

Better Access to Government Services for former Humanitarian Entrants

SUMMARY PROGRESS REPORT - DECEMBER 2013

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Introduction

The *Better Access to Government Services for former Humanitarian Entrants Report* (the Report) is a whole-of-government approach to improving access to Tasmanian Government services for former humanitarian entrants.

The Report (click [here](#) to access the full report) acknowledges that being able to understand and access services is an important building block for developing self-reliance and independence for humanitarian entrants. The Tasmanian Government recognises there are often significant challenges that need to be addressed to enable equitable access to government services and outcomes for former humanitarian entrants.

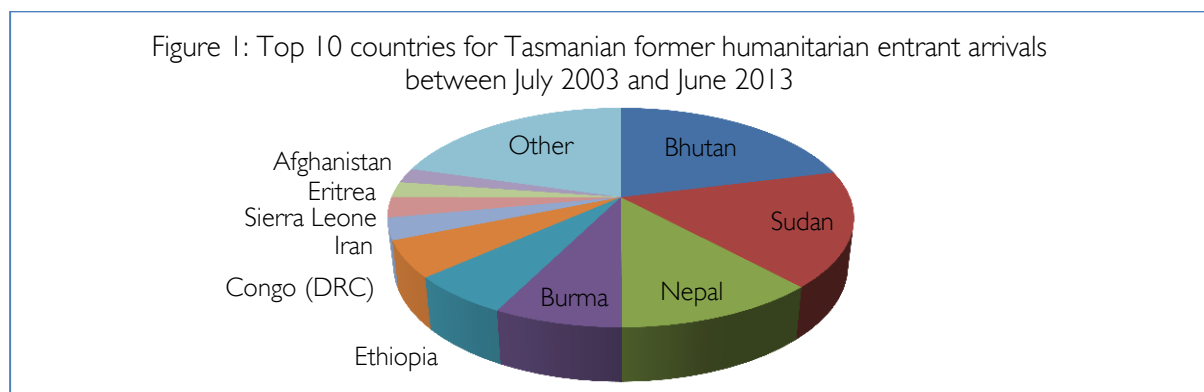
The Report provides five whole-of-government and 31 agency specific recommendations that either adjust existing programs or are new initiatives that will assist Tasmanian Government agencies to meet the needs of former humanitarian entrants. The recommendations were developed following comprehensive consultation with Tasmanian Government agencies, former humanitarian entrants and community associations.

The Interagency Working Group, comprising representatives from all Tasmanian Government agencies, was formed in 2011 to work towards improving access to government services by former humanitarian entrants. The Interagency Working Group guided the development of the Report and continues to oversee implementation of the Report's recommendations (see Appendix A: Interagency Working Group members).

This Summary Progress Report is a summary of progress made by Tasmanian Government agencies on initiatives which address a selection of recommendations from the Report. The initiatives are presented under headings which demonstrate the strategic approaches taken by Tasmanian Government agencies in addressing the recommendations.

Tasmanian former humanitarian entrants

Over 2 800 Tasmanian former humanitarian entrants arrived between July 2003 and June 2013. They represent over 50 countries, with the top 10 countries presented below (Figure 1).



This includes 599 people from Bhutan, 483 from Sudan, 336 from Nepal, 213 from Burma, 170 from Ethiopia and 153 from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Of the 2 840 arrivals, 1 300 were aged under 18 years; 1 225 were aged between 18 and 44; and only 315 were older than 45 years of age.

Challenges influencing access to services

The former humanitarian entrants arriving in Australia today have several differentiating factors and different pre-arrival experiences from previous migrant groups. These factors potentially include larger family sizes, lower literacy and numeracy levels in their own language, limited formal education, different cultural awareness and limited understanding of mental health issues.

Former humanitarian entrants face a number of challenges when accessing mainstream services, which can influence outcomes, not the least of which are:

- language difficulties;
- adjusting to a different culture and language;
- knowledge of services available;
- the ability to successfully access the services they need and in a timely manner;
- learning and adjusting to a new political system;
- difficulties in navigating government structures and understanding government processes, roles and responsibilities;
- securing affordable and appropriate housing;
- gaining ongoing employment;
- coping with the emotions associated with leaving friends and family behind; and
- exposure to racism.

Access to appropriate services can influence successful settlement and participation in society. The Government acknowledges some people from cultural, religious or linguistically diverse backgrounds may need additional support and assistance to access the services and support they need.

There are some settlement issues that fall outside the responsibility of Tasmanian Government agencies. These issues include:

- gaining employment;
- access to General Practitioners;
- the cost of housing (renting or purchasing); and
- difficulty in accessing the private rental market.

However, there are activities that the Tasmanian Government is able to undertake to assist with better outcomes for former humanitarian entrants in these areas.

The Better Access to Government Services for former Humanitarian Entrants Report

The Report provides a scan of current service provision across Tasmanian Government agencies. It identifies the barriers to access faced by former humanitarian entrants, examines the data currently collected on former humanitarian entrants' use of services and makes a series of recommendations to address the issues identified.

The Report provides five whole-of-government and 31 agency specific recommendations that either adjust existing programs or are new initiatives that will assist government agencies to meet the needs of former humanitarian entrants.

The majority of the recommendations contained within the Report are able to be implemented within agencies' existing budgets. Recommendations requiring additional funding will either be considered within agencies' budgets or be submitted to the Budget Committee for consideration.

Robust data collection by all Tasmanian Government agencies is required to build an evidence base for future policies on service delivery to former humanitarian entrants. Further, improving the service delivery to this group may not require large scale systemic change; rather it may require increased and more consistent data collection, reviewing and amendment of policy implementation and/or additional training for staff.

Four broad objectives help in addressing the key challenges faced by former humanitarian entrants in accessing government services. These are:

- improve accessibility of programs and services to former humanitarian entrants;
- improve responsiveness of programs and services to the needs of former humanitarian entrants and include more comprehensive delivery of quality assured cultural competency training across the public sector;
- continue to work with former humanitarian entrants to be informed of needs and identify emerging issues; and
- continue to work with agencies to improve agency data consistency, collection, analysis and use that would assist to identify client needs and inform policy and planning in relation to service delivery.

Five key recommendations apply across all Tasmanian Government agencies:

- increase the cultural competency of agency staff;
- review and adapt programs to adequately and appropriately respond to Tasmania's diverse population;
- undertake the development of a whole-of-government data collection framework;
- embrace new technologies, such as Twitter and Facebook, as additional communication mechanisms, particularly to engage young former humanitarian entrants with government; and
- continue the Interagency Working Group to implement the recommendations.



Implementation of recommendations

The Report recommended that the Interagency Working Group continue to convene to oversee implementation of the recommendations of the Report and to encourage increased responsiveness to the needs of former humanitarian entrants by all Tasmanian Government agencies.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) chairs the Interagency Working Group, with seven Tasmanian Government agencies represented via membership. Agencies have at times convened individual Working Groups to progress agency specific recommendations. Some recommendations are ongoing as they are long term.

During the past year the Interagency Working Group has updated some of the initial recommendations of the Report. The variations reflect:

- changes in the policy or program context;
- additional activity since the initial review; and
- refinement of the initial recommendations.

The initiatives detailed in this Summary Progress Report are presented under headings which demonstrate the strategic approaches taken by Tasmanian Government agencies in addressing the recommendations. These are:

1. Policy framework;
2. Building skills and resources;
3. Working collaboratively;
4. Targeted services;
5. Building pathways to employment and training;
6. Educating communities; and
7. Monitoring outcomes.

I. Policy framework

Tasmanian Multicultural Policy Review underway

DPAC is leading the review of the Tasmanian Multicultural Policy. In 2001, the Tasmanian Government developed a set of principles to formalise the State's commitment to multiculturalism, to maximise the potential of multiculturalism for the benefit for Tasmanians and to assist in strengthening a cohesive and harmonious society. The principles of the 2001 Tasmanian Multicultural Policy are:

- to recognise and value the diversity of cultural and linguistic resources and the skills of all Tasmanians as social and economic assets, and to develop and use these resources and skills for the overall benefit of Tasmania;
- to recognise and encourage the right of all Tasmanians to participate in, and to contribute to, the social, political, economic and cultural life of Tasmania;
- to accept and respect the culture, language, and religion of all Tasmanians within the framework of the laws of the Commonwealth and the State; and
- to recognise the rights of all Tasmanians to fair access to the services of the Tasmanian Government, taking into account the needs arising from the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community.

A major objective of the current Policy Review is ensuring that the Tasmanian Government delivers culturally appropriate and responsive services to all its citizens, regardless of their cultural, linguistic and religious background.

To guide the Policy Review a community Reference Group and a Tasmanian Government Advisory Committee have been formed. A discussion paper called *Many Voices* was released to assist community feedback. Over 30 submissions were received during the consultation period, indicating a high level of community engagement with the issue, and strong support for the relevance of the current multicultural principles. The feedback is informing the development of a new multicultural policy, which is due for release in early 2014, and will reaffirm the Tasmanian Government's commitment to multiculturalism and strengthen multiculturalism for all Tasmanians.

2. Building skills and resources

New Multicultural Language Services Guidelines for Tasmanian Government Agencies

The new *Multicultural Language Services Guidelines for Tasmanian Government Agencies* (the Guidelines) are based on the principle that all Tasmanians should receive equitable access to Tasmanian Government services irrespective of their language background. The Guidelines aim to assist in the communication needs of people with limited English language proficiency as they seek government services. They detail the legislative obligations, policies and reporting mechanisms for addressing language needs in providing accessible and equitable policies, programs and services.

The Guidelines are accompanied by a series of Information Sheets, which aim to guide good practice and cover areas such as:

- assessing the need for an interpreter;
- booking an interpreter;
- suggested performance indicators for policy implementation; and
- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accreditation framework.

The Guidelines and Information Sheets are available online at www.dpac.tas.gov.au/multicultural.

Multicultural Access Point (MAP) – a new website

The Multicultural Access Point (MAP) website provides an important resource for migrants in Tasmania and the service providers that support them. Relevant information in relation to living in Tasmania as a new migrant, such as access to housing, education options, transport, social events and employment opportunities, have been collated on this one site. The website will improve access to information and as such allow migrants to more quickly establish themselves and their families in their new home of Tasmania. It is anticipated that the website will be launched in 2013.

Qualifications in Cultural Competence

The Department of Justice offered a TAFE level qualification in Cultural Competence to staff through the Safe at Home program during 2013 and intends to provide ongoing Cultural Awareness Training to staff where funds allow. Furthermore, the Department assisted staff to develop the necessary skills to effectively use interpreter services and is in the process of making these resources available to all staff via an online site.

3. Working collaboratively

A collaborative approach for the health setting

A 'Collaborative Group' was formed in January 2013 between the Department of Health and Human Services, the Tasmanian Health Organisations (THOs), the Tasmanian Medicare Local (TML) and the Phoenix Centre. Group members consult and coordinate action in their own key areas and share advice to ensure improvements benefit both former humanitarian entrants and other culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Refugee and Multicultural Health Collaborative Group has supported a number of key improvements including:

- improving access to interpreting (eg hands free telephones in the new THO clinics and integrated care centres);
- consolidation of northern region refugee primary health care and the development of a southern range of complementary on-arrival health services;
- multiple strategies to increase the levels of health literacy in the North West; and
- identifying service and staff cultural competency needs, and multiple projects to increase training options across the State.

4. Targeted services

Addressing Discrimination and Harassment

Former humanitarian entrants are provided with information about the legal framework in Tasmania and its role in addressing discrimination and harassment. Community education helps to improve understanding of anti-discrimination law and promote safe and respectful relationships within the community. Information about how to report instances of discrimination or harassment under the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner (OADC) *Report It!* initiative has been widely distributed to former humanitarian entrants and other newly arrived migrants.

Reporting incidents of discrimination, harassment and abuse helps to develop strategies to discourage attacks and reduce risks in targeted areas. The initiative originated from the experiences of public abuse and violence against international students at the University of Tasmania and has now been extended to encourage the reporting of all incidents in the community.



Overcoming barriers to obtaining a driving licence

The Tasmanian Government continues to support programs that overcome the barriers to obtaining a driver licence. Programs supporting people from disadvantaged backgrounds include the Learner Driver Mentor Programs (LDMPs) and the Learner Licence Assistance Program (LLAP).

There is ongoing commitment to LDMPs grants scheme. Established in 2010, the scheme provides funding from the Road Safety Levy to help community organisations establish new or consolidate and expand existing LDMPs that support disadvantaged learner drivers unable to access a supervisory driver and/or vehicle to achieve the required 50 hours of supervised on-road driving experience. In 2012-13 a total of \$200 000 was allocated with four newly established and eight existing LDMPs receiving funding grants of up to \$25 000 each. In 2013-14 a further \$100 000 will be offered to LDMPs.

In addition to the LDMP grants scheme, in 2011 the Tasmanian Government provided \$100 000 to Driver Mentoring Tasmania, the peak body representing LDMP in Tasmania. This funding supported the establishment of a statewide coordinator role and in 2012-13 a further \$127 000 was allocated to support the continuation of this role for another 18 months.

The LLAP, a Community Road Safety Partnership initiative, has been operational across Tasmania for several years. LLAP provides assistance to people who experience difficulty obtaining a Learner Licence through the conventional process at Service Tasmania outlets. People with lower literacy levels, not confident with computers and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds all benefit from this program. LLAP operates through educational, employment and community service organisations. These organisations identify suitable clients, both youth and adult, and support them either individually or in a familiar group to gain the knowledge to pass the Learner Driver Knowledge Test.

There are currently over 70 organisations throughout Tasmania who conduct a LLAP and who have assisted 1 875 community members over the past two years. Participating LLAP organisations and the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources partner to provide a process which enables successful clients to be issued with a certificate recognising that they have passed the test. They are then able to go to a Service Tasmania outlet to obtain their Learner Licence.

5. Building pathways to employment and training

Working with employers to build pathways into workplaces and training

Migrant Education within TasTAFE organise fully supported work placements, where all former humanitarian entrant students have access to a vocational counsellor. Migrant Education also supports employers as they build workplace pathways for these students. An online presentation has been developed to help employers understand some of the differences with working with employees who do not have English as their first language. The presentation provides strategies for communicating effectively with workers who are not yet fluent in English, and focusses on improving work health, safety and wellbeing. The new resource is available at www.tastafe.tas.edu.au.

Supporting access to education and skills training

In 2012, Skills Tasmania through its Skills Equip and Equity Support Small Grants Program funded nine projects that specifically targeted former humanitarian entrants. These projects included those that supported work experience and mentor assistance and promotion of training and employment; the creation of training and employment pathways; and the provision of support, training and mentoring to new arrivals seeking to secure employment by establishing their own businesses.

In August 2013 a new recommendation has been developed for Skills Tasmania. The Skills Tasmania Equity Policy and Action Plan is aimed at overcoming barriers to Vocational Education and Training (VET); increasing employment participation; and increasing the responsiveness of the training system for Tasmanians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including former humanitarian entrants.

6. Educating communities

Educating communities on respective roles and responsibilities

Tasmania Police has an established network of Ethnic Liaison Officers (ELO), who operate on a statewide basis and are supported by a statewide coordinator. ELOs assist in establishing and facilitating relationships with culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities in Tasmania, including former humanitarian entrants. The ELOs provide a primary point of contact in relation to multicultural matters in each of the Police District Commands.

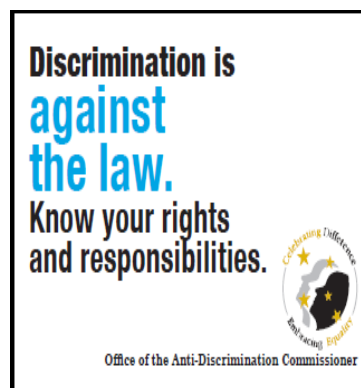
ELOs assist in educating multicultural communities as to the role and responsibilities of police and individuals in the community. The statewide coordinator also works with the University of Tasmania to ensure a focus on the safety of international students studying at the Launceston and Hobart campuses.

The Department of Police and Emergency Management provides representation on whole-of-government multicultural forums, and the Better Access to Government Services for former Humanitarian Entrants Interagency Working Group, to ensure the Department, and the ELOs in particular, have a broad understanding of current and emerging issues.

Community education

OADC works closely with the Tasmanian community to foster a society free of discrimination, prejudice, bias and prohibited conduct. This includes the delivery of workplace training and community education to improve understanding of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* and how to take proactive and preventative approaches to promote safe and respectful relationships within the community and work environments. It also includes information sessions for former humanitarian entrants and other newly arrived migrants.

Training is also provided to State Government and local government organisations, workplaces and other service providers on their responsibilities under the Act. In 2013 OADC worked to increase its presence in schools to deliver student awareness sessions. This included information on discrimination, harassment and bullying in the school environment. Over 1 700 people participated in race and/or cultural diversity focussed education and training in 2012-13. OADC also distributes a wide range of promotional material aimed at delivering key messages about discrimination and offensive conduct and what to do about it.



7. Monitoring outcomes

Monitoring educational outcomes and informing program intervention and support

There is an ongoing relationship between the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Program and Education Performance Services (EPS) within the Department of Education. The evaluation and review of educational processes and the assessment of former humanitarian entrant learning outcomes is regularly monitored, analysed and interpreted.

The EPS and the EAL Program are able to track students' educational outcomes based on National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data; Student Assessment and Reporting Information System (SARIS) reporting; and attendance and suspension data.

This information is used to monitor the educational outcomes for former humanitarian entrant students and inform EAL Program intervention and support provided for these students. The data is analysed every two years, with the latest analysis in September 2013.

Where to from here?

A number of the *Better Access to Government Services for former Humanitarian Entrants Report* recommendations are ongoing and indicate best practice approaches. These include recommendations such as to continue to adapt programs to respond to the needs of diverse communities, and to continuing to deliver community education programs.

Over the next 12 months, the BAGS Interagency Working Group will also focus on:

- developing a data framework for improved agency data consistency, collection, analysis and use that will assist in identifying client needs and informing policy and planning in relation to service delivery; and
- comprehensive delivery of quality assured Cross Cultural Competency Training for Tasmanian Government agencies.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the contribution of Tasmanian Government agencies in assisting former humanitarian entrants and the importance of collaborative working arrangements between agencies in addressing issues they may face.

Attachment A: Interagency Working Group members

Nick Evans (Chair)	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Rebecca Moles	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Suzanne Mallick	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Deb Van Velzen/ Le-ella Doyle	Department of Health and Human Services
Debra Salter	Department of Police and Emergency Management
Jenny Barclay	Department of Education
Anne Ripper	Department of Education
Kate Elliott	TasTAFE
Leica Wagner	Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Craig Hoey/ Deb Males	Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
Phillip Dalwood	Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts
Robyn Yaxley	Department of Justice
Ian Paterson/ Kris McCracken/ Nick Andrew	Skills Tasmania

Visit www.dpac.tas.gov.au/multicultural

Email multicultural@dpac.tas.gov.au