



# ***Access to Services for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers***

Tabled 29 May 2014

## Background

- Victoria is one the most culturally diverse communities in the world.
- Around 26 per cent of Victoria's population was born overseas.
- Victoria accounts for around 30 per cent of migrant settlement in Australia.
- The demographic profile of new arrivals to Victoria has changed significantly in recent years.



## Audit objective and scope

To assess the accessibility of government services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

We looked at whether:

- departments understand the needs of these groups
- departments have in place strategies and actions to support access
- departments can show if their strategies and actions are effective
- whole-of-government approaches are leading to informed and coordinated services.



## Audit objective and scope – *continued*

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The audit included five different departments and agencies:

- Department of Health (DH)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)
- Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC).

We looked at a broad range of services with a particular focus on three:

- DEECD's Maternal and Child Health service—universal and free
- DH's Refugee Health Nurse Program—targeted service
- DHS' family violence services—universal and acts as a referral pathway to other services.

## Conclusions

- Departments could be doing more to understand client need and whether it is being met.
- Departments are not being held sufficiently to account for their performance in multicultural affairs.
- Whole-of-government structures and processes are not resulting in informed and coordinated service delivery.

## Findings – understanding of client need

- Departments do not always recognise the particular needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in strategic frameworks.
- Departmental understanding of barriers to and enablers of access is not underpinned by systematic data analysis.



## Findings – departmental strategies and activities

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- Stakeholder consultations are not coordinated within or across departments.
- Cultural competency training and reporting requirements for departments and service providers are not clear.
- Not all departments have current and comprehensive cultural diversity plans.



## Findings – monitoring and reporting

- Data limitations affect service planning. page 25
- Departments report on their activities but not whether their activities have been effective. page 24
- Departments need to more systematically collect and analyse data. page 14





## Findings – whole-of-government

There is:

- no body with oversight of departmental performance
- limited cross-departmental collaboration
- no statewide mapping of services to identify gaps or reduce duplication
- no whole-of-government monitoring and reporting of expenditure to be able to tell if funding is appropriately allocated and leading to improvement.



## Findings – whole-of-government – *continued*

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There is lack of role clarity for two key bodies tasked with whole-of-government responsibilities:

- OMAC leads policy development and implementation, but lacks authority to require departmental compliance.
- VMC is an independent advisory body whose role is unclear and whose expertise is not being used by departments.



*Photo by Jorge De Araujo. By permission of the Victorian Multicultural Commission.*

# Recommendations

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Accept

That DH, DHS and DEECD:

1. develop and report annually on their cultural diversity plans—or equivalent—in consultation with OMAC and VMC
2. include in their reporting of progress on cultural diversity plans explicit reference to:
  - how culturally appropriate training for staff has been incorporated into the delivery of services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities
  - how information has been used to increase accessibility of services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities
  - the effectiveness of service delivery to culturally and linguistically diverse communities as an integral part of program evaluation.

✓

✓

## Recommendations – *continued*

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		Accept
3.	That OMAC within the Department of Premier and Cabinet monitors and reports on departmental compliance with the reporting requirements of s.26 <i>Multicultural Victoria Act 2011</i> .	✓
That the Department of Premier and Cabinet:		
4.	defines more clearly the roles and responsibilities of OMAC and VMC	✓
5.	develops appropriate governance arrangements for OMAC and VMC with robust and effective reporting and accountability mechanisms	✓
6.	That VMC and OMAC work closely together to monitor and report on overall departmental performance in relation to the provision of accessible, responsive and effective services.	✓

## Contact details

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