



# Inclusive Governance

A policy platform to respond to the emerging and enduring needs of CALD communities in Western Sydney.

May 2022

# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre operate, the Cabrogal Clan of the Darug Nation and pay our respects to their ancestors past, present and emerging. We also pay respect to all our Community elders past, present and emerging.

## Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)

The company is a community-based non-profit organisation established to actively and directly relieve the situation of people and communities from diverse backgrounds whose social condition finds them disadvantaged. We aim to promote the principles of access and equity for diverse communities and identify and promote particular disadvantaged groups' needs to ensure that no one is left behind. Underpinning our principles are the core values for Human Rights. We all have our thoughts and ideas, should all be treated in the same way, and given the same opportunities, living in freedom and safety.

LOCATION: 108 Moore Street, Liverpool NSW 2170.

CONTACT: Tel: 02 8778 1200. Email: [info@wsmrc.org.au](mailto:info@wsmrc.org.au)

WEBSITE: [wsmrc.org.au](http://wsmrc.org.au)

### Author

Dr. Archana P. Voola

### Report Design

Rachel Haywood

### Suggested Citation

*Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre (2022). Inclusive Governance: A policy platform to respond to the emerging and enduring needs of CALD communities in Western Sydney. Position Paper, Liverpool, NSW, Australia.*

Accessible at: [wsmrc.org.au/resources-research-reports](http://wsmrc.org.au/resources-research-reports)

# Introduction

Western Sydney MRC's Policy Platform consolidates our local community and settlement sector's voices. It reflects our collective positions on issues of importance, guiding Western Sydney MRC in its efforts to support the emerging and enduring needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in Western and South Western Sydney.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its public health policies (especially lock down measures), Trust and Representation emerged as critical. Western Sydney's CALD communities felt divided, neglected and unheard. This policy platform seeks to unite, pay attention and give voice to these communities.

The Policy Platform comprises two parts:

Part 1: Background

Part 2: Position Statements

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

CALD - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

MRC - Migrant Resource Centre

DFV - Domestic and Family Violence

CRISP - Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot

SETS - Settlement Engagement and Transition Support

NDIS - National Disability Insurance Scheme

CSP - Community Support Program





## Part One - Background

Western Sydney MRC was founded to address social disadvantage, employing a social justice framework of legal and political rights, social participation and economic, and social equality. The company is a community-based non-profit organisation established to actively and directly relieve the situation of people and communities from diverse backgrounds whose social condition finds them disadvantaged.

Western Sydney MRC's vision calls for a socially inclusive Australia where diversity is celebrated. To work towards this, change needs to occur at both local community levels and broader policy levels. We have a strong history of working with communities around advocating for a change in policy on matters that impact them. There is an expectation from the community that the Western Sydney MRC will advocate and advance issues of concern to inform policy makers and politicians.

Utilising a systematic community needs assessment methodology (see appendix B) with multiple sources of data – research evidence, practice wisdom and lived expertise – we have identified the specific needs of our CALD community groups and determined which issues should be prioritised for action. The limitation here as with all research is that the views and concerns are based on current communities who were vocal and engaged. It may not reflect the whole-of-community concerns. This policy platform is informed directly by the CALD communities via consultation tours, one-to-one client interaction and evidence-based research from real data.

An internal steering committee was established to review and provide oversight of this policy platform. The list of priorities presented in this document is not comprehensive, but rather highlights the top key concerns right now so that the policy makers at the federal level are informed to take appropriate action and correction.

The primary limitation of this position paper is the lack of representation of Indigenous voices. While they form a smaller proportion of the population of Western Sydney, we recognise their distinct and unique needs. We look to the local land councils and Indigenous elders to guide us in our understanding of the issues, especially the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council, where Western Sydney MRC is located.





Photo: Meet the Candidates Forum, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre - 4 May 2022



## Part 2 – Position Statements

Western Sydney MRC is seeking all parties' commitment to:

1. Federal support to address CALD specific service gaps
2. COVID-19 recovery supports for settlement service providers
3. Migration and Citizenship
4. Direct engagement with CALD communities



Casula Powerhouse Art Centre, Liverpool - Meet the Candidates event 4 May 2022

## Part 2 – Position Statements

### 1. Federal support to address CALD specific service gaps

We recognise the unique strengths that humanitarian entrants, permanent migrants and their communities possess, as well as the specific challenges they face in their settlement journey. The federal governments Settlement Engagement and Transitions Supports program delivered by Western Sydney MRC as part of the NSW Settlement Partnership<sup>ii</sup> provides several services, nevertheless gaps exist in certain CALD specific services for communities in Western Sydney.

These gaps need to be addressed urgently through targeted investments for access and equity. As an example, during the 2021 pandemic induced lock downs, several services quickly moved online with English as the primary medium of communication. The varying levels of English language proficiency became a barrier for this cohort of people to access services. Translations services<sup>iii</sup> are few and far between in a constantly changing crisis environment. Identifying and addressing such nuanced service gaps is essential.

Western Sydney MRC advocates for:

**1 Expanding eligibility for SETs program**  
Expanding eligibility for the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETs) program beyond 5 years eligibility cap and move to needs based settlement model. For instance, it may take longer than 5 years for community groups to become established and avail of the Community Capacity Building supports available under SETS.

**2 Widening of visa categories**  
Widening of visa categories that can be eligible for these supports such as family stream migrants with adequate level of English proficiency<sup>iv</sup>

**3 Expanding settlement outcomes**  
Expanding settlement outcomes, especially under the client services stream to include more than the three Es (English, Education, Employment)<sup>v</sup> to include housing, civic participation, women's safety, and social cohesion reflecting the National Settlement Outcomes Standards advocated by Settlement Council of Australia<sup>vi</sup>.

**4 Recognising Overseas Qualifications**  
Establishing a singular government entity to recognise overseas qualifications and skills unlike the current Overseas Qualifications Units<sup>vii</sup> linked to specific State and Territory governments.

**5 Building Digital Infrastructure**  
Building the digital infrastructure, capability and literacy of CALD communities/groups through a CALD National Digital plan<sup>viii</sup> with specific investment for refugee and migrant communities.

## Part 2 – Position Statements

### 2. COVID-19 recovery supports for settlement service providers

Working with and servicing CALD individuals has revealed to us that families, community leaders and local place-based organisations have been instrumental in supporting residents of Western and South Western Sydney to navigate challenges, especially those arising during times of crises.

When public health messages were not percolating to the ground, Western Sydney MRC was seen as a trusted local institution by the community with the capacity to offer the much-needed linkage between governments and individual residents. The COVID-19 survival and recovery efforts in 2020 and 2021 relied heavily on voluntary hours dedicated by community sector. But this is unsustainable and requires more intentional and considered federal government supports for local place-based community organisations, especially within settlement sector. For instance, formally recognising, embedding and financially compensating place-based organisations in emergency management systems to enhance the recovery efforts<sup>ix</sup>.

Western Sydney MRC advocates for:

1

#### Funding local place-based community organisations

Identifying, resourcing, and funding local place-based community organisations to be integrated with emergency management systems for tailored response and recovery<sup>viii</sup>

2

#### Sustainable workforces

Investing in sustainable workforce capacity of the settlement sector where currently full time employees only account for 36% of the staff<sup>x</sup>

3

#### In-language health communications

Focusing on public health communications targeting CALD communities not only in-language (esp. of those new, emerging, and harder to reach groups), but also reflecting and representing the tone and the optics of genuine collaboration and cooperation with leaders in those communities<sup>xi</sup>

4

#### Recognition of community sector

Recognising, supporting and compensating local community leaders, informal groups and volunteers working overtime on a voluntary basis to engage with government (joining calls with ministers), businesses (translating public health orders) and individuals (countering misinformation via WeChat, WhatsApp, community radio)

5

#### Innovation and Investment in community-led approaches

Recognising community sector participation in COVID-19 response and recovery in a meaningful way through innovations and investment in community approaches<sup>xii</sup> to economic recovery, language learning, mental health services<sup>xiii</sup> et al.



## Part 2 – Position Statements

### 3. Migration and Citizenship

Migration and citizenship have been on the national agenda of peak bodies such as Settlement Council of Australia and Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia.

The existing refugee program is a proxy for family reunion and requires enhanced pathway and more flexibility in other visa streams. While the 2022 Federal budget makes accommodations for much needed additional places (16,500) for refugees from Afghanistan over the next four years, there is an overall reduction in the annual number of humanitarian places set by the government<sup>xiv</sup>. Our Western Sydney MRC communities are specifically concerned about the lack of clear pathways to permanent residency and citizenship for temporary visa holders. Migration ceilings and slow pace to citizenship are missed opportunities for Australia to use immigration as a driver of our local economy as well as demonstrate leadership and innovation in meeting the global refugee crisis.

Western Sydney MRC advocates for:

1

#### Increasing humanitarian intake

Increasing humanitarian intake via community-based approaches such as the Community Support Program<sup>xv</sup> and Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)<sup>xvi</sup> Program but separate from the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and its national quota ceiling

2

#### National Anti-racism Framework

Implementing a National Anti-Racism Framework<sup>xvii</sup> for successful settlement of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. A framework that identifies contributory factors, levers for change and responses to combat racism in Australia

3

#### Regional Settlement options

Additional Regional Settlement options explored and developed as a co-designed initiative alongside individuals with lived experience<sup>xviii</sup>

4

#### Critical Safety Nets Expansion

Including people seeking asylum who are on bridging and temporary visa into critical safety nets such as Job seeker<sup>xix</sup>

5

#### Citizenship Review

Revisiting the citizenship process for refugees and people seeking asylum as the extended delays are impacting their ability to rebuild their lives in safety and security<sup>xx</sup>.

## Part 2 – Position Statements

### 4. Direct engagement with CALD communities

Over the past four decades, Western Sydney MRC has employed trust building strategies that have offered authentic, direct and meaningful engagement.

Currently we work with 44 cultural associations in Western Sydney surrounds. They include African, Iraqi, Italian, Syrian, Vietnamese, Chaldean Catholic, Assyrian Orthodox, Mandaean, Muslims, Pacific Islander, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to name a few. The on-going engagements have revealed that mainstream services are in most cases inaccessible or insufficient to address the unique challenges facing our communities. For instance, Federal employment programs offered through mainstream larger job networks are often unsuccessful and unsustainable<sup>xxi</sup>. Reasons being that larger organisations are ill-equipped with knowledge of local landscape, refugee and migrant work trajectories and lack the trust of local business and residents. Therefore, it is imperative to have federal engagement with local communities on issues that are self-identified<sup>\*</sup>:

Western Sydney MRC advocates for:

1

#### Trauma Informed Culturally Competent Support

Mental Health & Wellbeing of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds requiring nuanced trauma informed and culturally competent support and consultation

2

#### Place-based Service Expansion

Developing and expanding employment, education and training services linked to place-based community organisations

3

#### Affordable Housing

Prioritising housing affordability, and investing in social housing with high liveability index<sup>xxii</sup>

4

#### CALD Disability National Strategy

Supporting needs of newly arrived refugees with a disability via a co-designed NDIS CALD strategy

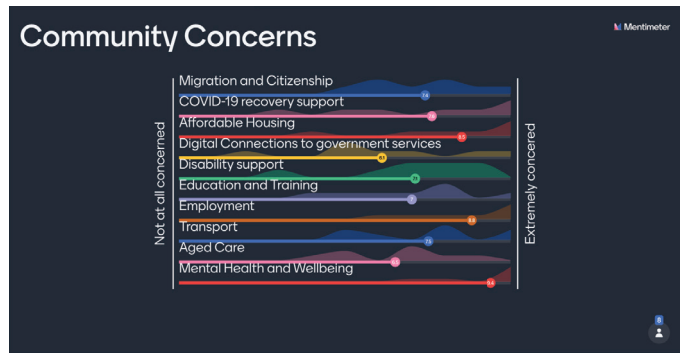
5

#### Refugee and Migrant DFV Support

Recognising and supporting refugee and migrant women's disproportionate experience<sup>xxiii</sup> of domestic, family and sexual violence

<sup>\*</sup>As is the case in this report, the issues listed as based on first hand community consultations held between February – April 2022 in lead up to the federal election of 2022.

Pre-consultation survey sample - Youth Consultation 22 April 2022



### What makes for a healthy democracy/good civic participation for CALD communities?

- Equal opportunity
- Cultural changes within the communities themselves
- An open forum for discussion, creating focussed goals that are then prioritised based on the general communities needs
- Having a seat at the table and being genuinely listened to and respected
- Understanding context
- everyone's voices being heard- equality of opportunity
- Voices being heard and decisions made in consultation with community members.
- Active listening, transparent communication, access to multilingual resources
- Making space for having uncomfortable conversations

### What would you like to see in a civic participation/advocacy/leadership workshop?

- Discussion debate and tangible actions to follow
- Open discussion from varied points of view and collaborative approach
- to learn about what we can do as the youth to improve policies for all
- Content focussed on affected communities with speakers talking of their lived experience
- Strong leadership

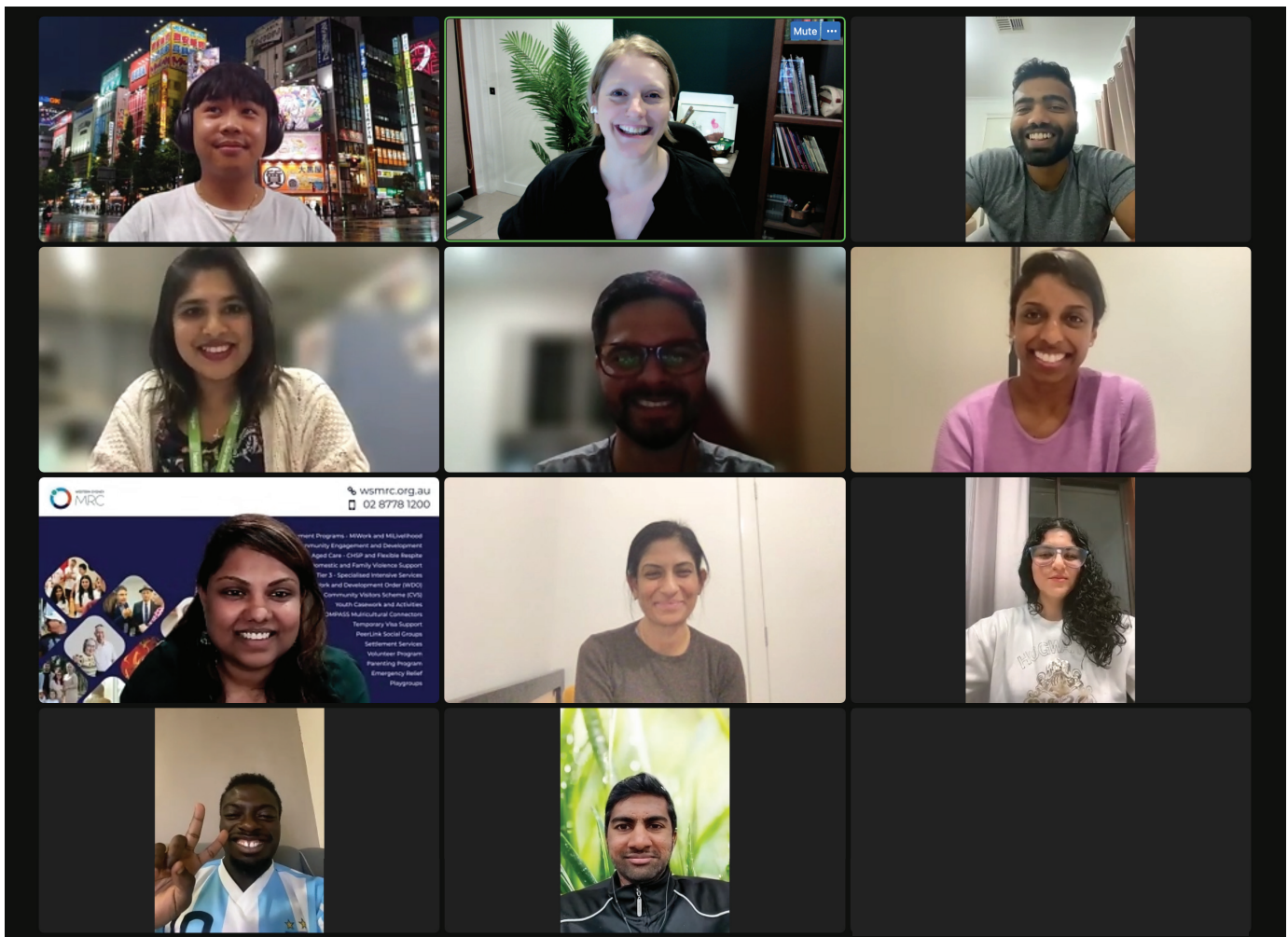


Photo: Youth Consultation via Zoom in partnership with Headspace Campbelltown - April 2022



# Appendices

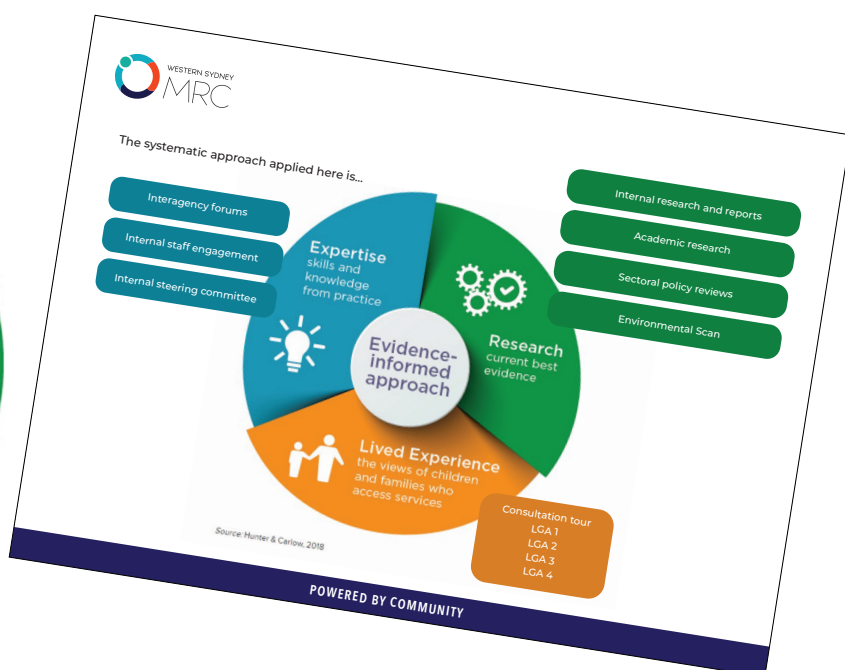
## A. Key Community Concerns Polled during Western Sydney MRC’s Community Consultation tours (Jan – April 2022)

Issues of Concern	Liverpool LGA	Fairfield LGA	Canterbury-Bankstown LGA	Western Sydney Youth
Mental Health and Wellbeing	2	1	1	1
Employment	3	4	4	2
COVID-19 recovery support	1	2	5	4
Migration & Citizenship	9	7	3	6
Affordable Housing	5	3	6	3
Digital Connections to government services	6	5	9	10
Disability support	10	9	8	7
Education & Training	4	5	2	8
Transport	8	10	10	5
Aged care	7	8	7	9

## B. Community Needs Assessment Methodology



Source: Hunter & Carlow, 2018



The diagram above developed by Australian Institute of Family Studies best captures this systematic approach to understanding community needs. Ref: Hunter, C., & Carlow, M. (2018). Knowledge translation strategy: Emerging Minds National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies [unpublished. internal document only]. Image 2 adapted by Western Sydney MRC to overlay our Civic Spotlight Initiative.

## Endnotes

- i ABC News (2021). The COVID Divide: As the economy starts to bounce back, unemployment remains high in parts of western Sydney compared to the rest of the nation, 7:30 with Leigh sales: <https://www.abc.net.au/7.30/as-the-economy-starts-to-bounce-back-unemployment/13680392>
- ii Western Sydney MRC (n.d.). NSW Settlement Partnership. <https://wsmrc.org.au/nsp/>
- iii Mostafa Rachwani (2022). Patients left without crucial information as Covid puts pressure on NSW interpreting services. The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/23/patients-left-without-crucial-information-as-covid-puts-pressure-on-nsw-interpreting-services>
- iv Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (n.d.). Program Eligibility: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/sets-program/sets-client-services>
- v Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (n.d.). SETS – Client services: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/sets-program>
- vi Settlement Council of Australia (2020). National Settlement Outcomes Standard. <https://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NSOS-2020.pdf>
- vii Australian Government (n.d). Qualification Recognition: <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/services-and-resources/pages/qualifications-recognition.aspx>
- viii Akin to the federal governments \$800 million Digital business plan: <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/digital-business-plan-drive-australias-economic-recovery>
- ix NCOSS (2021). After the pandemic: building a more resilient and inclusive NSW Pre-Budget Submission 2022-23: [https://www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NCOSS-Pre-Budget-Submission-2022-23\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NCOSS-Pre-Budget-Submission-2022-23_FINAL.pdf)
- x Settlement Council of Australia (2021). State of the Sector - 2020: <http://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/State-of-the-Sector-2020-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>
- xi Voola, A. P. (2021). Pulse of South West Sydney CALD communities: Amplifying voices during COVID-19. Research Report, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, Liverpool, NSW, Australia.
- xii Department of Social Services (2021). Stronger places, stronger people: <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/stronger-places-stronger-people>
- xiii FECCA (2015). Australian Mosaic: Pathways to better mental health: <https://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Australian-Mosaic-Issue-41.pdf>
- xiv Higgins, C. (2022). Budget 2022: What it means for Australia's refugee system? UNSW: <https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/news/budget-2022-what-it-means-australias-refugee-system>
- xv Refugee Council of Australia (2021).The Community Support Program: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/community-support-program/>
- xvi Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (2021). CRSA to partner with Federal Government for new pilot program <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/crsa-to-partner-with-federal-government-for-new-pilot-program/>
- xvii Australian Human Rights Commission (2021). Concept paper for a National Anti-Racism Framework: [https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc\\_cp\\_national\\_anti-racism\\_framework\\_2021\\_.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_cp_national_anti-racism_framework_2021_.pdf)
- xviii Western Sydney MRC (2021). Behind the numbers: Australian Humanitarian Program Community Consultation 2021: <https://wsmrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MRC00409-Community-Consultation-report-280521.pdf>
- xix Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (2021). Budget 21 continues the Government's detention cost blow out and exclusion of people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants in time of crisis. <https://asrc.org.au/2021/05/12/budget-21-continues-the-governments-detention-cost-blow-out-and-exclusion-of-people-seeking-asylum-refugees-and-migrants-in-time-of-crisis/>
- xx Farrell, P. & McDonald, A. (2022). Just one in 13,000 refugees have been resettled from a regional visa program. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-31/one-in-13000-refugees-resettled-from-a-regional-visa-program/100927932>
- xxi Tahiri, S. (2017). Not working: Experiences of Refugees and Migrants with JobActive: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Jobactive.pdf>
- xxii Deloitte (2021). Commonwealth Social and Affordable Housing Policy Review. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/552bbddde4b0da214d6d3a2ft/6232bfd-9d554a503b76c340e/1647493085888/220317\\_Deloitte+Social+Affordable+Housing+policy+review.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/552bbddde4b0da214d6d3a2ft/6232bfd-9d554a503b76c340e/1647493085888/220317_Deloitte+Social+Affordable+Housing+policy+review.pdf)
- xxiii Harmony Alliance (2020). Submission to inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence. <https://harmonyalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Harmony-Alliance-Submission-Family-domestic-and-sexual-violence-inquiry.pdf>

