

What's important to YOUth from refugee and migrant backgrounds?

The Centre for Multicultural Youth's response to the Victorian
Government's Youth discussion paper

November 2015





The Centre for Multicultural Youth

The Centre for Multicultural Youth is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia. Our purpose is to ensure that young people have every opportunity to succeed in Australia. Through a combination of specialist support services, training and consultancy, knowledge sharing and advocacy, we are working to remove the barriers young people face as they make Australia their home.

Our work focuses on young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, 12-25 years old, with a particular priority on those who are newly-arrived to Australia.

Young people can encounter significant barriers as they try to settle in Australia. Alongside the challenges of growing up, they are figuring out how things are done and adjusting to unfamiliar cultural, academic and social expectations. Their sense of wellbeing and belonging can be considerably diminished by factors such as racism and discrimination. These barriers are often compounded and magnified by services and systems that are ill-equipped to provide the specialist support needed.

Despite these complex issues, we know that young people have the enterprise, resilience and optimism to contribute to the continued prosperity of Australia. By engaging them as experts in their own lives and focusing on their strengths, they can be empowered to adapt and thrive. For more about our approach please visit our website www.cmy.net.au.

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds: need for targeted support

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds contribute to an increasingly diverse Victorian community. A review of the Australian Census of Population and Housing data shows the rich diversity of young people in Australia. Many were either born overseas or had parents who have migrated from other countries. They also identify with various cultures and religions.

Refugees and other newly arrived young people undoubtedly bring with them a multitude of strengths and personal resources and many will do well. At the same time, a growing body of evidence suggests that many young people arriving in Australia under the refugee and humanitarian program are facing a range of challenges.

In recent years, approximately 13,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants have been settled in Australia annually from a range of countries. A significant proportion of this cohort fit within the definition of young people. In the last five years, 6,279 humanitarian youth arrivals settled in Victoria. In 2014/15, a total of



1,048 humanitarian youth arrivals were resettled in Victoria. This represents 28% of all humanitarian entrants to Victoria during 2014/15.

As well as experiencing the ongoing impact of pre-migration experiences (for example refugee young people often experience ongoing trauma following their flight from persecution), newly arrived young people and their families often face significant language barriers, may have had limited or disrupted schooling, and face numerous barriers to meaningful economic participation.¹ They also lack knowledge of the Australian education system and labour market, and the networks that can facilitate finding employment. In this context, it is essential that a range of support services are available to meet a range of needs. However, the data suggest that many young people are falling through the gaps in the current system.

While much has been done in Victoria to recognise the particular needs of migrant and refugee young people, CMY would take this opportunity to highlight that there is still a way to go to build the support they need to access all the opportunities that Victoria offers its young people. Action must be taken to ensure that advantages gained to date are not lost and that complacency doesn't diminish our strength in diversity. CMY believe that there are circumstances where targeted multicultural and/or ethno-services are a necessity to overcome stubborn barriers young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds face in accessing mainstream services. Furthermore, multicultural and/or ethno-specific services are the bridge and pathway for young people into mainstream services. We hope that the recommendations for improvements offered here support the development of a new youth policy that ensures opportunities for all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Draft Vision

CMY supports the draft vision to maximize opportunities and remove barriers for all young people.

We propose that the vision includes the notion of maximizing opportunities for all young people to *have a voice* in promoting their own views and ideas on issues they care about.

Draft Objectives

CMY welcome the overall objectives as set out in the Draft Youth Policy.

As part of the objectives, CMY recommends that the objectives should include the promotion and support of young people in personal and community leadership.

Overall, there needs to be a framework within which the objectives of the New Youth Policy are situated. Such a framework will recognize the life stages and related needs of those who are 12 – 15 years, 16 – 18 years and young adults 18 – 24 years. It will help to link the objectives and frame the implementation actions needed to drive improvement. Such a framework would also be able to articulate the various groups of young people facing a range of challenges through no fault of their own.

¹ Parsons (2013) Assessing the economic contribution of refugees in Australia: A review of the literature. MDA, Brisbane. Available at <http://www.mdainc.org.au/sites/default/files/Assessing-the-economic-contribution-of-refugees-in-Australia-Final.pdf>



What's important to young people?

What do you think should be done to increase education opportunities for young people?

While many young people from refugee backgrounds achieve good educational outcomes, research suggests there are many who are disengaging or failing to attain educational levels that support their meaningful participation in the Australian community.² Some children and young people arrive in Australia with minimal or no formal education at all. Other educational challenges that many young people from refugee backgrounds face include the need to master English as an additional language, adapt to a new educational system, manage a history of torture and trauma as well as navigate other settlement challenges. Please refer to *The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria*, that outlines a number of the barriers and areas for attention with regard to the education needs of refugee young people. [Click here to see full report.](#)

In a recent submission to the Victorian Government's consultation on the Education State, CMY highlighted a number of recommendations to improve education opportunities for young people of refugee background. These included:

Targeting resources towards particularly disadvantaged groups of young people:

- Address issues of educational equity by explicitly targeting refugee young people through:
 - Providing greater levels of resourcing to schools with students from refugee backgrounds who have disrupted education; and
 - Ensuring that schools receive loading for refugee students who first enter the Victorian education system at secondary school age.
- Create clear guidelines and accountability measures around how schools use equity and EAL funding to meet the educational needs of young people from refugee backgrounds.
- Provide ongoing resources to the Out of School Hours Learning Support Program (OSHLSPs) sector, including CMY's role in supporting the design and delivery of OSHLSPs throughout Victoria and support to schools and organisations to deliver OSHLSPs in areas of need.
- Develop assertive, culturally relevant outreach programs that target highly disengaged young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds – with the aim of re-engaging them with education, training or employment.
- For the Department of Education to develop and resource flexible and responsive approaches to meeting the educational needs of refugee young people in rural and regional areas.
- Adequate resourcing for educational programs that engage older adolescent and young adult refugee young people with disrupted education to include core elements of good practice for this cohort.³
- For both State and Federal government to invest greater resources in initiatives that bridge on-arrival English language learning and mainstream education and training for post-compulsory school age refugee young people.

² Refugee Education Partnership Project, 2007, *The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria*

³ Examples of this include targeted pastoral support, recreational activities, and concrete and supported options into mainstream education, training and employment. For more details see: Oliff, L. (2010) *Finding the Right Time and Place: Exploring post-compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW*. Refugee Council of Australia, Sydney.



- For State and Federal government to work together to enable young asylum seekers to complete year 12, and access TAFE and other accredited learning opportunities, by removing financial or other barriers.

Strengthening school, community and business partnerships:

- Support schools to build strong, sustainable partnerships with business and industry in local area, to create pathways and opportunities for disadvantaged young people.
- Expand the school 'hub' model (for example, Doveton College) in areas of disadvantage and of high refugee settlement.
- Support and resource schools to engage effectively with the families of young refugees in their children's education.

Building the cultural competence and awareness of education providers:

- Embed 'working effectively with refugee students and their families' into the core curriculum for tertiary level teacher training.
- Ensure schools, English Language Schools and community support programs have clear and consistent information regarding the eligibility of young asylum seekers for EAL support and access to education more broadly.
- Build the capacity of school staff to better understand, support and engage with young asylum seekers and their families.
- Support schools to develop:
 - Cultural competency to respond to the specific needs of particular cohorts of disadvantaged students; and
 - Strong community partnerships to broker additional culturally relevant support.

What do you think should be done to increase training opportunities for young people?

Many newly arrived young people require extra time and support to acquire an adequate standard of literacy in English, to get used to the Australian education system, or to make up for disrupted education in their country of origin or in a second or third transit country before arriving in Australia. Vocational training and education opportunities are important pathways to acquiring Australian qualifications and successful careers for many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

However, in terms of transitions to employment refugee and migrant young people face a range of well-documented challenges.⁴ Traditional pathways will not meet the needs of some groups of young people from refugee backgrounds, who may require more flexible approaches that combine work and study, and contextualise learning. Additionally, opportunities for non-literate modes are important for some young people with low levels of English literacy.⁵ Those who arrive in the post-compulsory school age with disrupted education are a particularly vulnerable group and there is currently a severe lack of targeted education and training options for these young people.⁶ It is therefore important that there are a number of

⁴ CMY (2014) [Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People: A data update and review of recent literature with a focus on 'what works'](#). CMY, Carlton

⁵ Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (VFST), 2007, *The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria*, VFST, Melbourne.

⁶ For a comprehensive overview of the issues facing post compulsory school age young people from refugee backgrounds that impact on their educational outcomes and recommendations specific to addressing these see, Oliff, L. (2010) *Finding the Right Time*



realistic educational pathways to choose from, based on a young person's interest and ability. In this regard, CMY supports the RCOA's recommendation that there is a need for greater State and Federal resources in initiatives that bridge on-arrival English and mainstream education and training for humanitarian entrants who are post-compulsory school age.⁷

Additionally, CMY believe career planning and support is also important for all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, as many are misinformed or unfamiliar with the options available outside post-compulsory education. Additionally, they may lack access to guidance and support in understanding and becoming familiar with the skills and training needed to gain work.⁸ This is particularly the case for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, who are often unfamiliar with VET pathways, access points, and the local labour market.⁹ The Good Starts study (2009) highlighted confusion about education and employment pathways as a key concern of young people from refugee backgrounds.¹⁰

In CMY's submission to the Victorian VET funding review 2015, a number of recommendations regarding improvements to Victoria's vocational training and employment programs were made. These included:

- Provide flexible, multiple and supported VET pathways that lead to employment outcomes for refugee and migrant young people.
- Reinstate targeted youth support regarding understanding and accessing education and training pathways, similar to the role played by Youth Connections.
 - Consider funding a 'refugee youth' specific stream of this support, similar to the federally funded Reconnect specialist stream.
 - As part of this support, VET should work in partnership with youth support providers to engage with and provide pathways information to families from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Provide special consideration and flexibility to certain vulnerable or 'at risk' groups with regard to accessing government subsidised training, such as refugee and migrant young people, among others.
- VET curriculum should offer young people extensive "on the job" work experience, brokered and supported by course providers.
- Provide workplace mentoring to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who are undertaking work placements through VET.
- Build stronger partnerships between VET courses and industry.
- VET providers to provide employment transition support for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds near the completion of training.

In addition, CMY would highlight that many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds do not access or are often not aware of apprenticeships and traineeships. Low literacy levels can make application

and Place: Exploring post-compulsory education and training pathways for young people from refugee backgrounds in NSW, Refugee Council of Australia: and, CMY (2014) *Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People: A data update and review of recent literature with a focus on 'what works'*. CMY, Carlton

⁷ Oliff (2010) Ibid.

⁸ YACVic, 2012, VET and young Victorians: A way forward, Melbourne, YACVic.

⁹ Oliff, 2010

¹⁰ Gifford, S., Correa-Velez, I. & Sampson, R. 2009. Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee background: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre



processes prohibitive, while no or low pay and a lack of networks and knowledge of industries are some of the barriers for newly arrived young people. The fostering of industry partnerships with a focus on apprenticeships could further increase understanding of available pathways and employment options in this area; could encourage a review of existing barriers to refugee and migrant young people's participation in this scheme; and may open up opportunities for 'taster' sessions or greater engagement in areas of work not currently accessed by young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

What do you think should be done to increase employment opportunities for young people?

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds often face multiple barriers when transitioning from education to employment. They frequently lack the social connections that help many gain their first job; may be from communities where there are low levels of employment; may lack the confidence to take the necessary steps and make the social connections that may lead to work; can face racism and discrimination; and often have a limited understanding of Australian education and employment pathways.

When it comes to young people's transition to employment, the current literature also indicates that there are a significant number of young people whose needs are not being adequately catered for. This situation is reflected in high rates of school dropout and consistently higher rates of unemployment.¹¹ The literature highlights that there is limited provision of specialised programs to meet the complex support needs of young people from refugee backgrounds.

Furthermore, recent research highlights that institutional racism continues to exist in Australia which systematically disadvantages young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. At the same time, pockets of promising programs highlight some key principles of good practice and a range of strategies that have contributed to positive long-term outcomes.

CMY's experience and research highlights a number of important factors that can increase employment opportunities for young people of refugee background. A number of these are outlined in CMY's paper, *Facilitating the Transition to Employment*¹² and a range of other reports and submissions available from the CMY website. The most important ingredients to making effective transition to employment for young people include:

- Culturally relevant, individualised support/ case management
- Flexible options and multiple pathways
- Strong parent and/or community engagement to support young people's employment choices
- Brokering and supporting work experience or paid work placement opportunities, including relevant work experience embedded in education and training programs
- Providing support in the workplace
- Mentoring programs with an employment focus.

¹¹ In 20-24 year olds in Victoria, unemployment is higher in young people from households where a language other than English is spoken. Data comparing place of birth with unemployment also reveal some patterns. In Victoria, young people born outside Australia have a higher unemployment rate than those born in Australia. This difference is greatest in 20-24 year olds (6.6% and 9.5% respectively). See, ABS (2011) *2010.1 Census of Population and Housing : Country of Birth Community Profiles*. ABS, Canberra.

¹² CMY, 2014, *Facilitating the Transition to Employment*, Carlton, CMY. <http://cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Facilitating%20the%20Transition%20to%20Employment%202014.pdf>



- Programs that explicitly build young people's access to bridging social capital.¹³
- Ensuring service providers and employers are culturally responsive and understanding of the refugee experience
- Employment initiatives that broker opportunities and work with employers to promote equal opportunity for young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds.

What do you think should be done to improve the mental health of young people?

CMY welcomes the government's focus on the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Victoria. Research suggests that there are key relationships across social, environmental and economic determinants of mental wellbeing and mental illness and the development of mental health problems.¹⁴ CMY advocates therefore for a broader, contextual approach to supporting young people from refugee background's mental health, including:

- Strengthening young people's sense of belonging, social connectedness, resilience and coping skills;
- Creating meaningful and supportive opportunities in education and employment; and
- Reducing racism and discrimination.¹⁵

CMY recently made the following recommendations to the Victorian Government's 10 year Mental Health Plan, which seek to improve the mental health of young people from refugee backgrounds¹⁶:

- Invest in youth support initiatives for young people of refugee background that strengthen the protective factors for mental health and wellbeing, including initiatives that:
 - Strengthen young people's sense of belonging, social connectedness, resilience and coping skills
 - Create meaningful and supportive opportunities in education and employment
 - Reduce racism and discrimination
- Provide opportunities for positive youth advocacy and leadership development
- Increase resources to proven models that support the mental health and wellbeing of young people and families from refugee backgrounds, and expand programs to areas where they don't exist, such as:
 - Expanding the capacity of culturally relevant counselling services, including their ability to provide secondary consultation to the youth, settlement and mental health sector
 - Providing refugee youth specific support in rural and regional areas
- Build the capacity of youth mental health services to be culturally competent, flexible, youth-focussed, and informed by understandings of the refugee experience and trauma. This includes:

¹³Graham, J. Shier, M. & Eisenstat, M. 2015, Young Adult Social Networks and Labour Market Attachment: Interpersonal Dynamics that Shape Perspectives on Job Attainment, *Journal of Social Policy*, June 2015, pp 1 – 18; Yan, M.C, Lauer, S. and Chan, S. 2012, Double Jeopardy: An Exploratory Study of Youth From Immigrant Families Entering the Job Market, *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 10: 96-115; Refugee Council of Australia, 2012. *Job Services Australia: Refugee Community and Service Provider Views*, Surrey Hills: Refugee Council of Australia.

¹⁴Victorian Government, cited in Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), 2014a, *Mind Matters: The Mental health and Wellbeing of Young People from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds*, Carlton, CMY.

¹⁵CMY, 2014a.

¹⁶CMY, 2015, *Supporting the mental health of young people from refugee backgrounds*, Carlton, CMY.

<http://cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/CMY%20Mental%20Health%20Submission%202015.pdf>



- Strengthening partnerships between mental health organisations, ethno-specific and community based organisations that work with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Ensuring that mental health services address the following issues in order to effectively work with young people from refugee backgrounds:
 - Understanding cultural definitions of mental health, illness and treatment
 - The style and approach of mental health providers
 - Service accessibility
 - Trust
 - Working with interpreters
 - Engaging family and community
 - Advocacy – holistically responding to self-identified needs of the young person
 - Continuity of care.¹⁷
- Strengthen and support the use of interpreters in mental health settings:
- Invest in strategies that actively recruit and expand the number of bi-cultural mental health workers who can play a brokering and liaison role - providing cultural advice to mental health professionals and engaging proactively with refugee and migrant communities to educate and reduce stigma.
- Strengthen collaboration and joint care management between schools, youth workers and mental health services.
- Increase the coordination and integration of the mental health service system to work with young people and families of refugee backgrounds at all stages of the spectrum – from early intervention through to crisis intervention.
- Develop a ‘no wrong door’ policy that enables young people of refugee background to access mental health services regardless of where they first seek help – and to be supported through this process.
- Resource mental health focussed community engagement programs with communities from refugee backgrounds to promote awareness of mental health, reduce stigma and facilitate linkages with existing mental health services. Programs should target on multiple community levels, including with:
 - Young people
 - Families
 - Community leaders
 - Whole communities

What do you think should be done to improve housing for young people?

Safe and stable housing for young people of refugee backgrounds is a critical factor to them being able to effectively settle, make meaningful connections and participate in education and employment in Victoria.¹⁸ For young refugees, experiencing homelessness in Australia means they have in effect been ‘homeless twice’, or even multiple times, as a result of their displacement due to the refugee experience.¹⁹ Although

¹⁷ Colucci, et al., 2014.

¹⁸ CMY, 2010, *Finding Home in Australia*, Carlton, CMY.

¹⁹ Couch, J. 2011, A new way home: Refugee young people and homelessness in Australia, *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 2 (1).



young people of refugee background who are homeless in Victoria experience similar challenges to other homeless young people, there are a number of additional challenges they face that further compound their situation. These include resettlement, language acquisition, cultural adjustment, understanding of service systems, disrupted education, lack of family and/or extended social support networks, lack of financial and material resources, and the challenges of changed family composition (including role changes, blended households and overcrowding). Homelessness amongst young people of refugee backgrounds often remains unseen and challenges traditional ideas around who homeless young people are.²⁰

Research from 2002 found that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are six to ten times more likely to be at risk of homelessness than Australian-born young people.²¹ Despite such evidence, neither of the most recent Commonwealth (2008) and State (2010) government reports on housing and homelessness acknowledge the particular vulnerability of refugee and migrant young people.²²

In addition to the specific issues and recommendations highlighted here, CMY would also stress the importance of acknowledging housing and homelessness as inherently complex social problems impacted by a broad range of factors. As such, we would encourage the reviewers to revisit the extensive list of recommendations made in CMY's 2010 *Finding Home in Victoria* report, which canvasses a range of the barriers and proposed solutions to the challenge of homelessness for refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria today.

Recommendations / areas for improvement

- That a workforce development strategy be developed and delivered for:
 - the youth housing support sector in relation to cultural competency (including resourcing ethno-youth specific organisations to provide secondary consults to the youth housing sector);
 - the settlement and ethno-specific sectors in relation to youth work practice
- That good practice refugee youth specific early intervention models such as Reconnect (federally funded) be expanded and appropriately resourced in areas/regions where there are high concentrations of refugee and newly arrived communities to support young people who are at risk of becoming homeless.
- That the complexity of needs faced by this cohort of young people be recognised by increasing the flexibility for longer support periods in the SAAP system (including in transitional and other accommodation), to enable refugee and migrant young people to develop sustainable skills and pathways into independent living.
- That Federal and State funded services coordinate and work more collaboratively to intervene at critical transition stages for migrant and refugee young people to help and appropriately refer those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Coventry et al. (2002), p. 50

²² 2008 Commonwealth Gov 'the road home' and 2010 vic gov 'A better place strategy'



- That good practice early intervention models and services recognise the critical importance of adopting a family-focused approach when working with refugee and newly-arrived young people, their families and communities.
- That community education campaigns and strategies be developed to reduce racism and discrimination in the housing market – in particular targeting real estate agents and the private rental market.
- That services such as SAAP undertake training in order to increase their knowledge of, and capacity to accommodate particularly vulnerable groups, such as young people on visas with limited access to income support (such as those on orphan or remaining relative visas and young asylum seekers), young mothers, and unaccompanied humanitarian minors exiting care as they age into 18 years old. (such as the Refugee Support Program).
- That State and Federal Government programs are better coordinated and linked to address the issues of youth homelessness. For example, improve linkages between the Humanitarian Support Services (on-arrival federally funded program) and settlement services with generalist youth homeless services.

What do you think should be done to tackle discrimination of young people?

“Imagine opening up your newspaper only to find a headline which suggests that all young people like me, who have my skin colour, are criminals. There are so many good Australians out there working against the racially discriminatory and divisive stereotyping that makes it so hard for me to feel like I belong in this society. We’re not all criminals – in fact very few of us are. And we’re not all disengaged, although every time we see another instance of racial discrimination or racial stereotyping, it makes us feel just a little bit more disconnected from the very society that we call home.”²³

Despite the diversity of the Victorian community, racism is an everyday reality for young people of migrant and refugee background.²⁴ Racism negatively impacts upon the settlement and ability of young migrants and refugees to make effective transitions, negatively effecting self-esteem, and a sense of belonging to the broader community. It is linked to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and anger.²⁵ Vic Health’s research reveals that individual coping strategies alone do not provide sufficient protection against racism; organisational and community interventions are needed.²⁶

CMY’s previous consultations with young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds have revealed the following spaces to be particularly significant sites of racism for young people of migrant and refugee background:

²³ IMARA Advocacy, *A letter from a disengaged African youth*, 20 August 2012. <http://www.imarayouth.org/2012/08/20/letter-from-a-disengaged-african-youth/> Accessed 5.5.13.

²⁴ Francis, S. and Cornfoot, S. 2007, *Multicultural Youth in Australia: Settlement and Transition* Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues and Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth.

²⁵ FYA, 2009 page 18.

²⁶ Paradies, Y. Chandrakumar, L. Klocker, N. Frere, M. Webster, K. Burrell, M. & McLean, P. 2009, *Building on our strengths: a framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria*, Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).



- Public transport
- Sporting clubs
- Education & Training
- Employment
- Police/Justice
- Media

For instance, the medias portrayal of migrant and refugee young people is frequently unbalanced and emphasises problems and conflicts. The use of sensationalised language and negative reporting can lead to the establishment of fear amongst the public,²⁷ while also sending a message to migrant and refugee youth communities that they are ‘outsiders’ in terms of belonging the broader Australian community.²⁸ At the same time, the perspectives of multicultural young people are also often absent from mainstream media, which results in the sidelining of alternative voices that could potentially counter mainstream portrayals.

CMY have produced a number of reports and publications that explicitly address how young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds experience racism and discrimination.²⁹ A number of these reports, including *Everyday Reality*, make recommendations for addressing issues of racism for migrant and refugee young people.³⁰ These include:

- That racism be addressed in educational settings by:
 - Ensuring that Indigenous history, anti-racism, stereotyping and cultural issues are embedded in the school curriculum, starting with primary aged students
 - Working with schools to develop whole-of-school, anti-racism professional development, policies and strategies
- That racism be addressed in the broader community by:
 - Promoting opportunities for interaction between cultures through social cohesion programs and festivals
 - Supporting and resourcing youth-led, anti-racism projects, including media skills to develop and create their own media
 - Identifying inspiring multicultural leaders and role models to promote anti-racism
 - Resourcing public anti-racism media campaigns
 - Resourcing bystander action programs designed to equip and skill community members to challenge racism on a day to day level³¹
- Build the capacity of sporting clubs and referees through:
 - Increased cultural competency training with club administrators, referees and coaches; improving responses to reports of racism and discrimination in clubs; and the development of inclusion and diversity policies

²⁷ Martin, A. 2008, Television Media as a Potential Negative Factor in the Racial Identity Development of African American Youth, *Academic Psychiatry*, 32 (4), pp. 338-339.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Everyday Reality / Active Citizenship / Social Network / Election Statement 2014

³⁰ CMY, 2014b, *Everyday reality: Racism and young people*, Carlton, CMY.

³¹ Russell et al. page 10.



- Improve police interactions with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds through:
 - Increasing opportunities for positive interaction between the police and migrant and refugee young people
 - Implementing comprehensive cultural competency training modules for all police recruits, that are youth-focussed and underpinned by an anti-racist paradigm
 - Embedding a whole of organisational approach to developing anti-racist policies and practices across the Victorian police force, with built in mechanisms for accountability and evaluation
 - Instituting an independent body that can investigate racially-based complaints against police

What else do you think should be done to improve the lives of young people in Victoria?

Social Cohesion

We know that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds facing specific barriers to economic, social and civic participation, especially in the early years of settlement. However, over time refugees and migrants make significant contributions to Australia.³² However, their participation and contribution is directly impacted by the attitudes, practices and support of the communities in which these young people live. Thus social cohesion policy and investment is a fundamental factor, not only in a wide variety of social outcomes such as health and economic prosperity, but also in the successful settlement of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria.

The media has a critical role to play in promoting social cohesion in Victoria. Young people broadly are often unfairly represented in media portrayals. However for young people of migrant and refugee background, the situation is compounded. There is a stark absence of positive representation of refugee and migrant young people in the media, whilst there is simultaneous over-emphasis of reporting that associates youth and ethnicity with delinquency and crime. It is important that young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds are fairly and positively represented in the media; that they experience opportunities for them to have their voices heard and be involved in their own representation; and that positive stories of their contributions to the Victorian and Australian community are widely shared.

In research conducted with CMY during 2013, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds reported their desire to participate in social activities, programs, and opportunities that promote greater cross-cultural engagement.³³ The report, *Active Citizenship, Participation and Belonging*, highlights the value of young migrant and refugee's contributions to the community, their capacity to become future leaders, and their ability to positively influence attitudes and beliefs that can transform the next generations' cross-cultural engagement. This paper makes numerous recommendations in this regard and is an important reference point for any policy that seeks to engage young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds positively in contributing to strengthening social cohesion in Victoria.

CMY has committed to nurturing the capacity of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to contribute to the community around them. In terms of 'youth leadership', CMY believes that:

- a) Youth leadership involves young people actively pursuing opportunities to develop skills and qualities, having their voice heard and creating positive change.

³² See for example, DIAC (2011) Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals (SONA). Available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/settlementoutcomes-of-new-arrivals> and Hugo, G. (2011)

³³ CMY (2014) *Active citizenship, participation and belonging*. Melbourne: CMY.



- b) Every young person has the capacity to practice youth leadership, and can practice it to varying degrees. It is about recognising and building on young people's strengths, and supporting their sense of agency in the world.
- c) Leadership can be exercised as a group – such as working with others to create positive change in the local community.

CMY's work and research point to a number of principles that should underpin youth participation or leadership initiatives with migrant and refugee young people. These include:

- Taking into account the different needs of young people, according to their stage of settlement;
- Being inclusive of gender;
- Building confidence and self-esteem;
- Strengthening social cohesion, through bringing diverse groups of young people together.

Additionally, programs should aim to contain the following elements:

- Skill building and exposure to new experiences;
- Opportunities to develop new friendships and work with others;
- Adequate resourcing to allow young people to put their positive ideas into action;
- Adequate follow through and feedback when young people are consulted for decision making purposes.³⁴

Strengthening family connections

CMY's experience demonstrates the significance of family relationships to young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Adolescence is a significant time for young people helping to inform their development and sense of identity. For many migrant and refugee young people, parents and families this occurs while also negotiating a new cultural, social and legal context. This creates additional complexities for migrant and refugee young people and their families. While this process of negotiating cultural values and norms can be positive, allowing for new perspectives to be developed, at the extreme it can also lead to conflict and family breakdown. This is particularly the case for families that experience multiple and complex settlement barriers such as changes in family dynamics, adjusting to new cultural norms and economic disadvantage.

CMY note that a dearth of information identifying the triggers of intergenerational conflict among refugee and migrant communities³⁵ has resulted in a scarcity of programs and lack of targeted support for strengthening the ties within families.

In CMY's paper, [Migrant and Refugee Young People Negotiating Adolescence in Australia](#), several areas are highlighted that can strengthen family connections amongst migrant and refugee young people. Please refer to the paper for a full set of recommendations.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Work from CMY has attempted to address this gap. For a discussion of causes and themes identified see, CMY (2011) *Intergenerational Conflict: A literature review*. CMY: Melbourne. Available at <http://www.cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Intergenerational%20Conflict%202011.pdf>. See also, CMY (2014) *Negotiating adolescence*. CMY: Melbourne. Available at http://cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Negotiating%20Adolescence%20in%20Australia_0.pdf