the general public, host communities and specialist, and non-specialist service providers<sup>166</sup> must be explored and adopted.

### 5.3 Challenges of the research

The research methods adopted in this study are described in the next section. At this point it is worth noting that the climate during 2007 directly impacted on the research. Notable changes in levels of trust in the research became evident. Refugees generally became more suspicious and fearful particularly in relation to how they were being portrayed. Members of African Australian communities voiced concerns about mainstream public perceptions surrounding their communities.<sup>167</sup>

As a result, access to new participants for the research became increasingly difficult. The research methods were modified to account for this change. It was clear that trust and the impact of public opinion had become defining features in the research process. On the other hand when trust had been re-established between the researchers and the members of the African Australian communities, the refugee voices were strong and many participants expressed relief to be able to discuss complex issues in a safe environment.

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<sup>160</sup> Campbell, D., 2007a, *ibid*

<sup>161</sup> Campbell, D & R Julian, 'Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia: A Refugee Voice', *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, Vol 7, (5) 2007 pp. 7-16.

<sup>162</sup> Robinson, D., 2006, *ibid*

<sup>163</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>164</sup> Rees, S. and B. Pease, 2006, *ibid*

<sup>165</sup> RCOA. *Refugee Council Condemns Hanson's Cowardly Attack on African Australians: Media Release* 7th December. 2006 [cited 2007 14th March].

<sup>166</sup> UNHCR. 2002, *ibid*

<sup>167</sup> Kennedy, W. and J. Hall, 2006, *ibid*

### 5.3.1 Community policing

Community policing essentially involves 'engagement with the community, through restructuring police organisations and altering the daily activities of operational police officers'.<sup>168</sup> For the purposes of this discussion reassurance policing refers to strategies in community policing that actively 'reassure' members of the public. That is, the idea that communities need reassurance from police<sup>169</sup> with 'reassurance' defined as:

the intended outcome(s) of actions taken by the police and other agencies to improve perceived police effectiveness (mainly confidence in, and satisfaction with, the police), and to increase feelings and perceptions of safety (including reducing the fear of crime).<sup>170</sup>

The research in this project supports the argument for the need for community policing and more specifically reassurance policing to actively encourage positive relationships between police and refugee communities. It therefore argues that newly arrived refugee communities require a stronger emphasis on these styles of policing particularly in the initial years of settlement in Australia. The findings support general assertions that 'increasing the quantity and quality of police citizen-contact reduces crime'.<sup>171</sup>

There is a highly contested debate around community or 'reassurance' policing and its effectiveness.<sup>172 173 174 175</sup> For the purposes of this report it is important to note that a regional context may produce community policing strategies in a slightly different way than community policing in metropolitan areas. It depends on to whom the term 'community' refers.<sup>176</sup> Community policing in country stations means living in, and policing from, within those communities. Regional policing occurs in a context of close proximity (in terms of information networks

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<sup>168</sup> Segrave, M., & Ratcliffe, J., 2004, *ibid*

<sup>169</sup> Fleming, J., 'Working together' : Neighbourhood Watch, reassurance policing and the potential of partnerships, *Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice*, no. 303 September 2005, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra: 2005

<sup>170</sup> Dalgleish D and Myhill A. *Reassuring the public - a review of international policing interventions*, Home Office Research Study 284, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, London: 2004, pp. 9

<sup>171</sup> Sherman LW and Eck JE, *Policing for crime prevention*. In LW Sherman, DP Farrington, BC Welsh and DL MacKenzie (eds) *Evidence-based crime prevention*. London: Routledge. 2002, pp.316 in Fleming, J, 'Working together' : Neighbourhood Watch, reassurance policing and the potential of partnerships, *Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice*, no. 303 September 2005, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra: 2005

<sup>172</sup> Thatcher, D., Conflicting Values in Community Policing. *Law and Society Review*, 2001. 35(4): p. 765-798

<sup>173</sup> Skogan, W., *Community Policing (Can it Work?)*. 2004, Belmont: Wadsworth.

<sup>174</sup> Pelfrey, W., Jr The inchoate nature of Community Policing: Differences between Community Policing and traditional police officers. *Justice Quarterly*, 2004. 21(3): p. 579-601.

<sup>175</sup> Rosenbaum, D., (ed), *The Challenge of Community Policing: Testing the Promises*. 1994, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

<sup>176</sup> Lynes, D., Cultural Diversity and Social Order: Rethinking the role of Community Policing. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1996. 24(66): p. 491-502.

and relationships) that means many community policing strategies may prove highly effective.

There is evidence that citizens who perceive police favourably report less problems and higher levels of safety and it often assists to offset social disadvantage.<sup>177</sup> Findings support the ecological argument for community policing. Police should work to address crime and disorder by establishing mutual levels of trust, building working relationships with citizens, and strengthening both informal and formal social controls.<sup>178</sup>

The primary assumption is that policing is about making people feel safe. The concept of safety includes both perceived and real threats. In a policing context a sense of safety results from reassurance policing and the policing of criminal threat. In general, this occurs at mainstream community, specific community (either by location or by shared similarity which may include ethnicity or experience) and at an individual level, particularly in reaction to an involvement in an incident. A sense of safety is linked to an individual's sense of vulnerability.<sup>179</sup> It would then follow that the issues that police deal with concerning refugee communities, while sharing many similarities with mainstream community members, include different needs in relation to feeling safe due to their experiences and perceptions. Refugee individuals have been in a state of feeling unsafe as the norm and trust necessarily takes time to return. A humanitarian entrant does not instantly feel safe when they put their foot on the tarmac in a safe country.

The refugee experience therefore presents a unique context in which to perform reassurance policing. The emphasis in policing needs to be on *reassurance* for two distinct reasons. Firstly, refugees' lives have been characterised by a lack of safety and in many cases long periods of danger and vulnerability. The concept of safety needs to be explored in the new settlement environment.

Secondly, a reassurance process will have stages and the length of time involved and the type of reassurance required will vary. Refugee communities from Africa have a greater need for community and reassurance strategies than the mainstream population. In fact, they have quite distinctive needs from either those groups with migration (rather than refugee) experiences or those with a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, although they may share many common challenges.

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<sup>177</sup> Reisig, M. and R. Parks, Can Community Policing Help the Truly Disadvantaged? *Crime and Delinquency*, 2004. 50(2): p. 109-167. Page 139

<sup>178</sup> Reisig, M. and R. Parks, 2004, *ibid*

<sup>179</sup> Reisig, M. and R. Parks, 2004, *ibid*

## 6 The Research

This research is an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project titled *Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia - A Case Study of Tasmania*<sup>180</sup> that was undertaken at the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES) at the University of Tasmania. The research included the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and the Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM) as industry partners. The Linkage Project explored particular challenges for new and emerging<sup>181</sup> refugee communities and the potential of community policing to support successful regional<sup>182</sup> settlement.

Tasmania was the regional case study. It has a refugee and humanitarian intake of approximately 280-450 individuals per annum. Between 2005 and 2008, the majority arrived from Africa. In recent times, the region has had one of the highest intakes of refugees relative to its population in Australia. The data was collected primarily through interviews and focus groups that involved speaking with 160 people from the African refugee communities, police and key service providers.

The report is based on the findings of interviews with 160 people (40 individual interviews and 14 focus groups) over a three-year period (2006 – 2008). It involved police, individuals from the African refugee communities and key service providers. The report was also informed by insights gained from forums organised between police and members of the African refugee communities.

The data collected from the refugee communities involved 25 individual in-depth interviews and 14 focus groups (consisting of 110 participants) ranging from 1-2.5 hours. It included individuals from all African countries of origin groups that were settled in Tasmania at the time of the research: Sudanese, Burundi, Congolese, Ethiopian, Sierra Leone and Rwandan.

Police interviews involved personnel from various ranks, from throughout the state and performing a variety of roles within Tasmania Police. The in-depth interviews that were undertaken with 15 police officers ranged from 1-2 hours. It included police at Commissioned Officer level (ranks of Inspector and above), police of various ranks working in the community policing section and police who had direct contact with the refugee community as operational police.

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<sup>180</sup> This article reports on research being conducted as part of the research program '*Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia - A Case Study Tasmania*'. It is supported by an Australian Research Linkage Grant (No. LP0455618).

<sup>181</sup> In an Australian context, the term 'new and emerging communities' refers to communities in which a majority of members have been settled in the last five years.

<sup>182</sup> In Australia the definition of regional shifts depending on the categorization utilised by the various state and federal government agencies. For the purposes of this chapter it will refer to non-metropolitan areas that do not have significant metropolitan centres within easy commuting distance.

These interviews explored both operational and community policing components of police-refugee experiences. In brief, it provided evidence that community policing roles and reassurance strategies have a strong and positive impact on police- refugee relations. Several themes emerged that will be explored in this report. Quotes utilised to illustrate data in this report have been distinguished by rank or job type to provide some context for the comments at the same time as ensuring confidentiality.

Research assistants from each refugee 'community'<sup>183</sup> were employed to assist in the organisation of focus groups. This included organising communications, date, time and location and in most cases the same person acted as an interpreter. This enhanced the trust that had been undermined by recent media. The research assistants were all well respected members of their communities with appropriate interpreting skills. Employing these research assistants gave formal recognition to the significance of their role. Hospitality, place of safety, time and place were all considerations important to the success of the interaction particularly considering the context of heightened suspicion in 2007-08 fuelled by negative media representations of African Communities in Australia.

Some focus groups were organised on the basis of country of origin while others were organised on the basis of common attributes such as age, gender and visa type (eg. unlinked entrants). Interviews were conducted with individuals from the refugee communities, some of whom also worked as professionals in sectors that worked with refugee clients (settlement sector, health, employment, or as interpreters). These individuals acted as 'key informants' in that they reported professional observations as well as offering their personal experiences. The use of these 'key informants' was a conscious decision on the part of the researchers to ensure that data or individuals could be analysed as either unique or typical of subsets of the communities. These subsets included youth, women, married men, parents and unlinked male entrants.

The interviews with members of the refugee community and police explored both operational and community policing components of the police-refugee experiences. The focus group questions referred to topics that had emerged from the individual interviews and previous focus groups. Many of these topics were raised naturally by the group without prompting. Traffic issues (such as driving, drink driving and driver's licenses) and family violence were raised by all groups. There were three focus group questions.

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<sup>183</sup> The concept of community is being used here in its policy context not in its sociological and/or anthropological sense. The use of this term does not imply the existence of a single homogenous, bounded social entity. It is recognised that community formation involves a complex process of identification by 'self' and 'other' such that the category of 'African refugees' comprises a number of distinct communities that have established themselves in different parts of Australia. These processes are addressed in the larger study but cannot be discussed in any detail in this paper.

1. What is this problem for your community?
2. What are the symptoms for your community?
3. What are the solutions to enhance police and refugee relations in your community?

Several themes emerged that are presented in this report. Quotes utilised to illustrate data in this report have been distinguished by gender and age to provide some context for the comments as well as ensuring confidentiality.

## **7 Barriers and Enablers in Police-Refugee and Refugee-Police Relationships**

The barriers and enablers to positive relationships were explored with both police and members of the refugee communities. These barriers and enablers are interconnected and reinforce each other, hence the value of presenting both a police perspective and the refugee perspective.

### **7.1 Barriers and enablers from the police perspective**

The barriers and enablers to the relationship that emerged from the research data were firstly, a need for strategies that have a strong organisational foundation encompassing refugee background considerations in planning. That is, acknowledging that the refugee experience needed to be considered in policing approaches where the refugee community is concerned. There will be aspects that may not necessarily be immediately apparent but should be considered in strategies, processes and communication with these communities and its members. Secondly, there were issues related to language difficulties and thirdly, access to resources.

#### **7.1.1 Strategies at organisational foundation**

The background of the refugee may include direct negative experiences with police, fear of authority, fear of uniform, and living in a culture of survival, corruption and/or war. There is strong anecdotal evidence of direct negative experiences, some over very long periods of time. Officers have spoken of receiving knowledge of an individual's past experiences, particularly with people in authority, which makes the exaggerated nature of reactions more understandable.

These have included survival of a mass execution, torture, having family members taken by police and never returning, brutality and murder by people of authority. It also relates to stories that in giving information to police something 'happened' to a friend or family member. A fear of authority and/or fear of uniform can evoke strong associations in those with a trauma background. These could include those individuals with direct experiences but could also influence the perspective of large numbers of individuals not necessarily directly linked to the particular incident. This is a common reality for many refugees who have experienced contracted periods of danger and vulnerability. The length of these experiences means that some individuals may have childhood experiences that they are unable to disassociate with in adulthood. These may strongly influence reactions to police as indicated by the following report from a commissioned police officer:

One lady I was told was from Sierra Leone, she had been married for 12 months, the police came and took her husband away and that was it she never saw him again. You could see in her eyes and a few of the others little bit of fear ... or an apprehension about police and after an hour with them they were more relaxed and they realised that the police were here to help them. Later there was a multicultural display with a big portrait of her explaining how she had felt more relaxed after a policeman had spoken to her ... you have to break down the barriers ... if you go about it the right way and spend the time with them (newly arrived refugees) ...it gives them more comfort that way ... if we can get them feeling better then community can work together. (Commissioned Officer)

I do talks and tours through the station for refugees ... so they know ... maybe different from their perception of a police officer ... get the message that our policing may be different. (Constable)

Verbal abuse and graffiti against a number of families, so I thought it may give more comfort if somebody with rank came out to see them. (Commissioned Officer)

Living in survival mode, in a protracted war situation or where corruption is common has the potential to normalise experiences related to these areas and its associated extreme behaviour. In the Australian settlement context, however, behaviours may be judged as corrupt, aggressive or volatile. It should be understood that these comments are not related to any question of the authority of the rule of law in relation to any individual's action but that there may exist a climate of misunderstanding unrelated to any present conditions, which is affecting the individual's action.

A group of African males got pulled up in a car for a breathalyser, the driver of the car was arrested and had to go and have a breath analysis test because he had exceeded the breathalyser test, which meant going to the police station ... the passengers in the car then became agitated ... though what we believe they thought was that he was going to be taken away and shot or injured, so they then set upon the police officers. All got injured, some of the Africans got injured ... it was quite violent quite quickly ... (Commissioned Officer)

This case has resulted in one charge of driving whilst over the legal limit and three charges of assaulting a police officer. The contact with police in a routine traffic operation had produced a volatile situation for all the individuals involved. For some individuals with a refugee background there seems to be a lack of ability to have a graded response to a situation of confrontation. There were also examples of school bullying resulting in outcomes that were stronger than it would seem the incident deserved.

There are also examples of a lack of language understanding resulting in individuals being taken back to the station for ignoring a police officer's direction.

Especially when alcohol has been involved, individuals have misunderstood the request to move on or they have been offered a ride home to try and diffuse the situation only to have the situation result in an arrest. This outcome seems to be more likely when less experienced police officers were involved, especially if they have had no prior contact with individuals from the refugee community.

You can see why it happens - recently arrived with thoughts still of their home ... talking first hand about family members being brutalised by people in authority, be it police or army and sometimes murdered. I am not sure that a lot of our police officers really understand ... in fact I am sure they don't ... I do not know what we can do about it ... maybe training at the academy ... to have an understanding of when they react, why they may be reacting in that way. (Commissioned Officer)

The clarity that is required about the rule of law in Australia, especially related to specific issues such as family violence, needs to be emphasised not diluted. In the context of refugee cultural consideration in police contact with the refugee community, the benefits lie in the practical acknowledgement that causal factors accelerating a reactionary policing situation may need to be considered. In this way, refugee communities' needs require policing that is informed and sensitive to the potential complexities of a situation involving a refugee.

Situations when men are starting to drink ... they are here and that is wonderful but there is a boredom ... their role as provider has changed ... they do not feel they fit in anywhere ... the alcohol fuels family argument which is actually more about the women being empowered in Australia ... especially because our family violence campaigns are strongly focused on women knowing rights not men's support in the change. (Constable)

### **7.1.2 Language barriers**

The second theme in the data related to language barriers. The issue of assessing a situation particularly with a 'call out' incident is more complex where English capacity is low. More experienced officer's spoke of the use of body language, voice tone and other indicators as supports when assessing at least the severity of the situation. The details of a situation are immediately crucial in a policing context. The need to use an interpreter, even when understood by police officers, presents numerous practical issues. These include establishing the language spoken, access to on-site or telephone interpreters in the appropriate language, the timely nature of that access, confidentiality in small communities and concerns surrounding costs.

### 7.1.3 Access to resources

The third theme in the data concerned resources. This included three topics: difficulty in accessing interpreters, time and training. They were expressed as frustrations, though more in terms of the need to acknowledge the issues within the police service than a simplistic demand for the issues to be 'solved'. All these issues are potentially exacerbated in a regional setting. Concerns focused on the police skills required in assessing interpreter need and the process of engaging interpreters, including cost considerations.

There are decisions about how and when to use interpreters that some police had found challenging. There needed to be an acknowledgment by policing organisations that contact with refugees was labour intensive and time consuming both in the community policing role of reassurance and in operational policing. To be most successful it also required police personnel with certain social skills.

The act of simply going back to tell the family that we had caught the guy, he would be going to court and he was not allowed to go near them again. It costs us \$250. (Sergeant)

With a call out for family violence ... each incident takes 4-7 hours ... it's long and exhausting and the refugee context even harder. (Commissioned Officer)

They are all very keen (in community policing). They want to be there and I think that's very important. (Commissioned Officer)

The issues for regional police services may be quite specific. Two significant areas are the influence of public opinion and the lack of personal experiences of diversity among police personnel. Issues associated with 'othering'<sup>184</sup> may be potentially different in a regional context as can be seen in other examples of rural racism.<sup>185</sup> In addition, the unpredictable nature of refugee settlement in terms of preparation and reaction to establishing contact presents problems for regional police.

Assaults ... against whole families .... Verbal and slogans, swastikas on their property and slogans like 'go home you black c...' on their doorsteps, fences and the pavements ... Pretty good idea about who it is but families say please do not do anymore because they are fearful of retribution. (Commissioned Officer)

There was some shoplifting by girls (of refugee community) from Catholic schools in some areas ... the shop owners are good at recognising uniforms and contacting the school, who then might contact me in an advisory role if it is a minor matter ... the shop owners are happy to not

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<sup>184</sup> Riggins, S., 1997, *ibid*

<sup>185</sup> Chakraborti, N. and J.. Garland, 2004, *ibid*

proceed as long as it's addressed. (Constable)

Some comments were made about frustrations concerning clear leadership. The benefit of leadership in the refugee community to police means ease of dissemination of information or assistance in solving a complex matter with an individual from that community especially where it has not yet become criminal in nature. There was comment of 'in fighting' for influence or a lack of solidarity about issue or clear 'elders' which meant police contact with the communities was not able to be maintained in ways that had been successful in the past with other CALD communities. It is difficult to establish if this occurs in all refugee communities from Africa or if it is a regional issue due to small numbers and staggered settlement. This is an area that requires observation in the future.

Cultural differences such as in family violence and intergenerational conflict demonstrate the layers of understanding required when educating a new community about issues of law and order. The following examples highlight that this understanding takes time and also the potential for these cultural tensions to lead to more serious concerns.

One gentleman had been most upset about the Australian laws on family violence, I'm not sure that he had been violent, but the concept of males and females being equal here was a problem. In fact three times he left the meeting and stomped up and down the footpaths, waving his arms around on his own. I said to him the other day when I saw him that he was much quieter. "Yes I am sorry about that." So he has gone away and reflected on what was said, so we do get the message across but it takes time. (Commissioned Officer)

I was amazed that the women expected and thought that it was their husband's right to hit them if they did not have dinner at the table. The women got really upset when I said that in Australia you can't hit each other ... but it's my husband's right, he is my husband. (Commissioned Officer)

A chap put his hand up meekly and said, "Excuse me, do I have to talk to my wife?" I said, "I am sorry, what do you mean by that?" He said, "If I talk to her sometimes she yells and screams and throws things at me. So I would prefer not to talk but I do not want to get into trouble". (Commissioned Officer)

Parents' ways of disciplining the children ... mothers disciplining the daughters quite violent ... even burning ... these situations are noticed at school ... when the girl comes to school with a superficial injury ... with children saying, "I do not have to ... do what you want to" ... the change in family's ways of doing things ... with many men lost in war ... lots of mothers and aunties bringing up the kids and sons having to take over their father's roles ... so as much as we can tell them what our rules are ... in the heat of the moment they go back to how they have sorted things out before –physically ... so now that we have some alcohol coming into play

that's a problem not with a lot but a few individual families trying to keep the families together ... keep the peace restraint order in the house rather than split the families up. (Constable)

#### **7.1.4 Initiating a positive agenda**

The most significant comment in terms of barriers to effective policing concerned knowledge and perceptions. Knowledge and perception creation is the most fundamental place for change and most fundamental forum for relationship building according to most police interviewed. In terms of police contact though some of the issues are about how you instill a strong philosophy around understanding the refugee experience to build good strategies and broad strategies for individual police to utilise within an operational context. Time is a key component of this relationship, both amount and length. Building the relationship requires a strong focus on lessening a general lack of trust that characterises these communities due to their experiences. When the opportunities for building a relationship were created results occurred.

Talking to the (African) men's group about family violence, we started with 10-12 and then within 20 minutes there was 35 men ... they came in from everywhere ... with a good cross section of men from different countries ... it was standing room only. (Commissioned Officer)

According to some police officers there was an emerging trend that with an increase in numbers of refugees from Africa there seemed to be a decrease in some types of incidences. Police officers referred to the benefit of critical mass concerning knowledge and perceptions of police and law and order issues.

This critical mass concerning knowledge was described as the benefits of having a safe 'sounding board'. It was clear that police felt they were not dealing with high criminality rates with this community, but just a high potential for misunderstanding and for exaggerated behaviours often not directly associated with the incident.

'Safe at Home' (family violence) legislation is a lot of work to educate the community, probably 2-3 years to get the message out properly. (Commissioned Officer)

#### **7.1.5 Successful strategies**

Three successful strategies emerged: 1. observation of case trends, 2. situational assessments and a focus on 3. generic solution in response to specific incidents. Small regional stations can track cases involving refugee communities to build an understanding of areas of tension and concern for police. Complex situational assessment can often support the accumulation of critical knowledge. Some

regional areas were utilising their size to their advantage to maximise understanding of their new community members.

The CIB allocate all the files (concerning refugees) to one person, a detective so he has got an overall picture instead of them being everywhere

... otherwise it can slip through and someone thinks it's an isolated incident when it's not. (Commissioned Officer)

In the last six months anything that even remotely involved racism, I get a copy of the report. (Commissioned Officer)

Situational assessment where it may be borderline or an early intervention strategy may be mediation ... decide on the best way in doing things ... (Constable)

After an assault and a family being hassled to the point where they were hiding under the kitchen table ... they did not know police would be interested in their problem ... so later we ran soccer matches between police and youths from the African communities to try and break down the barriers ... to show there was nothing to be scared of and one of the African boys played who had been assaulted by the boys that were particularly nasty. (Commissioned Officer)

It is clear that knowledge and perceptions within police-refugee relations are problematic due to the fact that it remains really difficult to measure outcomes and therefore to justify the existence of community policing. This obviously presents challenges for policing and the expectations related to key performance measures of the policing services.

## **7.2 Barriers and enablers from the refugee perspective**

The material in the interviews and focus groups with African Australian community members focused primarily on policing. Within the focus groups, experiences referred to community or reassurance policing, incident responses and other social factors as precursors to police contact. The topics that emerged were racism, traffic and licensing, substance use, family violence and issues concerning youth. Mental illness was also raised in some sessions but it became clear that the concept of mental illness was approached very differently to the mainstream Australian context.

Public opinion was very important to all groups regardless of ethnicity, age or gender. The concerns raised were slightly different for each of these categories. For example, youth were concerned about being vilified and parents were concerned about the climate for their children. It was found that among some respondents the emotive power of media portrayals had undermined confidence that they were being fairly treated. The vilification of black Africans by the media had obviously affected morale and feelings of belonging.

The findings clearly demonstrated that attitudes towards, and experiences with police and legal systems are significant factors in the process of refugee settlement. In particular, the question of community policing was a theme that recurred throughout the interviews and focus groups.

Is it a community which would live in harmony and that comes through understanding and education, not necessarily through courts, through law enforcement? Law enforcement, for me as a person is meant to keep the community in balance – I mean to protect everyone in the community and protection means you will have all sorts of people to protect, even the ones that are inflicting harm (Male, aged in 30s).

Echoing the themes in previous research on settlement more generally, there were three distinct themes that emerged in the current research: background and transition, knowledge acquisition and education, and reactions to present experiences. Each had sub themes.

### **Background and Transition**

#### **7.2.1 Past experiences of police still relevant**

It was found that respondents had had numerous negative experiences with police during pre migration.<sup>186</sup> Many were direct, many were as witnesses and many were as part of experiences shared with friends and family. The severity of

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<sup>186</sup> Schuck, A. and D. Rosenbaum, Global and Neighbourhood Attitudes Toward the Police: Differentiation by Race, Ethnicity and Type of Contact. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2005. 21(4): p. 391-418.

these experiences must never be downplayed. Most refugees coming to Australia have experienced state sanctioned violence in the process of fleeing. Some respondents chose to refer directly to these experiences that impacted on their suspicion or fear of police personnel or anyone in uniform. It became clear that the relevance of those experiences was still a daily life consideration.

Look I really, really get nervous ... when I come across police, when I see a police car, I feel scared. I really get nervous and if a police car is following me I try and stop and let them go. ...I'm thinking I don't like you, I don't want to see you ...I see someone who is corrupt, someone who is going to abuse me, use his powers, kill me, take my money, because my experience is this. So when I look at a policeman whether I am right or I am wrong, it doesn't matter, he's got the power, he's got that male power. ... I have to run away. Even if something goes wrong, it's hard to think about (calling the) police. (Female, aged in 30s).

... if you have been exposed to a traumatic experience you seem to respond to that in a certain way. And if that works you keep that, and that becomes part of your frame of reference. (Male, aged in 30s)

## 7.2.2 Diverse coping strategies

The lack of consistency in information dissemination and in its absorption meant that some respondents were living in a vacuum in relation to understanding their rights and responsibilities under Australian law. Even those who had dealt with Australian laws expressed concerns including remaining confused about the facts of the laws and their ramifications. They had very different coping strategies on arrival in Australia and different abilities to take in all the new information.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>188</sup> These abilities will be different over time and diverse among members of a new and emerging community.

... as a refugee you tend to, even if you live as a refugee one single year or three months, what happens is you would be robbed of your confidence as a person. (Male, aged 30s)

Initially, knowledge of the Australian law did not always rate as important. Instead issues like housing, banking, school and employment were at the forefront of people's minds. If they missed an opportunity to gain knowledge of the law at the beginning there were not necessarily other opportunities. Not all communities even had access to this information in the first six months. There was a lack of continuity in the delivery of information regarding the Australian law to new arrivals. The nature of multi-agency service delivery in the settlement sector may be contributing to this issue in continuity. Nevertheless, responsibility for realising this gap in knowledge cannot be expected from those who have recently arrived.

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<sup>187</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, 2004, *ibid*

<sup>188</sup> Ager, A. and A. Strang, 2004, *ibid*

### 7.2.3 Gender and intergenerational stress and a lack of balancing agents within family

Changes in family structure<sup>189</sup> are one of the most powerful challenges for refugee individuals and families, and one of the most complex areas in terms of the provision of support in settlement.<sup>190 191</sup> Gender and intergenerational conflict were discussed by participants, where power and access differences were disrupting familiar understandings of the family unit. Financial components were cited as the most important trigger for this stress and its associated problems. Many participants voiced concerns about the perception that Australia is a women's world and parents voiced concerns about their children. In addition, young people felt uncomfortable with the power they had over parents through access to knowledge and language but acknowledged that they could not always resist using it.

Yeah money is the major source of family violence conflict because, for example, this is back in Africa where the man is the head of the family and the kids will not be under, like the concession card where all the kids are under the name of your wife and then some will realise all my power has gone to the wife. (Male, aged in late 20s)

... learning becomes difficult when you are from a different community, another community and people might not view it that way. Like we were talking about parenting issues and I said 'you guys seem to think that African families don't know parenting' and that we teach them parenting. I said, 'this is ridiculous. Are you the ones who raised their children? No.' But we have a different style of parenting than you have, we have different parenting than you have. You do what you do because you have certain values. It's natural to draw your principles and your practices from your values. And if I have certain values what I do, I am doing because I think it will reinforce those values in my children and reflect that so if there has to be any education it has to be participatory education and it has to be about sharing different experiences of parenting. Not telling people that you don't do it this way – not that way of teaching but just tell them that they have another way of parenting. We do it because we have these values. (Male, aged in 30s)

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<sup>189</sup> Samarasinghe, K. and B. Arvidsson, 2002, *ibid*

<sup>190</sup> Iredale, R., et al., 1996, *ibid*

<sup>191</sup> Julian, Franklin & Flemingham, *Home from Home: Refugees in Tasmania*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1997: Belconnen, A.C.T.

## Knowledge Acquisition and Education

### 7.2.4 Confusion, hesitancy and extremity

If people felt unsure about facts then behaviour potentially could be more exaggerated.

The findings of a tendency of exaggerated behavior, in some cases, included behavior associated with both withdrawal and high levels of anxiety. The concern is that in neither of these states do people have straightforward relationships to the police service and its supports or a sense of safety.<sup>192</sup> <sup>193</sup> There were different coping strategies to deal with this lack of knowledge: some withdrew, whilst others became very vocal in an attempt to access the knowledge.

The responses can be seen in two forms: passive and active reactions. In the passive responses the most obvious example was with laws relating to personal interactions especially within the family. Where was the line drawn about family violence and how can I discipline my kids? People had some information but they did not necessarily know how to put it into practice in real situations effectively. So, in many cases, not only had the knowledge impacted on family relations but undermined a parent's ability to parent because their confidence to judge what was right and wrong in this new context was undermined. Many felt children and youth held the power, children and youth had access to support. Children and youth had access to information. Children and youth were actively being encouraged to have this information at the tips of their fingers. Participants realised an imbalance between the learning of rights in Australia and a practical understanding of their responsibilities. Parents felt children suffered from this imbalance and it exaggerated their behavior. This was evident in the following comments:

I will ring the authorities if you hit me Dad, says my 5-year-old when he came home from school. I have never hit him. (Male, aged in 40s)

I did not know what I was allowed to do when my son was annoying a woman on the plane coming to Australia. She kept looking at me but after seeing the pre-departure video, I didn't know what I was allowed to do. So I did nothing. (Male, aged in 50s)

My daughter seems to have child protection (phone) numbers on every page of her school diary. (Female, aged in 40s)

There were also references to more active responses. If the grasp of knowledge was tentative it seemed there is a risk of a reversion to survival mode behavior.

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<sup>192</sup> Phillips, C. and B. Bowling, Racism, Ethnicity and Criminology. Developing Minority Perspectives, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 2003. 43: p. 269-290.

<sup>193</sup> Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Multicultural Perspectives on Crime and Safety*. 2000: Melbourne.

This is the kind of behavior that refugees may have relied on during times of flight or danger. It was also a concern that in an incident response situation heightened senses of anxiety may lead to exaggerated exchanges between police and members of the refugee communities.

Attitude is very important because if you have quite a balanced attitude towards a certain element you react that way – your reaction comes from your attitude because if you choose or if you perceive that that person or a policeman is a very bad kind of person. If someone thinks in their mind that police is bad person for instance if they are caught in a situation whereby the police have asked them to stop the immediate reaction from their mind is to flee not to stop. They might, they have done nothing wrong but they will still flee. (Male, aged in 20s)

### **7.2.5 People wanted to know *why* the law exists**

There was a real sense that a lack of understanding of the reasons that various laws existed had an impact on their acceptance. It seemed that a lack of this knowledge meant that some respondents found the law more confronting and they personalised its existence to their community. This was particularly true of aspects of family violence laws and the laws surrounding the discipline of children. When these laws were explained in a more universal context, acceptance was increased.

Training sessions that were more specific to an aspect of the law rather than a broad overview of Australian law, led to increased understanding at a practical level. When the sessions were weighted more heavily to question and answer sessions it promoted increased acceptance of the laws and an increased sense of empowerment in the community members. These observations were further substantiated in the individual interviews and focus groups. For example, in a recent workshop presented by police, people were informed that 'Safe at Home' laws in Tasmania came into force after seven women were killed by intimate partners between 2000-03. The question from the group was 'Were any of those women African?' Similarly, from a participant who had been here longer than six months, 'Are the laws for men and women?' (Male, aged in 30s). These quotes demonstrate the need to clarify the assumptions underpinning specific laws in Australia and the need to determine whose responsibility it is to ensure that newly arrived refugees understand their rights and responsibilities concerning the law. It was apparent throughout the process of data collection that people 'do not know that they do not know something'.

## **Reactions to Present Experiences**

### **7.2.6 Community mythology**

The data indicated the existence of assumption building in the refugee communities concerning police and Australian law. The experiences as individuals and families in each community became the mythology on which the community based their actions and their beliefs about the police and the Australian law in general. The presence of family violence (even though in only one or two families in some communities) meant the experiences of these few families was accepted as 'the way it is' in Australia. Importantly, the general public also develops understandings of the law in the same way.

However, for a community with weak social links to mainstream services and communities, and whose members have not been socialised into these laws, this mythology creation is even more powerful. It can exacerbate already existing feelings of confusion and misunderstanding. Acquiring information in this manner leads to negative outcomes. In the words of one participant:

It's not learning it's 'fearing'. (Male in 40s)

### **7.2.7 Feelings of less access to justice or limited follow through**

This was a complex area in the findings. Nevertheless, the influence of this finding has the potential to be far reaching in the communities. A feeling of lack of access to justice and/or follow through was a sentiment that was deeply felt by some members of the refugee communities. Many people referred to contact with police, particularly where they may have been a victim, where follow up by a police officer had been limited.

A lack of information, which had often been promised, meant that people were left wondering whether or how the law had been enforced. The importance of feedback was very significant for some participants and in its absence people were left feeling that the police had not supported them.

Even if there is blood (in Africa) the law has been broken. Isn't my blood as important? (Male, aged late teens)

... in the African context you look for a sort of reconciliatory judgment ... in the law, what happens is the legal system has conceded the cultural values and its importance ... and probably the difference is your laws seem to have emanated from the fact that the individual right is the most important right. Our laws probably, like many African countries, the laws there might come from a collective angle which is like from community, ethnic groups are more important. (Male, aged in 30s)

### 7.2.8 Reporting

The discussion, particularly in the focus groups, clearly highlighted changes in reporting trends as communities became more aware of the ramifications of the laws.<sup>194</sup><sup>195</sup> This included under-reporting, over-reporting and a few cases of false reporting of family violence. These trends indicate that the safety measures that these laws are designed to ensure may not be effective in all cases.

She thought that they would come and give him some warning and that he would make sense of it and then he would come back to the relationship that was her intention. But when she found out that he was given that (court order) and the kids were telling, 'you are the one who did this to our father, and you have destroyed ...' and she couldn't live with that. It was very hard for her to understand why that happened because she didn't know that they would do that. (Male, aged in 30s)

### 7.2.9 Reflections on other approaches

Some participants reflected on traditional methods used in the African context. These included mediation, reconciliation and elder support. Queries were made about what other methods of diffusing conflict were used in Australia along with police intervention.

... who can arbitrate for both. So what they do is then the court sends the case back to the elders, not to make judgment but to see if there can be a sort of reconciliation between the two parties without siding with the one or the other. If the situation can be resolved without going into the pain of divorce and letting their own community disintegrate and letting their own children have to be divided and it's a big problem because, bare in mind that, in many African countries we don't have a social service or social system whereby the kids will be taken care of by the government. (Male, aged in 30s)

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<sup>194</sup> West, C., Domestic Violence in Ethnically and Racially Diverse Families: The "Political Gag Order" Has been Lifted, in *Domestic Violence on the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender and Culture*, N. Sokoloff, Editor. 2005, Rutgers University Press.

<sup>195</sup> Rees, S. and B. Pease, 2006, *ibid*

## 8 Discussion and Conclusions

### 8.1 Discussion

Previous research on settlement has identified the refugee's background, cultural knowledge and interpersonal experiences as significant contributors to successful settlement. This research confirms the importance of these aspects but identifies issues relating to police and legal systems as crucial in outcomes for refugees - as individuals and as communities. Based on the analysis of data collected through interviews and focus groups with African refugees and police, this research concludes that the following components are required to ensure positive and sustainable refugee-police relations in regional Australia. There needs to be an assisted process of knowledge creation and transfer about Australian law for individuals, families and communities with a focus on practical application to break down the effects of past experiences.

Education delivery must also acknowledge diversity in the different refugee communities, coping strategies and personalities of individuals. There needs to be consistency in the delivery of education about Australian law in terms of time and amount. The spot fire mentality of providing education when trouble starts should not be relied on so extensively. Education and support concerning understanding the law in any incident-based contact needs to be sensitive of the family involved even if delivery is directly based on the individual. The wider family will be the support for that individual and that family needs to understand the context, processes and expectations concerning Australian police services and the justice system. An acknowledgement of the power/gender/age dynamic shifts and their implications in settlement needs is also required and an appreciation of the implications on the family and individual in their contact with police services. Overall, it is clear that an understanding of 'experiential difference' by refugees, police and other service providers is crucial for enhancing the settlement experiences of refugees in new and emerging communities. Finally, there needs to be an appreciation of the importance of the relationship between the individual and the community among refugees and how policing in Australia may cause tensions between members of the refugee communities and police.

What became important was the acknowledgement that the problems were not about the good or bad of law in Australia or Africa, but about transition and change and an awareness that change takes time. Overall, education and transfer of knowledge concerning Australian law needs to be factual, relevant and timely. It was apparent from both the analysis of refugee and police data that relationship building and education for both refugees and police were paramount in creating positive community experiences. This is clearly articulated by one of the refugee participants:

The first question would be do you have a community education

program because there is no community policing without a community education program. The first thing is you will have to make people aware how the laws work here and what it means, what the consequences are. Then they will be aware and then they will act different and they will cooperate with the police. (Male, aged in 30s)

## **8.2 Wider contributions of the project**

The researchers have made a conscious decision to promote the research at a large number of forums. The rationale was to raise debate and discussion concerning this highly sensitive aspect of refugee settlement and to test the research with diverse audiences that influence and contribute to the wider area of research in refugee settlement and policing in Australia. These forums included both international and national conferences in discipline areas such as criminology, cultural diversity, sociology, refugee settlement, policing and social exclusion and inclusion.

The research has highlighted over-reporting and under-reporting trends which were brought to the attention of both DIAC and Tasmania Police to ensure that support could be sourced for the community. The research has contributed knowledge to projects such as those aimed at assessing the extent of victimisation and under-reporting by members of refugee communities in Tasmania and has provided support for the *Tasmanians Talking Project* currently underway.

Feedback from the ARC Linkage partners has acknowledged that the project has been very beneficial. Issues of concern regarding policing and the new and emerging communities are regularly raised by community members and are a high priority for DIAC to support positive settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants. The research has raised the awareness of individuals and contributed to the organisational intelligence of DIAC and Tasmania Police. In particular, it is expected that the findings and the strategies emerging from the research will inform the training of police officers. The outcome will be to enable Tasmania Police to respond to humanitarian entrants in a cohesive and proactive manner rather than being reactive in the context of an incident. It has assisted in the strengthening of positive partnerships in the pursuit of successful refugee settlement in regional Australia.

## **8.3 Conclusion**

The research demonstrates that the key issue is that of maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of police work not about making police counselors. It indicates that the process of policing must contain maximum education and knowledge acquisition opportunities for members of these new communities. It highlights the need for a strong understanding of the detrimental nature of negative

perceptions of police carried from pre-arrival refugee experiences that can remain with individuals, families, specific community groups and occasionally with the community as a whole. The longer the negative attitude is maintained the more difficult it is to change. Therefore the importance of proactive presentation of law and order issues and the way in which the face of Australian police is presented are of utmost importance.

From the police perspective, community policing strategies offer the key to developing and maintaining positive police and refugee relations. It is equally important for members of the refugee community and police personnel to act as agents of change and to create opportunities to enhance police-refugee and refugee-police relations.

Strategies in regional areas may need to be different to those in metropolitan locations and focus on communication as a strong foundation for police and refugee relationships. Effective communication and relationships enable quality policing to overcome barriers that may have been created by the refugee experience and transition to a new country. As was commented:

... the community as our customer means everyone deserves equal quality of policing to address their need to feel safe. In this case it might mean more effort. (Commissioned Officer)

#### **8.4 Where to now?**

The research has identified a number of key themes in relation to the development and maintenance of positive relationships between police and refugees in regional Australia. Police are aware of the challenges and difficulties associated with newly arrived refugee communities and this research points to some strategies that may assist them in addressing these. At the same time, members of newly arrived refugee communities are aware of the gaps in their knowledge and understanding of Australian law and law enforcement. This research also identifies strategies that can assist members of refugee communities to address these gaps.

In the next section of this report, these strategies (for police, refugees and other organisations in which refugees have contact during settlement) are presented as a framework for enhancing positive police and refugee relations in regional Australia.

## **9 Framework and Strategies for Positive Police and Refugee Relations**

The next section outlines a framework and associated strategies that can be adopted to encourage positive relations between police and refugees.

### **9.1 Framework**

#### **9.1.1 Principles and prerequisites**

The successful development and maintenance of positive relationships between police and newly arrived refugee communities requires a focus on the following principles:

##### **1. The refugee journey**

An understanding of how prior experiences and the social context during settlement in Australia may be experienced from the perspective of a newly arrived refugee.

##### **2. Complexity**

An appreciation of the potential complexity of an incident when language, cultural and experiential differences are present.

##### **3. Access**

An understanding of the importance of access to education and knowledge acquisition for members of refugee communities (regardless of whether their contact with police is as victims or perpetrators) to reduce the likelihood of negative contacts with police in the future.

##### **4. Active requests**

An appreciation that not all individuals will need extra support but that those who need assistance most are potentially least able to ask.

##### **5. Two way relations**

An appreciation that any positive relationship will be established through a two way process and often needs to be ongoing to achieve lasting results for that refugee community or family.

##### **6. Multidimensional communication**

An appreciation that relationships may involve multidimensional communication with other parties involved in a support role (for example, interpreters and settlement support staff).

## **7. Whole of community education**

An understanding that the impact of contact should be considered from an individual, family and community perspective to maximize relationship building and to minimise misunderstandings.

## **8. Consistency and quality**

Although some of these strategies may be in use by police personnel, acknowledgement that consistency is important and therefore strategies need to be embedded in training, policy and procedures to have maximum effect.

## **9. Agents of change**

An appreciation that both police and members of the refugee communities need to act as agents for change.

The principles identified above, when linked with the following understandings, are likely to lead to strategies that will enable positive police and refugee relations to develop:

1. Police are a key agency in supporting a positive settlement experience.
2. Any experience at an individual level has a flow-on effect to the refugee communities.
3. A whole of community approach is most effective.
4. An interagency approach and partnerships are crucial.
5. Relationship building takes time.

### **9.1.2 Overarching strategies**

Overarching key strategy areas to stimulate positive police and refugee relations include:

1. Communication;
2. Education and training;
3. Maximising organisational intelligence and expertise;
4. Positive partnerships; and
5. Promotion of positive images of newly arrived communities

## **9.2 Desired Outcomes for Police-Refugee and Refugee-Police Relationships**

1. An understanding by members of refugee communities of the role of police in maintaining law and order by promoting education about rights and responsibilities in Australian law in a way that is accessible, practical and easy to understand.

2. The education of police officers to ensure proficiency in dealing with an incident involving members of newly arrived refugee communities.
3. The maximization of police effectiveness and efficiency by adopting community policing strategies underpinned by cultural competency training.
4. Equal access by all members of the Tasmanian community to police services and the justice system.

The next section outlines the roles that non-police organisations and refugee communities can play in the enhancement of positive police and refugee relations. The direct role of policing organisations is then explored by outlining key strategies for police to enhance positive police and refugee relations.

### **9.3 Key Strategies for Refugee Communities and Non-Police Organisations to Enhance Positive Police and Refugee Relations**

#### **9.3.1 Education and information**

1. To promote education on the rights and responsibilities associated with Australian law in a way that is accessible, practical and easy to understand.
2. To ensure the use of interpreters to enable the client to communicate effectively.
3. To maximise the education potential of every incident so that police contact with a member of a refugee community has the capacity to inform the whole community.
4. To promote the importance of reporting to facilitate police support and longer-term safety of the community.
5. To promote the establishment of a mechanism for reporting crime and anti-social behavior to a non-police party as a process to build up trust in the system of law and its enforcement. Additionally, to collect data and evidence from this process to inform policy and procedures.

#### **9.3.2 Relationship building**

1. To develop relationships with police and to create or take up opportunities for feedback to the police as an organisation.
2. To actively participate in the wider mainstream community to increase acceptance, and to normalise the presence, of humanitarian entrants in regional Australia.
3. To maximise positive portrayals of African Australians and newly arrived refugee communities more generally.

### **9.3.3 Enhancing positive refugee and police relations**

1. To build and maintain the relationships between current key refugee community leaders and police personnel.
2. To work in partnership with settlement support service providers and multicultural organisations to contribute to the promotion of understanding by the wider community of the refugee journey and the settlement of humanitarian entrants into Australia.
3. To work with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to promote training in law, acknowledgement of leaders in the police organisation, and contact between police and key members of the refugee communities.
4. To work with agencies in the criminal justice system to increase an understanding of processes in the criminal justice system and to improve a sense of justice among members of refugee communities.
5. To encourage key service organisations to build into existing programs or create new project opportunities to support positive police and refugee relations. Key agencies include:
  - Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS) providers to provide and promote an adequate level of understanding in refugee communities about the law and working with police.
  - The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and education providers to ensure ongoing education about the law, especially new aspects of policing (for example the introduction of the *Safe at Home* initiative in Tasmania)
  - Other organisations to establish consistent links between police and settlement service providers to ensure that ongoing support provided to members of the refugee communities includes information that is factual and that workers can easily pass on to their clients.

## **9.4 Key Strategies for Police to Enhance Positive Police and Refugee Relations**

### **9.4.1 Training and education**

1. To ensure cultural competency is built into all police training. Four key areas have been identified:
  - a. Awareness raising of the refugee journey in recruit training.
  - b. Education in recruit and officer training on how to deal with incidents involving a member of the refugee community.
  - c. In-service training and supervisor support mechanisms to ensure proficient handling of both community policing strategies and incident response when newly arrived refugees are involved.
2. To ensure training opportunities include the following aspects:
  - a. The provision of training to staff in cross-cultural communication skills in order to maximize the refugee's understanding of an incident.
  - b. How to work with interpreters: when, why, and how.
  - c. How to use community policing strategies in refugee communities to maximise individuals' perceptions of safety.
  - d. How to maximise the education potential of every incident so that contact with members of the refugee community has the capacity to inform the whole community through effective communication, clear direction, feedback and follow through mechanisms.
  - e. Highlighting the dangers of stereotyping and uncritical assumptions and the potential impact of these in dealing with an incident.
  - f. Acknowledgement of the specific needs of sub-sections of the population such as refugee women, youth and young men arriving alone.
  - g. Promotion of the necessity of reporting crime to police and the education of refugee communities about its importance.
  - h. To acknowledge diversity in refugee communities and how it may influence service delivery.

### **9.4.2 Effective policy and procedures and facilitating communication**

1. To communicate clearly and respectfully with humanitarian entrants and to actively facilitate the ability of members of refugee communities to communicate clearly with police.
2. To develop protocols that ensure the use of interpreters to enable the client to communicate more effectively.

3. To listen and act on information from individual refugees to increase perceptions of safety through community policing strategies.
4. To provide accessible information to individuals and refugee communities on referral and post incident support and to provide follow-up to individuals, families and the wider refugee community post-incident through a tailored approach that takes into account individual circumstances.
5. To ensure that police contact in these complex circumstances is supported by protocol and enhanced by cultural competency. Review and monitor the current methods of dealing with cases involving refugee clients to ensure the effectiveness of these processes in maximizing positive policing outcomes.
6. To effectively mentor new police officers and offer a clear line of enquiry when dealing with complex interactions involving members of refugee communities.
7. To ensure succession plans for key contact staff such as Multicultural Liaison Officers in each district/region so as to minimize loss of networks and organisational intelligence.
8. To develop methods of tracking refugee contact with police, especially incidents related to violence, racism, discrimination and anti-social behaviour, to identify emerging trends.
9. To support the development of legislation to strengthen police capacity to address acts of discrimination, racism, violence and anti-social behaviour.
10. To encourage and facilitate the recruitment of members of refugee communities to the police organisation.

#### **9.4.3 Relationship building**

1. To build and maintain relationships with newly arrived refugee communities, particularly with current key community leaders, and to promote inclusion of members of newly arrived refugee communities. In the process, it is important to identify individuals well placed to build trust, links and relationships with newly arrived refugee communities.
2. To create welcoming and accessible services that recognise diversity within each refugee community.
3. To promote education on rights and responsibilities under Australian law, in a way that is accessible, practical and easy to understand.
4. To promote the importance of communication and the need to create opportunities for individuals and communities to provide feedback to police.

5. To work together to develop partnerships with key agencies to establish regular contact and to support education about Australian law and the role of police to newly arrived refugee communities.

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