

# Regional Migration Social Cohesion



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**Australian Government**  
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MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

VICTORIAN  
**multicultural**  
commission

# **ARC Linkage Project**

## **“Resettling Visible Migrants and Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia”**

### **Research Team**

**(School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne)**

- Joint Chief Investigators: Prof Brian Galligan, Dr Millsom S Henry-Waring
- Postdoctoral Fellow: Dr Martina Boese
- PhD Candidate: Ms Melissa Phillips
- Research Assistant: Ms Annika Kearton

### **Industry Partners**

- Municipal Association Victoria (MAV)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC)

# Research Sources

- **National online survey with stakeholders** working in settlement-related areas in government and community sector
- **Focus groups with stakeholders** working in settlement-related areas in 8 research sites in Victoria
- **Interviews with recently-arrived migrants and refugees** in 8 research sites across Victoria
- **Expert (policy) interviews** in selected areas

## 8 Research sites (Vic)

- **Regional/rural Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ballarat, Colac-Otway, Geelong, Latrobe, Mount Alexander and Swan Hill**
- **Metropolitan LGAs Monash and Maribyrnong (for comparative purposes)**

# Regional sites

- Ballarat (8.7%; 25% Eng)
- Colac/Otway (7.5%; 31% Eng)
- Geelong (15.9; 23% Eng)
- Latrobe (7.5%; 31% Eng)
- Mt Alexander (11%; 38% Eng)
- Swan Hill (12%; 12% Italian)
- Monash (45%; 18% Chinese)
- Maribrynong (40%; 24% Viet)

# Themes

- Regional migration
- Social Inclusion
- Settlement
  - Government policy
  - Community
- Inclusion
  - Becoming Australian

# Regional Migration

- Current settlement patterns in Australia show a shift away from major gateway cities and to regional areas, mainly regional cities or clusters
  - Migrant following Australian pattern
- Similar shifts observed in Canada, the United States and New Zealand
- Regional settlement of migrants and refugees occurs
  - Directly through government-led settlement pilot projects or ongoing programs
  - Directly through skilled migrant visa schemes obliging visa holders to work in a designated area
  - Indirectly with regional/rural level support (e.g. employer assisted)
  - Indirectly with metropolitan support (e.g. community sector assisted)
  - Due to family or community connections in an area (secondary settlement or relocation)
  - Due to lifestyle, job opportunities, housing affordability, higher education and other pull factors

# Social Inclusion

- Reform mantra in last decade, esp. in UK: marginalised people are less equal & suffer more
  - Concerns health, disabilities, housing etc.
- C'wth Ministry 2007-13 (Gillard, Crean, Plibersek, Butler)
- Various States have a Social Inclusion policy
- SA Dept of Communities & Social Inclusion
  - 'works with people who may be poor, vulnerable, at risk of harm or isolated, to connect them to choices and opportunities. The Department works with other agencies and provides direct services in housing, ageing, child protection, youth justice, disability, anti-poverty, adoptions, community services and domiciliary care'.

# Top-down Settlement

**Commonwealth** driven through a predominantly top-down process:

- sets intake numbers, categories, mix
- exercises fiscal control and oversight of major settlement programs: *Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)*, *Settlement Grants Program (SGP)*, *Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)* and *Complex Case Support (CCS)*
- Contracts out settlement services via competitive tendering
- State governments have a stake through State Migration Plans and the *State Specific Regional Migration Visa (SSRM)*.
- Settlement is mediated by state and local governments, and through third sector community organisations and businesses
- Inclusion:
  - Skilled migrants assumed to have qualities to make their own way
  - Humanitarian/Refugees have special programs: C'wth, joint, State & local



# Bottom-up Settlement

- Settlement is increasingly mediated by 'non-traditional' settlement actors: local councils, employers and community groups
- Local actors concerned about population decline, local economic growth and regional renewal
- Local actors bring to the table a strong knowledge of the community at the grassroots level and play a central role in facilitating regional settlement
- Local government
  - No specific responsibilities but need to deal with people who come to their jurisdiction
  - Ensure access and equity in local government services
  - Variable across local govts: from leader/ facilitator, to taking on responsibilities, to watching brief

# Local Government—Cinderella

- Local governments are increasingly involved in settlement, multicultural affairs and community relations, but to varying extents and in different capacities
  - Cultural diversity officers in local councils
  - Development and implementation of cultural diversity plans (not a legislative requirement for local councils)
- Local actors are increasingly taking on the responsibility of promoting and coordinating skilled migration
  - Regional Coordinators of the *Global Skills for Provincial Victoria* initiative are currently placed in 11 local councils in regional Victoria, supporting community and economic development, employer contacts and the attraction and retention of skilled migrants
- Settlement planning and coordination through the Local Settlement Planning Committees (LSPC)

**Focus groups with local stakeholders in regional areas showed an overwhelming support for more local government engagement in the area of supporting newly-arrived residents and cultural diversity more generally, however, there is a tension evident in the desire for greater local government involvement and uncertainty as to where their expertise can best fit**

# Employment

## **Critical for Well-being/ Inclusion**

- Employee sponsored
  - Dependency
- Skilled Independent
  - Mismatch eg engineers & IT to Geelong
- Refugees/unskilled
  - Jobs locals won't do
  - High unemployment
- **Other Factors can trump**

# Community Sector

- Due to gaps in settlement coordination and service planning, and the unavailability of flexible funding to accommodate emerging needs, local services are left to accommodate new arrivals in an area and approaching these services for assistance: *“government doesn't seem able to be responsible in a reactive way early enough. So it's relying on the goodwill of people within under-funded organisations to say, ‘this is our responsibility, we will take it on’”*  
(Local employer)
- Community sector organisations often see their natural role as being the recipients of funding and ‘turf’ battles occur when new players receive funding. Well-established community sector organisations that are funded to provide settlement services, do not always view the increased responsibilities of Local Council in the settlement area as desirable
- Compounding the issue associated with fluctuating client levels due to internal migration is the challenge of providing services in large regional and rural areas where services can cost more. Two service approaches have been identified in this research: direct service provision or outreach.

# Mobility

- Hyper-mobility features significantly in pre-migration.
- That recent arrivals are highly mobile, and readily relocate is a real and positive phenomenon. Relocation of recent arrivals makes service delivery difficult. Better data on relocation is crucial, and policies need to be sufficiently flexible to follow these movements as new arrivals negotiate employment and housing pressures, transnational ties and community links
- ‘Secondary migration’ raised by some service providers as a problem or loss; but understood by others as a pragmatic response to changing circumstances
- Issues still to be resolved:
  - Data collection methods to provide snap-shots of newly arrived communities ensuring adequate funding (especially for SGP grants)
  - What is a ‘critical mass’ for settlement service provision ?
- Community: multiple, variable—NOT single, integrated locale

# Challenges

- Variability in regional and rural settlement due to high levels of internal migration complicates settlement planning and service-provision
- An uneven patchwork of bottom-up responses from local governments and the third sector has emerged
- Locally-based organisations feel left out of policy decisions and planning; are often unprepared for new arrivals and have inadequate resources
- Centralised funding and contracting out arrangements conflict with the more fluid grassroots reality of regional migration and hinder more coordinated, cooperative service provision at the local level
- Discrete and short-term project funding is also a barrier to coherent and ongoing service delivery
- Local government is in place to play a larger role
- Need for intergovernmental coordination among C'wth, state and local government

# Being Australian

- Variety of interpretations of the symbolic and practical meaning of Australian citizenship

- Formal entitlement: rights and/ or responsibilities
- a sense of belonging
- a means of status and security

*It means a lot to me because I have a passport, I have an Australian passport ... having that citizenship, holding Australian citizenship means a lot to me. if I travel to another country (..) I will be respected, people know I'm Australian. ...It's a land of opportunities; it's a land of democracy, a land of freedoms, where people exercise their own skill, their ability of doing things politically and socially.*

# Identity; Degrees of Belonging

*Yeah, what I feel like I am? Okay, look since we came to Australia, like our son was really young, he's more Indian than I am....*

*Because he's going out there, he's reading, and he's very interested in his roots. So we didn't have to teach him. **We wanted to make him more Aussie** so that he's, as the parents, we wanted to take him out in activities we wanted to, so that he can be a part and not stand out....*

*On the other hand, I, when I'm working, sometimes I forget that I wasn't born here, and it's been only ten years. So sometimes when I, in the morning when I look at the mirror, I say 'oh, I'm different', but I don't think that I am different. So, look, we're living in this country, we've been very fortunate as well, and it's given us a lot as well, so we are quite grateful. So if people ask me who you are, I say, well I'm an Australian with Indian background, that's what I feel like.*



# Being Aussi

*I think anyone in Australia can be Australian, but he or she cannot be Aussie.*

*(Interviewer ) Because of what?*

*Because of the colour, because of the ethnicity of the...yeah so...background, yeah.*

# Visibility & Discrimination

## **70 interviewees**

- 22 discrimination
- 19 low English skills
- 14 lack of job interviews
- 12 lack of Aust. Experience
- 5 lack of skills
- 4 difficulty in skills recognition

## **Other good news stories**

- Advantages/confidence in being visible

# Being Included

*I: what do you think it means to be Australian?*

*K: **To be Australian, it means that you are been included**, you have been given the certain right, yeah, privileges, yeah, that any other Australian people, yeah.*

*I: So do you feel Australian, would you say you feel Australian?*

*K: You feel Australian, but you see, if something happens, sometime you don't feel like you are Australian, yeah.*

*I: When for example, when do you not feel Australian?*

*K: When you feel like people don't recognize you, or don't respect you, you don't feel like, you don't belong here, yeah.*

# Key Observations

- Identification as 'Australian' ranges from rights-focused to culture-focused positions.
- Inclusion has structural and emotive aspects, and is conditional upon acceptance by others.
- Identity is deeply contextualised in multiple localities
- processes of cultural transformation are variable
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Gen Migrants: some retain more of formative pre-migration culture; others embrace Australianness; many combine both
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen largely Australianised
  - But which Australia?

**Eugene Kamenka: 'Australia made me; but which Australia?'**