



Housing Responses in WA for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants

**Presentation for the 11th
Trans Tasman Community Psychology
Conference**

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Introduction

Acknowledgements

Traditional Owners

Shelter WA

Presenter Credentials

Disclaimer and Limitations

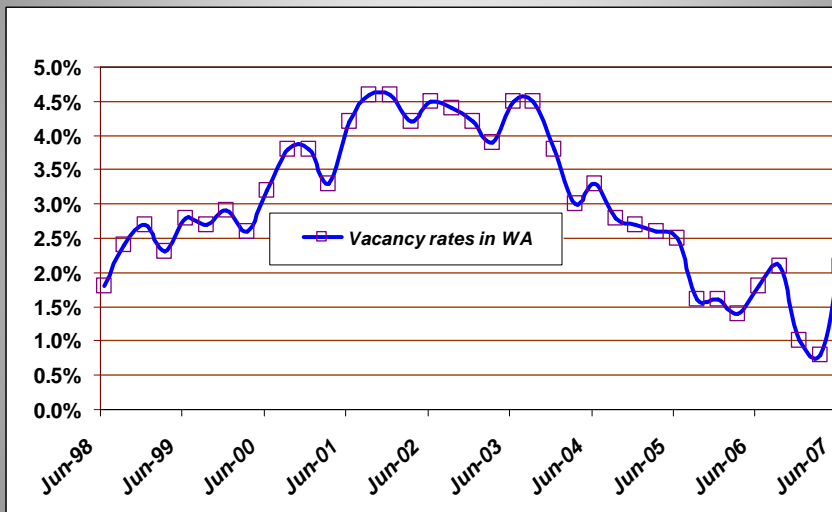
This Presentation

- The Housing Crisis Committee for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
- Humanitarian Entrant and Refugee Immigration to Australia and WA
- Intensive Humanitarian Support Services (IHSS) and Special Humanitarian Program and the Integrated Services Centre Pilot Project
- Access to housing and support
- Achievements of the HCCCaLD

The HCCCaLD

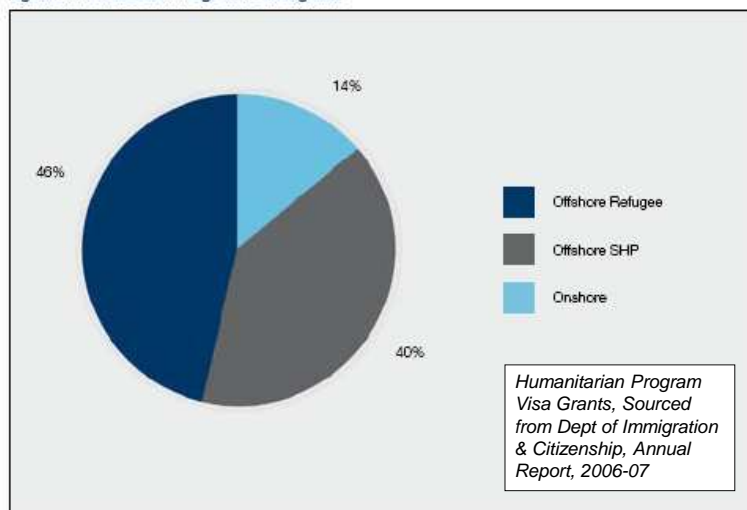
- Group formed in 2006 from range of agencies expressing concern about humanitarian entrant households' access to secure, appropriate and affordable housing including IHSS, ASeTTs, Edmund Rice Centre
- Problems in rental housing supply particularly acute 2006-8
- Changes to housing policy for Humanitarian
- Vacancy rates in private rental under 1.0% in June 2007 – equilibrium understood to be private rental vacancy rate of 3%

WA Rental Vacancy Rates 1998-2007



How do they come?

Figure 9: Humanitarian Programme visa grants



How Many?

- Australia longstanding signatory to 1951 International Convention and 1967 Protocols
- Approximately 80,000 Humanitarian Entrant applications to Australia annually
- Asylum seekers (on-shore) and resettlement (offshore)
- Vast majority of migrants under other visa's
- Australia accepts 10 – 15,000pa Humanitarian depending on Australian Govt decision
- 10% to WA (1,000 – 1,500)

Services Provided

In particular, in the **first six months** when need is greatest, humanitarian entrants receive six months of the Intensive Humanitarian Support Service (IHSS) upon arriving in Australia.

The IHSS includes the following services:

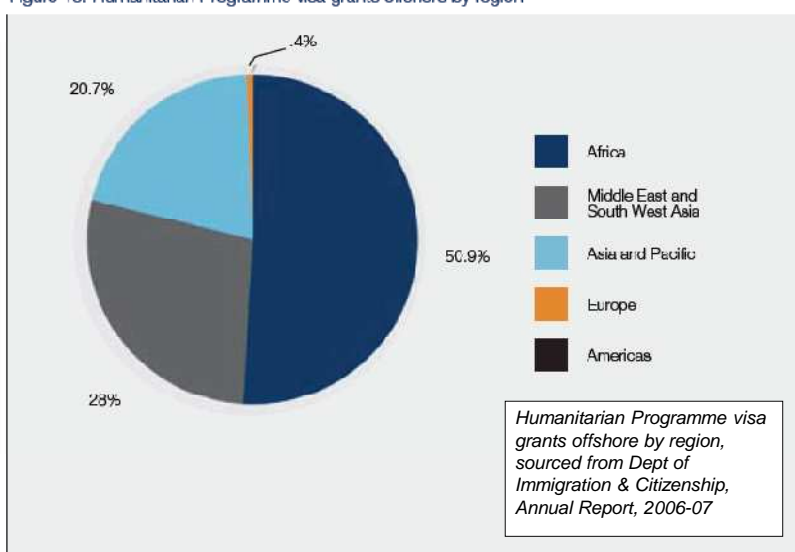
- case coordination, information and referrals – includes a case coordination plan based on initial needs assessment, information about, and referral to, other service providers and mainstream agencies and help for proposers (for SHP entrants) to fulfil their role of assisting.
- on arrival reception and assistance – includes meeting eligible entrants on arrival, taking them to suitable accommodation and providing initial orientation and meeting any emergency needs for medical attention, clothing or footwear.
- accommodation services – helps entrants to find appropriate and affordable accommodation and provides them with basic household goods to start establishing their own household in Australia.
- short term torture and trauma counselling services – provides an assessment of needs and a case plan and referral for torture and trauma counselling and raises awareness among other health care providers of health issues arising from torture and trauma counselling.

Support After the Initial 6 Months

- After receiving the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) program, humanitarian entrants can access less intensive specialist settlement services for a further four years, through the Special Grants Program (SGP) and the Community Service Scheme program (CSSS).

Where do they come from?

Figure 13: Humanitarian Programme visa grants offshore by region



Why?

- As would be expected, humanitarian entrants come from war torn and strife bound countries where they are escaping real persecution, violence, cultural, religious and systemic genocide.
- They are desperate for sanctuary and risk everything to flee
- Currently African countries including Zimbabwe Somalia and Rwanda
- European countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Middle Eastern countries - Afghanistan

The HCCCaLD seeds

- The Committee is voluntary, has no resources and operates on the goodwill of the individuals, agencies and organisations from which staff came
- Initiated by Nihal Iscel, formerly a Generic Special Grants Program Coordinator with the WA Edmund Rice Centre
- Nihal observed increasing difficulty accessing affordable housing for humanitarian entrants once they were due to leave IHSS accommodation after 6 months, and continuing disadvantage in the housing market

What did the HCCCaLD Achieve?

- Encouraged the development of tenancy resources in languages other than English – progressed by the Department of Commerce
- Held a Sector Wide Consultation and prepared a report with 14 recommendations that was presented to the Minister
- Gained visibility and awareness of discrimination in the Private Rental market and was instrumental in a recent Equal Opportunity Commission Investigation

What were the Recommendations?

Regional Network meetings for government and non-government workers servicing humanitarian communities.

It is apparent that there are many workers in the field, IHSS, SGP, CCCS and other advocacy services, housing workers and government departments that are working in isolation. The network meetings should be for grass root workers as well as decision makers. The purpose of the meetings could be to share knowledge, improve referral, reduce service duplication and help identify trends, issues and solutions in the region. Job descriptions and service agreements should be changed to allow workers to participate in these networks

What were the Recommendations?

- **Provide more comprehensive education on tenancy matters that are appropriate and relevant to humanitarian communities. This should include the development of tenancy education materials using low literacy learning and teaching resources, multi-media DVD and kits for workers to deliver to groups or individuals.**

What were the Recommendations?

- **Increased education and training in tenancy law, housing support services and tenancy issues for community settlement workers, bilingual workers, community leaders and volunteers.**
- **Bring back dedicated multi-housing sites for new arrivals to live in as a community until adequately orientated and ready to enter the private housing market.**

What were the Recommendations?

- **Extra support by providing one months free rent and fully subsidised utility connections and costs for the first month of arrival for humanitarian community individuals or households.**
- **Development of a Tenancy Support program for humanitarian communities to receive practical assistance to find a suitable property, apply for, accept an offered tenancy, move in and maintain their accommodation.**

What were the Recommendations?

- **The IHSS program, be extended up to 12 months for those families who need additional time to settle in.**

The current IHSS program is an excellent program. However, some families need this support for longer than the current 6 months, due to the range, complexity and volume of circumstances and issues they are dealing with. Without this kind of support for some success in maintaining or accessing housing is significantly diminished and families face ongoing and compounding crisis

What were the Recommendations?

- **Access to free Telephone Interpreter Service for Real Estate Agents and Landlords managing properties with CaLD tenants**

A program similar to the free Telephone Interpreter Service used by General Practitioners, hospital and other medical services to provide explanation of care and treatment and to gain informed consent from CaLD people with limited proficiency in the English Language would be beneficial if it was also extended to Real Estate Agents and landlords who manage properties with CaLD tenants.

What were the Recommendations?

- **Implement the proposed EOC investigation into race based discrimination in the private rental market**

It was found throughout the consultation that a high number of workers reported discrimination in the private rental market, HCCCaLD therefore supports the proposed EOC investigation into race based discrimination in the private rental market.

What were the Recommendations?

- **Improved data collection and reporting of housing, housing related advocacy and tenancy support services provided by humanitarian community workers**

It is apparent that the current data collected by agencies working with humanitarian communities does not fully capture the housing issues and the kinds of services community workers are delivering, in addition and beyond their formal job duties to meet their clients' urgent housing needs. These services, the time taken in attending to them and outcomes needs to be captured. Often no other work can be effectively performed until housing is secured, so this becomes a priority for the worker but is not part of their formal job description of reporting.

What were the Recommendations?

- **Public housing and Community housing stock to be significantly increased overall and to increase the proportion of 5+ bedroom dwellings suitable for larger families.**
- Public Housing needs to be restored to level at least 6% of overall housing stock and the housing needs of larger families in both Humanitarian Communities and Indigenous households must be met by prioritising the development of adequate numbers of new stock with 5 or more bedrooms.

What were the Recommendations?

- **Expand and extend the pilot Integrated Education Centres, currently established in Koondoola (north metro) and Parkwood (south metro). These programs are well received and successful and need to extend to other locations where there are newly emerging communities.**

Attaching the Integrated Education Centres to Schools helped establish stronger connections in a learning environment

What were the Recommendations?

- **Provide new short-term emergency and crisis accommodation for CaLD families with a particular need identified for Muslim women with children and Muslim women escaping family violence.**

A full analysis of this issue was undertaken in 2007 and resulted in the Report 'No Place to Go: Report on the Needs Analysis for Crisis Accommodation for CaLD Background People of Islamic Faith'.

SAAP service providers report that they feel unable to offer suitable and culturally appropriate services to people from CaLD backgrounds that also have English language difficulties. Similarly, from the perspective of people from CaLD backgrounds, many service providers identify that these people are unaware or unwilling to access these services and therefore remain in unsafe situations or are forced to use other avenues that may not meet their needs.

Aly, A. and Gaba, G. 'No Place to Go: Report on the Needs Analysis for Crisis Accommodation for CaLD Background People of Islamic Faith' Dar Al Shifaa (Islamic) Inc. 2007

What were the Recommendations?

Implementation Plan

- **That a Round Table of responsible government agencies and decision makers identify sources of funding and develop implementation plans for actioning the above recommendations.**



Participants to the Consultation Forum in February 08

Thank You
Questions?