



Government of **Western Australia**  
Office of **Multicultural Interests**

# OMI Family Consultation Report

*February 2011*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) held the last of four consultations scheduled for 2010 on Thursday 28 October 2010 at the Agonis Centre, 2232 Albany Highway, Gosnells. A roundtable was also held on Monday 1 November 2010 at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Chesterfield Road, Mirrabooka. The consultations were undertaken in response to the OMI Strategic Plan 2009–2013, as part of a statewide community engagement strategy.

The aim of the strategy is to facilitate the engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in government decision-making processes, policies and programs and provide information, skills and opportunities to support settlement, integration and citizenship.

The consultation aimed to:

1. provide information about parenting-related services and programs provided by relevant government agencies
2. listen to concerns of community members and service providers about parenting issues, and explore possible solutions.

Eighty-nine people attended the consultation at the Agonis Community Centre. Of these, 77 (87 per cent) were representatives of service provider agencies and the remainder were community members. Nineteen people participated in the Mirrabooka roundtable. Of these, 18 (95 per cent) were service providers and only one (5 per cent) was a member of the community.

Feedback from participants following the consultation indicated satisfaction with the quality of the presentations and facilitated group discussions.

It should be noted that, while the consultation structure is effective in raising issues and identifying CaLD community perceptions of government services, it does not reliably yield recommendations or solutions that can readily be implemented. This is in part due to the lack of opportunity for agencies to present the detailed context for their policies and programs, knowledge of which is essential for formulating reforms.

### Key issues and solutions

Priority issues identified at the two consultations were:

- **Loss of parental control**—this was considered to result from a focus on children's rights, the extent to which children in Australia are given autonomy, and the relatively rapid acquisition of English compared with their parents. **Intergenerational conflict** between parents and children was identified as a common result and was identified as a priority issue in itself.

Suggestions to address these issues included:

- education for young people to develop a sense of responsibility and respect for their parents and families
- increasing the number of parenting programs that focus on how to deal with teenagers.

- **Information provision**—the need for agencies to reduce their reliance on written communication and to adopt a multifaceted approach to information provision was highlighted. Participants supported a community development approach in the design and delivery of information, with greater involvement of CaLD communities. Concerns were raised regarding the volume of information provided soon after arrival in Australia.

Suggestions for improving information provision included:

- using alternative community education mechanisms such as theatre and DVDs to deliver messages and working with community members to identify the most effective mechanisms through which to convey information
  - including pictures and multicultural images where written information is used
  - delivering information and parenting support over an extended period of time.
- **Social isolation**—in many cultures, neighbours and the extended family have a parenting role. Once in Australia, parents lose access to this support network. It was noted that single-parent families, in which the mother is the sole care giver, are not uncommon among those who arrived through Australia’s humanitarian program.

Suggestions to address this issue included offering programs that create community spaces for families to come together and develop support networks.

- **Parenting programs and services**—a key message for the Department for Child Protection (DCP) was to focus on parents as well as children in developing their programs, to improve connections with communities and be aware of cultural parenting practices when making decisions. Participants also called for more education for parents regarding the cultural differences in parenting between Australia and some other countries.

Participants identified a need for agencies in general to:

- increase their levels of **cultural competency**, and employ more mediation, bilingual and outreach workers in order to communicate and service CaLD communities more effectively
- introduce community development models of service delivery
- adopt a flexible approach to parenting models, which accommodates cultural differences
- increase collaboration and partnerships between agencies, as well as between agencies and CaLD communities, to improve service delivery.

Other key issues identified by participants were:

- **Settlement issues**—other than the matter of social isolation, participants stressed the need for agencies to acknowledge and respond to the many pressures experienced by many CaLD families as they settle and adjust to life in Australia. Suggestions to address these issues included:
  - ensuring agency staff are aware of the ongoing impact of torture and trauma and take this into account when delivering services and provide information about torture and trauma services;

- addressing housing issues, including providing opportunities for large families to be housed in duplex accommodation, adopting community housing models and increasing rental and bond assistance to facilitate access to the private housing market.
- **Language services**—participants identified scope for improvement in the use of interpreters and translators by agencies and a need to monitor the effectiveness of language services. Suggestions to address this issue included promoting and monitoring implementation of the *Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008*.
- **Targeted programs**—a need was identified for programs targeting specific groups, including:
  - services for young people aged between eight and 14 years
  - support for CaLD parents in terms of dealing with adolescents
  - increased support for CaLD men.
- **School education**—participants commented on the challenges faced by children in school and the impact on families in terms of the extent to which children adjust to school. Participants expressed concerns regarding the consequences of students leaving the school system especially the potential for young people to become involved in the criminal justice system. It was suggested that difficulties with schooling could exacerbate intergenerational conflict.

Suggestions to address these issues included:

- encouraging greater interaction and collaboration between CaLD parents, families and communities and schools
- providing specialised support for new arrivals and ongoing support thereafter as required
- schools organising homework assistance for students and establishing a pool of volunteers to help with homework.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) held the last of four consultations scheduled for 2010 on Thursday 28 October 2010 at the Agonis Centre, 2232 Albany Highway, Gosnells. A roundtable was also held on Monday 1 November 2010 at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Chesterfield Road, Mirrabooka. The consultations were undertaken in response to the OMI Strategic Plan 2009–2013, as part of a State-wide community engagement strategy.

The aim of the strategy is to facilitate the engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in government decision-making processes, policies and programs and provide information, skills and opportunities to support settlement integration and citizenship.

### 1.1 Background

Family issues were chosen as a focus for consultation in recognition that, while most families face challenges, especially in relation to parent–child relationships, migrants and refugees may face additional challenges resulting from the experience of settling and adjusting to life in a new country. Parents from refugee backgrounds, in particular, have demonstrated great strengths in caring for their children and looking after their families. However, differences in the social, cultural and family environments between the home country and Australia can make parenting more difficult and challenging.

Some families may find significant differences in some aspects of parenting in their countries of origin compared with those in Australia. There may also be different legal and cultural rules about parenting in Australia including those regarding discipline methods, child-minding and nutrition.

Additional challenges may arise from:

- children adapting to life in Australia and to the Australian culture and English language more quickly than their parents
- traumatic experiences before settling in Australia which can disrupt family relationships and interactions
- financial strains arising from low incomes, high living costs and additional responsibilities to support family members overseas.

At a youth roundtable organised by OMI on 6 September 2010 for CaLD youth service providers in the Mirrabooka area, participants identified intergenerational conflict as one of the key issues for CaLD youth and the main cause for young people leaving the family home and in some cases becoming homeless.

Children and young people often adapt more quickly to their new environment. Parents may place greater importance on maintaining values and roles from their home country, while their children may feel pressure directly from friends, and indirectly from the general society, to adopt 'Western' or 'Australian' values and roles.

This can result in:

- disagreements between parents and children about their use of money, dress, friendship groups, language or behaviour
- disruption of family roles such as when parents rely on their children to translate for them.

At a community forum held by the City of Stirling in November 2009 the same points were made, with participants noting that:

- many women who arrive with their children on humanitarian visas are sole parents and a lack of a significant male role model can create challenges especially in raising boys
- some parents may be confused about what level and types of discipline are allowed in Australia.

Research has identified a need for communities and agencies to work together to share information, skills and knowledge to build strong families.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 Methodology

Eighty-nine people attended the consultation at the Agonis Community Centre in Gosnells. Of these, 12 (13 per cent) were community members and the remainder were representatives of service provider agencies. The participants were from a range of cultural backgrounds. A list of communities and organisations represented at the forum is provided in the Appendix.

Eighteen people attended the roundtable at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Youth Centre. The roundtable was for invitees only and included representatives from the Department for Child Protection, Department for Communities, the Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka, Ishaar Multicultural Women's Health Centre and the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre. Only one community member, from the Sudanese community, attended.

The consultations were organised in two parts:

Part 1: An information session during which Donna Legge, Manager of the Department for Communities' Parenting WA Centre, and Eduardo Farate, Principal Policy and Planning Officer: Cultural Diversity at the Department for Child Protection, described the role of their agencies and the initiatives they have implemented to assist people from CaLD backgrounds.

Part 2: A facilitated discussion in small groups of approximately 10 participants per group in which OMI sought input on issues affecting families from CaLD backgrounds. Each group had a facilitator and scribe who recorded the issues raised by participants at each table.

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Refugee Research—Access Services Inc. (2009) *African Women Talking: "We want the best thing for our family"* p.14.

Participants were also offered individual feedback sheets on which they could make additional comments if there was insufficient opportunity to contribute all the comments they might wish to make.

For each of the issues raised, participants were invited to:

- i) identify issues, and their associated impacts
- ii) explore possible solutions, and how to achieve them.

The issues were summarised and then each participant voted to prioritise two key issues and their solutions.

It should be noted that, while the consultation structure is effective in raising issues and in identifying CaLD community perceptions of government services, it does not reliably yield recommendations or solutions that can readily be implemented. This is in part due to the lack of opportunity for agencies to present the detailed context for their policies and programs, knowledge of which is essential for formulating reforms.

### 1.3 Evaluation

Following the forum and roundtable, participants were asked to provide feedback on the presentations, quality of discussion and overall organisation. Results are provided below.

#### Agonis Centre

Seventy-six of the 89 participants (85 per cent) completed the questionnaire.

Sixty-two respondents (82 per cent) considered the presentations to be 'good' or 'excellent'. Of these, 40 (53 per cent) considered the presentations 'good' and 22 considered them 'excellent'. Comments were mixed. Some respondents indicated that they found the presentations useful and informative and would have appreciated more time to have been made available for presentations and questions. Others believed that the presentations could have been omitted to provide time for more discussion.

Comments included:

*Good overview of their respective areas and gave participants a good starting point for the discussion that ensued.*

*Little bit more time for each presenter and then for more questions.*

*In retrospect I think both these presentations could have been dropped to make more room for discussion. I'm not sure the process was really enhanced by having the presentations as they added little to knowledge in the room, and almost reinforced service providers frustrations with Government.*

*Language used in presentations would be more simple.*

All respondents (100 per cent) found the discussion relevant. Forty-five (59 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and 25 (33 per cent) gave a rating of 'good'. All believed their views were heard to varying degrees. Forty



three (57 per cent) gave a rating of 'excellent', 20 (26 per cent) gave a rating of 'good' and six (8 per cent) gave a rating of 'average'. Comments included:

*Fabulous! Great mix of people and services—lots of ideas and new view points.*

*Some of the other members of our group had excellent thoughtful observations, and I felt that I learned a lot from their expertise. I was also able to give my own ideas and experiences.*

*Issues inspired a lot of discussion but due to time constraints this had to be limited to the available time.*

Sixty-four respondents (84 per cent) valued the consultation program as 'good' or 'excellent'. Of these, 42 (55 per cent) gave a rating of 'excellent' and 22 (29 per cent) gave a rating of 'good'.

Qualitative feedback indicated that key areas for improvement related to the need for more time to be given to the consultation and for efforts to be made to attract more members of the community. Comments included:

*Overall I feel the consultation process especially with input from diverse cultures, was a very valuable experience and I hope that I will be influential in helping with solutions to various cultural and parenting issues.*

*Comments were made at the table that the promotion may not have reached all communities, some could not afford to attend—weekends and smaller community friendly venues may be more suitable.*

*Very organised but rushed. Maybe a whole day would be more suitable so more discussion can be generated.*

#### Mirrabooka roundtable

Sixteen of the 18 participants (89 per cent) responded to the questionnaire.

All respondents (100 per cent) considered the presentations to be 'good' or 'excellent'. Ten (63 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and six (37 per cent) gave a rating of 'good'. Comments focused on the need for more time to be given to the presentations. Comments included:

*Very direct and informative information given in a short time. Both speakers spoke clearly.*

*Appreciated the notes handed out by Eduardo.*

*They did not get enough time to enlighten us, to give us all the information we need.*

*More time for questions.*

All respondents (100 per cent) found the discussion relevant. Eleven respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and four gave a rating of 'good'. All believed their views were heard to varying degrees. Forty-three (57 per cent) gave a rating of 'excellent', 20 (26 per cent) gave a rating of 'good' and six (8 per cent) gave a rating of 'average'.

Comments included:

*Questions very relevant.*

*Not enough time given for the consultations on the issues. Complex issues to be covered in 1 hour?*

*Again felt somewhat rushed for so many questions and I am not sure everyone's views were heard.*

All respondents (100 per cent) valued the consultation program as 'good' or 'excellent'. Of these, 14 (88 per cent) gave a rating of 'excellent' and two (12 per cent) gave a rating of 'good'.

Qualitative feedback indicated that key areas for improvement related to the need for more time to be given to the consultation. Comments included:

*OMI = good independent facilitator.*

*Smaller forum was better.*

*Very good to get the questions before.*

*Well organised—I liked the fact that there was a facilitator and scribe.*

*I think more time for this meeting may have been more beneficial as we could cover other areas.*

*The final collation of issues (yellow sheets) however, although the time keeping was accurate according to the timetable, I did feel a little rushed—was it Melbourne Cup race fever today!*

#### Future consultation topics

Participants at the forum and roundtable expressed interest in further consultations, including consultations focusing on specific communities. Suggested topics for future consultations were community safety, child protection, childcare, drugs and alcohol, the education system and schooling, family violence, improving relationships, integration of cultures, intergenerational conflict, the justice system engagement of refugee CaLD youth, mental health issues, parenting, public housing issues, the roles and responsibilities of CaLD men, transport<sup>2</sup> and youth issues.

#### 1.4 Lessons

Key lessons identified through this consultation process were the need for OMI to:

- allocate adequate time for consultations to ensure participants have the opportunity to discuss issues fully and to explore potential solutions in greater depth

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<sup>2</sup> OMI held a consultation on transport issues affecting CaLD communities on Saturday 26 June 2010. The consultation report is available at [www.omi.wa.gov.au](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au)

- promote consultations more widely, using a variety of methods, in order to attract participation by CaLD community members
- explore alternative formats through which to consult with CaLD communities.

OMI will take these issues on board in its planning for future consultations.

## 2. ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

### 2.1 Family support services

#### 2.1.1 Availability

Participants identified a number of gaps in the availability of family support services. Specific needs identified were for:

- short-term respite for single parents
- education for fathers about post-natal depression
- multicultural (single language, targeted) playgroups
- increased capacity for childcare services to accommodate all children in a family
- services for both CaLD men and women who are perpetrators or victims of domestic violence
- more assistance and support for parents with teenagers
- training for ethnic community leaders to enable them to provide parental programs
- increased availability of positive parenting programs
- a pregnancy support service for women from CaLD backgrounds who are close to giving birth, including someone to help look after their children when they are in hospital pre- and post-delivery. It was suggested that volunteers could be recruited to help provide support for mothers
- access to information about family law.

Participants highlighted the need for programs and services that support development of children and young peoples' self-esteem, in particular, services for eight to 14 year olds and social centres and programs for young people to assist them to establish appropriate boundaries. Suggestions included;

- programs such as the Mirrabooka midnight basketball program established by WA Police, which involved Indigenous and migrant youth
- after school activities, such as those provided by Centrecare, with fees determined according to length of time a family has been in Australia
- increasing the capacity of child care centres to enable all children from large families to attend the same centre<sup>3</sup>
- increasing awareness of services that child care centres can access

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<sup>3</sup> It is noted that child care services must comply with regulations relating to child to staff ratios.

- adapting mainstream playgroups to the needs of a multicultural community through provision of information and services in a range of languages and employing interpreters and bilingual workers.

Participants at the Mirrabooka roundtable voiced concerns regarding the adequacy of the 510 hours English language training provided to new arrivals as well as the adequacy of childcare for parents attending English classes. They identified a need for more opportunities for parents to learn English and suggested that:

- the number of Intensive English Centres be increased
- more information and encouragement be provided to parents to attend English classes
- child care facilities be provided for English classes
- English classes be linked to employment to enable workers to attend.

### 2.1.2 Accessibility

#### Information dissemination

Difficulties faced by families from CaLD backgrounds in accessing information about parenting and family support services were a significant concern for participants at both the Agonis Centre forum and the Mirrabooka roundtable. Difficulties included language barriers, agencies' reliance on written information and the timing of information provision.

*[It is] all to do with language. If they don't speak the language how do they know about these services?*

Difficulties accessing the Parenting WA Line provided by the Department for Communities were noted:

*Parent helpline not accessible to many CaLD people, women are isolated.*

Participants felt that agencies needed to embrace alternative methods of information delivery rather than 'one-way' dissemination of written information:

*Parenting tips come from a cup of tea, discussing amongst ourselves, informal chatting. Solutions aren't formal. [They are] flow on effects from experience. That's what we do. [A] booklet doesn't tell the family what to do.*

It was noted that information about services was most effectively provided by 'word of mouth':

- One participant reported that, in rural African communities, travelling theatre groups have been used to educate communities about HIV and that this might be an appropriate method of communicating parenting information to communities in Australia.

An additional concern was the quantity of information provided soon after arrival in Australia:

*I arrive one day, the following day I was given parenting information. I say I don't understand. Too soon. Six months later better. Like need to tick a box, we've told you.*

Participants stressed the need for parenting information to be given repeatedly rather than on a 'one-off' basis.

Participants also identified a need for migrant resource centres in some areas to assist with information and service delivery as well as a need for a multi-agency approach to provide an opportunity for information exchange and increased understanding of the communities with which service providers are dealing.

### Suggestions

Solutions suggested to address these issues highlighted the importance of programs that are multi-layered, model behaviours, placing more emphasis on oral rather than written communication and providing opportunities to 'learn from observing'. Participants highlighted the need for information to be relevant to communities and delivered in culturally appropriate ways, such as using female interpreters and organising child care for information sessions with women.

Suggestions included:

- provision of information in audiovisual formats such as television, DVDs and skits or plays<sup>4</sup>
- the Department of Child Protection (DCP) and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship working together to explore how to communicate parenting information
- adopting a 'drop-in centre' model that provides opportunities for families and agencies to share resources
- taking a community development approach, developing strategies that are 'community driven' and providing education and information tailored to specific ethnic groups
- providing opportunities for oral information sharing and small group discussions
- providing facilitated playgroups for modelling behaviour
- providing community leaders/spokespeople with information and involving them in the delivery of information, for example, involving Imams in Muslim communities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> One participant at the Mirrabooka roundtable suggested asking community members to draw pictures for the production of pamphlets to increase the extent to which communities relate to the materials.

<sup>5</sup> Participants highlighted the importance of allowing families to identify these leaders rather than relying on those nominated by others.

- accessing parents at playgroups and churches
- delivering information over an extended period of time so that clients have the opportunity to hear the information at different times as they adjust to life in a new country
- including parenting skills training or information in settlement services and in the curriculum of English classes
- including pictures and multicultural images where written information is used.

#### Other issues

It was noted that, in some countries, family support services do not exist and that this could result in a lack of awareness of available services or a lack of understanding of the purpose of these services which could impact on the extent to which some clients accessed them.

Suggestions to address this issue were offered in discussions relating to the acceptability and adaptability of services (see below).

Lack of transport was also identified as a barrier to accessing services. One suggestion to address this was to provide transport to bring communities together.

#### 2.1.3 Cultural appropriateness

Participants cited both positive and negative experiences of service delivery agencies. Participants at the Agonis Centre forum identified a number of services that were considered helpful to parents. They included:

- access to bilingual support in childcare centres
- after school activities which encourage parents' participation
- health services that provide 'full checks'
- housing assistance (crisis accommodation for some)
- intensive English centres in schools
- settlement services, particularly the Humanitarian Settlement Scheme and Settlement Grants Program
- transport services targeted at CaLD clients such as the 'Get on Board' program provided by Transperth.

## Cultural sensitivity

Participants at the Agonis Centre forum identified a lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity among some providers. Participants raised a number of issues in relation to service delivery provided by key government agencies, particularly the Department for Child Protection (DCP) and Centrelink.

*[There is a] perception that mainstream services are [for the] dominant culture [and] not for them: Clients are reluctant to access mainstream services because service providers are unwilling to adapt to CaLD clients, for example, not using interpreter services as a matter of course, not attempting to increase their cultural understanding. This makes clients feel that these services are not for people from CaLD backgrounds.*

Families might also be reluctant to provide information about themselves and their children to service providers, fearing that service providers may intrude or 'take control' of their families.

The primary issue of concern related to the approach used by agencies when dealing with families from CaLD backgrounds.

*[I felt] angry when they came to tell me how to do things for my family.*

*[They] come in with enormous cultural superiority and make CaLD families feel their culture is worthless.*

Participants identified a need to increase the level of trust between government agencies and families. Participants acknowledged the challenges agencies face to build this trust, particularly given that many CaLD clients come from countries in which government and its officials had engendered fear and distrust within communities. For many communities, involvement of government in family issues is an alien concept.

Participants at the Mirrabooka consultation identified a need for agencies to adopt a capacity building, strengths-based approach which would involve providing parents with alternative choices about managing their children.

It was also noted that it was important for agencies to be aware of arrival and settlement patterns to enable forward planning of services that may be required for different communities. For example, although agencies are currently focused on service delivery to African humanitarian entrants, it is likely that they will need to adapt services to the needs of new arrivals from Burma.

Participants identified a need for agencies to partner and collaborate to increase the effectiveness of service delivery to CaLD families. Participants at the Mirrabooka roundtable identified the need for partnerships between government agencies and non-government organisations as one of their top two priorities.



## Suggestions

Suggestions to address these issues included the following:

- Capacity building for frontline workers, especially police officers.
- Making partnerships and collaboration a requirement for funding.
- Identifying and promoting best practice models among agencies.
- Employing cultural consultants—“people who know both worlds”.
- Community education about raising children in Australia conducted by DCP and DFC using audiovisual aids such as DVDs.
- Parenting programs both north and south of the river and DCP and DFC allocating funding for Integrated Services Centres<sup>6</sup> to run programs such as ‘Bend like a river’<sup>7</sup>.
- Researching different parenting programs/cultural values/models of delivery so that government departments and service providers have more understanding of cultural practices and appropriate parenting strategies.
- Providing outreach services similar to the Brockman House ‘Young People’s Program’.
- Mediation between parents, children and government institutions to allow for early detection and prevention of issues prior to financial assistance or action.
- Two-way education between agencies and families including working with communities and elders to develop appropriate models of community education and increasing opportunities for partnerships and collaboration between agencies, families and communities.
- Establishing mentoring programs.
- Using simple language when describing concepts and services: for example, rather than referring to “financial counselling” using a simple term such as “money help”.
- Providing crèche facilities wherever possible, specific hours for women with children, or a supervisor to oversee children where long waits in queues are likely.
- Developing a multi-agency approach and increase coordination between relevant agencies including providing opportunities for service delivery agencies to share knowledge about communities and their needs.

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<sup>6</sup> Integrated Services Centres are located at Parkwood and Koondoola Primary Schools and are a one stop shop addressing the most critical needs of humanitarian entrants.

<sup>7</sup> -A program to assist with parenting issues for CaLD families. Developed and delivered by DCP in Mirrabooka.

- Providing CaLD and ethnic-specific services.
- Increasing awareness of the community centres and activities that are available, for example, through churches and multimedia approaches.
- Establishing a 'one-stop-shop' for families including playgroups, sewing classes, English classes, providing an opportunity for people to meet other families, share experiences and learn about parenting.
- Building trust with communities and ensure open communication between family and support people, for example, by making personal approaches to groups and families.
- Hosting open forums in culturally appropriate venues, ensuring the forums are welcoming, for example, by offering refreshments.

### Language services

Participants at the Agonis Centre forum expressed concerns regarding agencies' reluctance to use interpreters and believed that this problem was widespread and due largely to the cost involved and lack of training in the use of interpreters.

It was noted that interpreters are essential for people who were not proficient in English who also come from an oral linguistic background. However, many people from CaLD backgrounds are not aware of the availability of interpreting services or their right to request an interpreter from a government agency. It was also noted that some CaLD clients are reluctant to use interpreters due to the risk that other members of the community will 'know their business'.

Participants who had experienced interpreting services expressed concerns regarding their effectiveness in some situations.

*There are so many words that don't go in English or English words don't have a word in our language. Some doctors are impatient and don't want to explain to make it easy so how can you explain.*

It was suggested that many migrants and refugees do not understand how, or to whom, they can appeal in relation to interpreting services.

### Suggestions

Suggestions to address these issues included the following:

- Promoting and monitoring implementation of the *Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008*, in particular, the importance of:
  - using qualified interpreters, especially for medical, legal and housing issues, and not using children as interpreters
  - checking with clients that they are comfortable with the chosen interpreter.
- Providing information to people from CaLD backgrounds regarding processes for making complaints related to interpreting services.

- Providing agencies with education and training about interpreting services and how to use them.
- Increasing employment of people from CaLD backgrounds, in particular, bilingual workers who can interpret for non-legal matters.
- Encouraging clients and service providers to access telephone interpreters, especially those from other States.
- Including provision for use of interpreting and translating services in contracts and budgets of non-government agencies contracted by government agencies.

### Centrelink

While participants cited specific concerns regarding the impact of Centrelink payments on families (see sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4), specific concerns regarding Centrelink services related to a lack of understanding of Centrelink's role, the desire for crèche facilities to be made available for women with children and the confusing nature of Centrelink terminology and business transactions.

### Department for Child Protection

DCP was singled out for comment on a number of occasions. Some participants had had positive experiences working with the department. Citing a case of sexual abuse, one participant commented:

*We've had positive experiences working with DCP. Staff have approached cases well, despite that it has been really intrusive for families—"We don't want you involved". The family thought they could handle it themselves.*

Others, however, expressed a number of concerns regarding current approaches used by the department and the impact of these on families. It was suggested that access and responsiveness to DCP services were affected by misconceptions and fear resulting from 'bad stories' people heard in their communities.

*Most people are frightened of DCP—they don't understand what they do.*

*DCP call the police when dealing with case. They listen to the children and not the parents. [The children] go to foster parents—[they] come back with babies, binge drinking or in gaol.*

Some participants felt that more could be done by DCP to provide information to communities about relevant laws regarding child rearing in Australia and to tailor their approaches to the needs, circumstances and cultural backgrounds of families.

*[An] issue in Chinese families [is that] children are often left with siblings or cousins ... [parents are] unaware of what is the legal requirement regarding adult supervision.*

*Most CaLD families manage children exceptionally. However, families coming into contact with DCP are struggling, and many are isolated. It's important to contextualise individual family experiences/issues/languages and so on.*

Participants also spoke of a distrust among parents when talking to counsellors or teachers, fearing that comments might be relayed to DCP due to mandatory reporting laws.

Participants also expressed an appreciation of the challenges inherent in the role of DCP caseworkers.

*How do staff of DCP embrace the parents who are not at the same level—how do they relate without disempowering them?*

### Suggestions

Solutions to address these issues were for DCP to:

- promote and use programs such as 'Bend like a river' for parenting education
- employ cultural workers to deal with CaLD families
- increase the level of communication and consultation between DCP and families to:
  - identify their needs and understand each family's unique situation
  - identify how DCP can improve its approach
  - educate families about child protection laws and DCP's role
- promote their role of protecting children so people know that they are working to benefit the family and not alienate/disrupt them
- involve non-government organisations in the provision of information and services to enable them to provide a mediating role between DCP and families
- explore the concept of 'open houses' in which DCP would invite people into their offices and explain how things work (this concept was used by the Muslim community at Perth mosque in Northbridge and the Suleymaniye (Canning) mosque in Queens Park)
- embrace a partnership approach in which DCP, parents and police work together to solve problems
- take a 'two-way' approach in which families learn about laws and DCP staff learn about each family's child rearing and parenting practices.

## 2.2 Parenting challenges

Participants identified a number of challenges facing parents from CaLD backgrounds. The most significant of these was the contrast between parenting approaches in Australia and some other countries.

One area of difference was the role of the wider community in providing family support. It was noted that in many cultures, neighbours and the extended family have a parenting role due to the close nature of family and community relationships, and that cultural traditions and festivities ensure children remain in close proximity to their parents for longer periods of their lives. This is not the case in Australia.

*Culture is closer, united, therefore we embrace discipline, from family, friends, other members of the community.*

Another area of difference identified was the level of autonomy given to children in Australia compared with some countries.

*Australian parents allow their children more freedom; often parents from CaLD backgrounds, particularly those who have been refugees, are more wary or fearful for their children, and so allow their children/adolescents less freedom than Australian parents.*

As a result of these differences, parents are faced with the need to review and adapt their parenting approaches. Challenges for parents include balancing their desire to maintain traditional methods of parenting within the new cultural environment and developing an understanding of the boundaries, roles and responsibilities typical in Australia.

*Children pick up Australian way of life (night life, internet) and language (swearing) and parents don't understand and therefore have a fear. They try to work out a way to maintain their culture and balance and take the best of both worlds.*

Of particular concern were the challenges for parents in adapting to a culture in which physical discipline is not condoned or supported.

*If you tell a child to do something and they say no, you can't force them. What about if I smack them? She say no. As a parent that is wrong to me. I want them to respect/listen to me.*

There was also a sense that alternatives to physical discipline were not well communicated to parents and that, as a result, parents experienced a loss of control over their children.

*Parents often feel that they have no control.*

*There are huge impacts, for example, shame on the family if "parents don't know how to raise their children anymore".*

Some CaLD parents are further disadvantaged by the loss of their family support network, including parental role models. It was noted that single parent families, in which the mother is the sole care giver, are not uncommon among those who arrived through Australia's humanitarian program.

*In most families children are at different stages at the developmental stage and this can be overwhelming for parents especially mothers who have little social support.*

*Some families have range of ages 4 to 17 for example so there is a lot to deal with.*

The loss of a father-figure in some cases could result in the elevation of a son as the 'head' of the family.

Another challenge for parents identified by participants was intergenerational conflict.

Participants perceived that, in Australia, authorities tend to focus on promoting children's rights but not their responsibilities and that this, combined with the loss of respect among children for their parents and their cultural values, resulted in a loss of parental power and control and intergenerational conflict.

*DCP are more concerned about children [than parents] ... They only see the right of the child.*

*Teenagers [are] using DCP as a pathway to escape responsibilities, calling police.*

Participants considered that many children from CaLD backgrounds used the knowledge of their rights to gain power over their parents. This could result in alienation between parents and their children. At the same time, participants considered that parents are not provided with information about their rights in situations of family conflict.

*We empower newly arrived children with all this protective behaviour information. We give them a kid's helpline number. Protective behaviours information is fine for kids. But what about the parent?*

*In some cultures it's the parents' duty to guide and protect children. In the education system [here we] give freedom to the child but no-one explains to parents what those guidelines are. Parents don't understand the boundaries.*

*The children are progressing in culture and language but parents have no clue what is happening at school, what they are learning, values being taught.*

Australia's culture of relative freedom for children and young people was considered to encourage a lack of respect for parents and the cultural values of their country of origin and a breakdown in communication between parents and their children.

*Intergenerational issues include desire of freedom, wanting to be same as peers, getting boyfriends. Parents not knowing how to raise their children in this context particularly because there are so many conflicting messages.*

Loss of parental control could result from children adapting to life in Australia and learning English more quickly than their parents, and parents' subsequent reliance on children for information and communication. It was also suggested

that children observe a shift in power from parents to service providers which undermines parents' authority.

*How do parents maintain their authority when they have no language and therefore no information?*

*... children who learn English quickly are manipulating parents.*

*The children learn faster therefore challenge parents with the excuse that that it is how it's done in Australia.*

Parents could be further distanced from their children due to barriers faced in participating in their children's education.

*Difficulty for parents to be involved in schools—can't help with homework, canteen, classroom, rosters.*

Participants at the Mirrabooka roundtable cited the continuing tradition of arranged marriages, and the contrasting opportunity in Australia for young people to leave home, which could create conflict between children and their parents.

The opportunity for young people to access the JET allowance through Centrelink could heighten the sense of loss experienced by some parents. Participants noted a perception that Centrelink allowances were "breaking up families".

*They explained why he had to be separate from me and I then accepted but they took him to sign the paper away from me and it hurt me.*

Participants expressed concern regarding the impact of alienation between parents and their children, including young girls of school age becoming pregnant and subsequently losing the support of their families.

## Suggestions

Solutions suggested to address these issues included:

### **Parent support**

It was suggested that parenting programs and courses be initiated that:

- focus on early intervention
- acknowledge the value of diverse cultural backgrounds and the difficulties involved in parenting 'between cultures'
- educate parents about alternative parenting approaches and methods of discipline, including communication and mediation strategies, and those methods that may not be appropriate or acceptable in Australia
- provide ongoing support for parents
- educate parents about their rights and how to achieve a balance between parents' and children's rights

- bring children and parents together and encourage communication between generations as well as offering information about the rights and responsibilities of both parents and children
- engage both parents and children in resolving issues
- are tailored to children's developmental stages, for example, providing discrete information sessions about parenting 'toddlers', 'teens' and 'pre-teens'
- provide opportunities for parents to sit in their children's classroom for a day (or longer) to expose them to what happens in the school
- offer strategies for dealing with youth and promoting family unity and strengthening parent-teen relationships, for example, by bringing communities together to share how parents relate to their children and develop an understanding of alternative methods of parenting and ways of encouraging children to develop respect for their elders and the family structure.

### **Support for children and young people**

It was suggested that strategies for children and young people be introduced, such as:

- educating children and teenagers about respect for, and their responsibilities to, their parents
- social networking activities that teach teenagers about their responsibilities and to discuss actions and consequences
- youth forums at schools for young people to talk to CaLD students about setting boundaries
- employing peer support workers who can identify with issues affecting CaLD young people
- translating relevant information for CaLD young people.

### **Other strategies**

- Change policies and legislation to give more power to parents.
- Train community leaders and other members of the community to educate parents in their communities.
- Provide cross-cultural training focusing on parenting issues for case workers, childcare and health workers and other relevant industry workers.
- Provide in-service training and education for childcare centres to reduce the need for intervention by State services.
- Establish mentoring programs for both children and parents.
- Develop a checklist and guidelines relating to rights and responsibilities of both parents and children.



- Increase awareness of the purpose of the JET allowance provided by Centrelink.

### 2.3 Relationship between parents

Participants discussed the changes in dynamics between parents as a result of the settlement process and adjustment to life in Australia, in particular, the shift in roles between men and women. Participants highlighted the impact on the relationship between parents and the tendency for a larger proportion of Centrelink allowances to be paid to mothers rather than fathers. New-found autonomy for women could also threaten the power balance between husband and wife.

*Women find suddenly they have more power than husbands. They get encouraged to be independent through Centrelink and therefore they can live without the man if issues come up. They should be encouraged to find solutions to their problems. The man is still an important part of the family.*

*The main issue is with the male—they have their sense of pride and that is what we need to tap into. They do not want to talk about it and feel hurt, shame and stay isolated.*

Family and domestic violence was not prominent in discussions. However, participants acknowledged that children could be exposed to family and domestic violence in some CaLD families, in particular, in those cultures in which traditions regard it acceptable for a husband to hit his wife.

*Cultural difference in relationship between men and women for some families leads to domestic violence leaving single mother families who are isolated and impoverished and men who are separated from their children.*

It was suggested that young women with spousal visas are especially vulnerable to domestic violence.

### Suggestions

Solutions suggested to address these issues included:

- early intervention programs to assist men and women to learn about relationships, encourage men to become more involved in the family and ways to strengthen the family unit
- agencies working with DIAC to increase support for women on spousal visas
- Centrelink working with other agencies and communities to assist families to adapt to the shift in power from men to women, including explaining the purpose of Centrelink payments and allowances.

### 2.4 Settlement issues

Participants stressed that parenting cannot be isolated from other settlement issues. These included challenges with language, housing, health, mental

health, education and employment. Parents were disadvantaged by a lack of access to traditional supports such as their church and extended families.

*[There are a] range of issues for new arrivals. [It] can be frustrating and a lot of mental health issues come in. If you are experiencing problems how can you help children?*

It was noted that isolation is commonly experienced by newly arrived CaLD women, resulting from a fear of leaving the house, meeting other people, taking children to school and concerns that their children will be accepted.

Torture and trauma issues were a key issue of concern. Participants commented that these issues could arise after several years and impact on parenting.

It was also noted that the challenges inherent in the settlement process take some time to overcome.

*The trauma of why they left starts to come out after three to four years of living here ... It now starts to affect the whole family.*

Participants stressed the need for service providers to know and understand the impact of these issues on parents and to provide information to communities about the services available to support them. Two-year funding for the Women's Refugee Health Clinic in Bentley to provide General Practitioner services for refugees and migrants was welcomed. The need for alternative approaches to support men was noted.

Participants at the Mirrabooka roundtable were particularly concerned about the impact of housing difficulties on families.

*How can you bring up children when there is a threat to housing? [It] causes intergenerational conflict in the home, etcetera.*

Issues included lack of housing suitable for large families, the dearth of affordable public and private rental properties and difficulties paying in advance for bond and rent.

Suggestions

### **Settlement services**

- Establish community hubs within easy access to transport and ensure they are promoted.
- Expand the use of the Integrated Service Centre (ISC) model to address the settlement needs of communities and expanding the number of ISCs in schools.
- Establish a 'Buddy system' between parents and people within the community, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to support CaLD parents.
- Extend settlement services beyond the current five-year period to allow for more intensive and extensive education regarding parenting practices.
- Provide advice and support to parents who are seeking to reunite with their families.

- Educate the community about available services through the use of cultural consultants.
- Provide more opportunities for adults to learn English once they have settled.
- Involve other relevant service providers in the first six months of settlement, not only settlement officers.
- Allow families three months to adjust to the new country and language before encouraging integration into mainstream activities, and pacing the provision of information to ensure it is appropriate to the families' stage of settlement.

### **Family support**

- Educate and empower community leaders to provide information and support to families.
- Provide ongoing family counselling and information and support for men, for example, by establishing men's groups.
- Increase partnerships and collaboration between communities and service providers offering support to families.
- Ensure agency staff are aware of the ongoing impact of torture and trauma and take this into account when delivering services.
- Make available information about torture and trauma services.
- Provide ongoing torture and trauma support and assistance to families beyond the initial settlement period.

### **Housing**

- Provide cultural awareness education for landlords and real estate agents to encourage more support and understanding for CaLD applicants.
- Explore and adopt alternative housing options such as community housing models, provision of duplex accommodation and increasing the availability of larger houses.
- Department of Housing to address its priority waiting list.
- Increase the level of rent and bond assistance provided by Centrelink and the Department of Housing to facilitate access to the private housing market.

## **2.5 School education**

School education was also an issue that was raised at both consultations.

Participants commented on the challenges faced by children in school and the impact on families in terms of the extent to which children adjust to school. The challenges for students in coping with settlement, learning English and the demands of full-time study were noted. Participants expressed concern that the practice of placing children in a grade that matches their age rather

than their education level could disadvantage students and result in truancy and attrition.

*[There is] ... no education in the refugee camps. When they go to school in Australia they are put in a grade that matches their age and not education level even though they have no educational background. They end up dropping out of school.*

The need for homework assistance and tutoring was also noted.

Participants at the Mirrabooka roundtable were particularly concerned about the consequences of students leaving the school system and especially the potential for young people to become involved in the criminal justice system.

Participants at the Agonis Centre also expressed concern for students who struggled in school, particularly secondary school, and who subsequently drop out. It was noted that this could also exacerbate intergenerational conflict.

Other issues raised at the Agonis Centre forum included the need for:

- assistance for students beyond the perceived six month period of intensive support
- assistance to access computers
- resources to which students from diverse cultural backgrounds can relate, to encourage the development of self-esteem and a positive sense of identity
- home tutoring and homework assistance:

*Few services provide assistance with homework. Parents may not be able to help children with homework and some may need help with homework (learning English) themselves.*

Other issues included the adjustment necessary for some students to adapt to different learning approaches, and the financial difficulties faced by parents who wish to send their children to private Islamic schools.

### Suggestions

- Change assessment systems to recognise different levels of achievement.
- Provide specialised support for new arrivals and ongoing support thereafter as required.
- Provide information to parents regarding the choice of schools for their children.
- Schools to organise homework assistance for students and establishing a pool of volunteers to help with homework.
- Establish an 'interim' school for children aged five to ten years to provide specific support.
- Encourage greater interaction and collaboration between CaLD parents, families, communities and schools.

- Include books relevant to various cultures in school libraries.
- Translate some education material into other languages.
- Review education policy to consider the level of support needs required by students, particularly those aged 12–17 years.
- Increase schools' focus on the teaching of manners, etiquette and responsibilities.

### 3. PRIORITY ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

At the end of the forum and roundtable, participants identified the major concerns that had been raised in their group discussions. All participants were provided with two coloured dots and asked to identify the two issues, and solutions, that they considered the most important.

#### 3.1 Loss of parental control

Loss of parental power and control was nominated as one of participants' top two concerns at both the Agonis Centre forum (32 per cent of participants) and the Mirrabooka (79 per cent of participants) roundtable. It was suggested that one of the reasons for this was the result of agency intervention in parenting which resulted in a loss of respect among children for their parents.

Participants also acknowledged the contrast between parenting approaches in Australia and some other countries and the challenges faced by parents in adjusting to their new environment. One area of difference was the role of the wider community in providing family support. Loss of parental control could also result from children adapting to life in Australia and learning English more quickly than their parents, and parents' subsequent reliance on children for information and communication.

#### Suggested solutions

The key solution suggested by participants was for agencies to work with parents to establish a parenting model that accommodates cultural diversity. Others included:

- changing policies and legislation to give more power to parents
- providing an institutional setting in which children learn life skills
- increasing the level of education about disciplining methods/options in Australian society and providing parents with alternative options for disciplining their children
- educating children and teenagers about respect for, and their responsibilities to, their parents
- educating parents about their rights and how to achieve a balance between parents' and children's rights.

#### 3.2 Information provision

The timing and methods by which agencies provide parenting information was the second key concern with 56 per cent of participants at the Agonis Centre forum.

## Solutions

Solutions suggested included:

- using alternative community education mechanisms such as theatre and DVDs to deliver messages
- working with community members to identify the most effective mechanisms through which to convey information
- DCP and DIAC exploring how to communicate parenting information
- adopting a 'drop-in centre' model, and provide other opportunities for oral information sharing, which provides opportunities for families and agencies to share resources
- providing facilitated playgroups for modelling behaviour
- providing community leaders/spokespeople with information and involving them in the delivery of information
- delivery and provision of information over an extended period of time so that clients have the opportunity to hear the information at different times as they adjust to life in a new country
- including skills training or information on parenting in settlement services and in the curriculum of adult migrant English classes and extending the length of time over which classes are delivered
- including pictures and multicultural images where written information is used.

### 3.3 Social isolation

Social isolation was the third key concern with 25 per cent of participants at the Agonis Centre forum identifying it as one of their two priority concerns. It was noted that in many cultures, neighbours and the extended family have a parenting role and, once in Australia, parents lose access to this support network. It was noted that single parent families, in which the mother is the sole care giver, are not uncommon among those who arrived through Australia's humanitarian program. It was also noted that the complex and challenging process of settlement also affects parenting.

Suggested solutions

Solutions suggested included:

- offering programs that create community spaces for families to come together and develop support networks
- supporting ongoing group consultations.

### 3.4 Intergenerational conflict

The same percentage of participants (25 per cent) at the Agonis Centre forum rated intergenerational conflict as one of their top two concerns.

### Suggested solutions

The key solution identified by participants in the plenary session was for more emphasis to be placed on the value added by the parents'/families' cultural background when communicating with children and adolescents. Another was to increase the number of parenting programs that focus on how to deal with teenagers.

#### 3.5 Parenting programs and services

The manner in which parenting programs and services are currently delivered was the fourth key concern. A key message for DCP was to focus on parents and not just children in developing their programs, to improve connections with communities and be aware of cultural parenting practices while making decisions. Participants also called for more education for parents regarding the cultural differences in parenting between Australia and some other countries. Concerns were also raised that some agencies, such as childcare centres tended to call authorities too quickly before gaining an understanding of a family's circumstances.

### Suggested solutions

Solutions included:

- DCP to provide more support and be more available to communities
- Department for Communities to assist communities to learn how to access funding and to form associations
- making programs such as the 'Bend Like a River' program available to all communities
- educating and training workers to increase their understanding of cultural parenting practices and ability to work productively with families
- employing outreach workers.



## 4. CONCLUSION

The Agonis Centre forum and Mirrabooka roundtable attracted large-scale interest, in particular, from government and non-government agencies working with CaLD families. While the consultations were skewed towards service providers, the voices of members of CaLD communities were nonetheless strong and the messages from both were consistent.

These messages included:

- **Cultural differences in parenting**—the challenge of understanding parenting practices in Australia and moving from cultures in which parenting is a ‘community function’ to one that is more individualised and linked to government services. Participants remarked on the need to support parents transitioning between cultural modes of parenting, particularly in terms of methods of discipline.
- **Loss of parental control**—this was considered to result from a focus on children’s rights, the extent to which children in Australia are given autonomy, and the relatively rapid acquisition of English compared with their parents. Intergenerational conflict between parents and children was identified as a common result.
- **Information provision**—the need for agencies to reduce their reliance on written communication and to adopt a multifaceted approach to information provision. Participants supported a community development approach in the design and delivery of information, with greater involvement of CaLD communities. Concerns were raised regarding the volume of information provided soon after arrival in Australia and the need for information to be provided over an extended period of time.
- **Cultural competency**—participants identified a need for agencies to increase their levels of cultural awareness and sensitivity in order to communicate and service CaLD communities more effectively. A major challenge identified was to build the trust of communities. There was support for the introduction of community development models of service delivery as well as an openness to adapt parenting models to suit the needs of different cultural groups.

Participants stressed the need for agencies to acknowledge and respond to the pressures experienced by many CaLD families as they settle and adjust to life in Australia. Addressing social isolation—most commonly experienced by women, torture and trauma issues and housing stress, were of particular concern.

The need for a flexible approach to parenting models, that accommodate cultural diversity, was identified.

- **Language services**—participants identified scope for improvement in agencies’ use of interpreters and translators and a need to monitor the effectiveness of language services. Calls were made for more use to be

made of bilingual workers who are able to both interpret in many situations as well as acting as 'cultural bridges' between communities.

- **Targeted programs**—a need was identified for programs targeting specific groups, including services for young people aged between eight and 14 years, education for young people to develop a sense of responsibility and respect for their parents and families, support for CaLD parents in terms of dealing with adolescents, and increased support for CaLD men.
- **Partnerships and collaboration**—participants identified a need for more collaboration and partnerships between agencies, as well as between agencies and CaLD communities, to improve service delivery.

## 5. KEY ACTIONS

OMI will undertake the following actions to initiate responses to the issues raised. OMI will also forward a copy of the report to the Commissioner for Children and Youth and to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for consideration in the context of State initiatives relating to the National Early Childhood Strategy.

### **Loss of parental control**

- Forward a copy of the report to DCP and DfC suggesting that consideration be given to:
  - education for young people to develop a sense of responsibility and respect for their parents and families
  - placing more emphasis on the value added by the parents'/families' cultural background when communicating with children and adolescents
  - increasing the number of culturally appropriate parenting programs that focus on how to deal with teenagers.

### **Information provision**

- Highlight in correspondence to the DCP and DfC the need to:
  - reduce reliance on written communication and adopt a multifaceted approach to information provision with input from community members to identify the most effective mechanisms through which to convey information
  - adopt a community development approach in the design and delivery of information, with greater involvement of CaLD communities
  - deliver information over an extended period of time.

### **Social isolation**

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), and highlight in correspondence to the DCP and DfC, the importance of programs that create community spaces for families to come together and develop support networks.

### **Parenting programs and services**

- Highlight in correspondence to the DCP the need to:
  - focus on parents as well as children in developing their programs, to improve connections with communities and be aware of cultural parenting practices when making decisions.
- Highlight in correspondence with DCP, DfC and FaHCSIA the need to:
  - adopt a flexible approach to parenting models, which accommodates cultural diversity

- provide more education for parents regarding the differences in parenting between Australia and some other countries
  - support parents transitioning between cultural modes of parenting, particularly in terms of methods of discipline
  - increase the level of education provided to parents about their rights and how to achieve a balance between parents' and children's rights and disciplining methods/options in Australian society
  - adopt community development models of service delivery
  - increase cultural competency training of agency staff
  - employ more mediation, bilingual and outreach workers
  - increase collaboration and partnerships between agencies, as well as between agencies and CaLD communities, to improve service delivery.
- Forward a copy of the report to WA Police.

### **Settlement issues**

- In correspondence with DCP, DfC, FaHCSIA and WA Police emphasise the need to acknowledge and respond to the many pressures experienced by many CaLD families as they settle and adjust to life in Australia, particularly torture and trauma issues and housing stress.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Housing, highlighting the need to address housing issues affecting people from CaLD backgrounds, particularly those from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds, for example, by:
  - providing opportunities for large families to be housed in duplex accommodation next to each other where large single accommodation is not available
  - adopting community housing models
  - increasing the bond assistance amount to families from CaLD backgrounds, particularly those from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds, to facilitate access to the private housing market.
- Forward a copy of the report to Centrelink, drawing attention to the suggestion that rent assistance to families is increased to facilitate access to the private housing market.

### **Language services**

- Promote implementation the *WA Language Services Policy 2008*, in particular, the importance of:
  - using qualified interpreters, especially for medical, legal and housing issues, and not using children as interpreters
  - checking with clients that they are comfortable with the chosen interpreter.

- Monitor implementation of the *WA Language Services Policy 2008*.

### **Cultural competency**

- In correspondence to DCP, DfC, FaHSCIA, WA Police and Centrelink, note the need for agencies to:
  - increase levels of cultural competency of their staff
  - consider employing more mediation, bilingual and outreach workers
  - acknowledge and respond to the pressures experienced by many CaLD families as they settle and adjust to life in Australia.

### **Targeted programs**

- Forward a copy to DIAC and, in correspondence to DCP, DfC and FAHCSIA, highlight the need for programs targeting specific groups, including:
  - services for young people aged between eight and 14 years
  - increased support for CaLD men.

### **School education**

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Education noting the impact on families in terms of the extent to which children adjust to school and highlighting the need for:
  - considering placement of students from refugee background based on education level and not according to age
  - homework assistance and tutoring
  - greater interaction and collaboration between CaLD parents, families and communities and schools
  - ongoing support for new arrivals, particularly those aged 12–17 years.

## 6. APPENDIX: AGONIS CENTRE FORUM ATTENDEES

### Government

AMES Polytechnic West

Centrelink

Child and Adolescent Community Health State-wide Policy

City of Stirling Family Services

Curtin University

Department for Child Protection

Department for Child Protection—Best Beginnings Midland

Department for Child Protection—Parent Support

Department for Communities—Parenting WA Cannington

Department of Health

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Early Childhood Australia—Edith Cowan University

Equal Opportunity Commission

Greenwood Senior High School

Parkwood Integrated Services Centre

Polytechnic West

South Metropolitan Public Health Unit

Thornlie Senior High School

Thornlie Intensive English Centre—Thornlie Primary School

WA Police

### Non-government

Armadale Community Family Centre

Bahai Community and Relationships Australia

Bilingual Families Perth

Centrecare Migrant Services

Communicare

Community Services Health and Education Training Council

Community Midwifery WA  
Community Youth Training Services  
Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka  
Excelsior Primary School P and C  
Fremantle Multicultural Centre  
Little Aussies Educate Centres  
Living Well Incorporated  
Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation  
Mercy Employment and Community Services  
Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre  
Multicultural Services Centre WA  
Muslim Women's Support Centre  
Perth Family Relationships Centre  
Playgroup WA  
Ngala  
Rotary Club of Kenwick  
Save the Children  
Sussex Street Community Law Service  
The Christian Disciples of Christ Association Incorporated  
The Gowrie WA  
Uniting Care West  
Wanslea Family Services  
Victoria Park Youth Accommodation.

Community  
Guineau Community Association  
Hosanna Australasian Community Incorporated  
Muslim Charity Community of WA  
Rumbek Youth Association