

Arab-Australians in Victoria

Needs Assessment and Community Capacity Building

A research project funded by the State Government

Community Support Fund,

commissioned by

VASS (Victorian Arabic Social Services)

undertaken by

CCHR (Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights),

Deakin University

2004

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This research project is funded by the Community Support Fund, commissioned by Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) and undertaken by the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Faculty of Arts, Deakin University.



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Published by:
Deakin University,
Geelong, Victoria 3217

First published 2004

Printed by Deakin Print Services, Learning Services, Deakin University

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All chapters published in this report have been peer refereed except where indicated.

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ISBN:0 7300 2612 4
National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in Publication

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research project was made possible by the generous financial support of the Victorian state government's Community Support Fund, which recognised the vital work performed by the Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) in meeting the various needs of the Arabic-speaking community in Victoria. Without this grant, this wide-ranging investigation into the needs of Arab-Australians would not have been undertaken. VASS Committee of Management has commissioned Deakin University's Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights to undertake the first stage of the project, consisting primarily of services audit and needs assessment. VASS as a community organization is always willing to provide support and assistance whenever needed. VASS chairperson, Ms Dalal Smiley whose deep understanding of the challenges facing the Australian-Arabic community gives her an informed and unique insight into community needs and concerns,

As the chief researcher of this project I am indebted to a number of colleagues whose support and advice were critical to undertaking the project. These include Carol Makhoul, whose dual role as a researcher within the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights (CCHR) and a member at Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) placed her in a unique position to contribute significantly and effectively towards the successful completion of the project. I am also grateful to my associate investigators Associate Professor Sue Kenny, Director of CCHR and Dr Kevin Brown, whose input at various stages helped strengthen the overall design of the study and its conceptual basis. Jehan Loza from Deakin University contributed to the study's preliminary literature surveys in its initial phase. A number of other people gave generously of their time to provide general feedback, editorial assistance and formatting. These include Anna Trembath, Michael Leach, Francesca Alice, Caroline Anderson and Mike Kenny.

Community-based research is not without its challenges. We are grateful to the many people in the community who made this project possible. These include the following individuals who facilitated access to the diverse members of the Australian-Arabic community across the various regions: Iman Allaf, Emil Armanious, Hala Chamas, Amal Diab, Nabil Elhage, Peter Francis, Lina Hassan, Lebe Malkoun, Mohsen Mohamad, Omar Osman, Lena Toomayan, Julie Quaider, John Haddad and all those who completed the questionnaires. Mona Jabbour, Elizabeth Suliman, and Norma Makhoul assisted with translating the questionnaires.

Finally many thanks to Anne O'keefe and Robert Budd from the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights for their support in producing the final print.

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Melbourne, February 2004.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

List of Figures

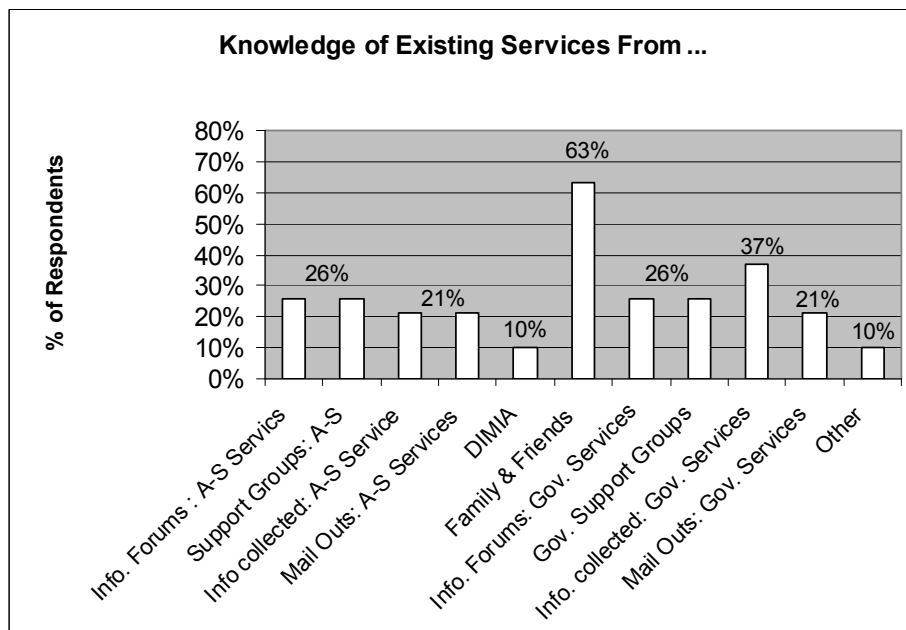
Executive Summary	1
Recommendations	11
1. Introduction	17
1.1 Project aims	17
1.2. Key principles informing the approach to this project	18
1.3. Research timeline and key phases	18
2. Literature review: settlement needs of NESB communities	20
2.1. Elderly	20
2.2. Youth	23
2.3 Women	26
2.4. Men	28
2.5. Refugees	30
3. The concept of capacity building	36
3.1 Capacity building and nonprofit organisations	36
3.2 Definitions of capacity building	37
3.3 Components of successful capacity building	40
3.4 Components of successful capacity building	42
3.5 The phases of capacity building	44
3.6 Capacity building methodologies	50
4. Methodology	51
4.1. Approach and research methods	51
4.2. Service audit	51
4.3. Focus groups	51
4.4. Questionnaires: Arabic-speaking community and service providers	52
4.5. Audit of VASS	53
4.6 Selection of participants	53
4.6.1. Sample Pool: Analysis by Region	53
4.6.2. Sample Pool: Analysis by Gender	54
4. 6.3. Sample Pool: Analysis by Age Group	55
4.6.4. Sample Pool: Analysis by Length of Stay in Australia	56
4.7 What constitutes Arabic-speaking – unity and diversity	58
4.7.1. Overview of Arab migration	58
4.7.2. Demographic information on the Arabic-speaking community	59
5. Research findings: services audit	63
5.1. Operational definitions	63

5.2. Services audit	64
5.3. Mainstream government services	65
5.3.1 Mainstream services by type	65
5.3.2 Mainstream services by target group: analysis by region	67
5.3.3 Mainstream services by target group, type and region	68
5.4 Overall summary : mainstream services	73
5.5 Arabic-specific services by region and target group	74
5.6. Arabic-specific services by type	74
5.7 Arabic-specific services by target group: analysis by region	76
5.8 Arabic-specific services by target group, by type and region	77
5.9 Overall Summary: Arabic-Specific Services	80
5.10 Mainstream service provider questionnaires	82
6. Research findings: needs assessment	83
6.1 Government services accessed	83
6.1.1 Type of government service accessed	89
6.1.2 Needs: met by government services accessed?	89
6.1.3 Level of satisfaction with government services accessed	91
6.1.4 Government services not accessed	92
6.1.5 Reasons for why government services not accessed	95
6.1.6 Types of services sought from government services	96
6.2 Arabic-specific services accessed	102
6.2.1 Type of Arabic-specific services accessed	105
6.2.2 Needs: met by Arabic-specific services accessed?	106
6.2.3 Level of satisfaction with Arabic-specific services accessed	107
6.2.4 Arabic-specific services not accessed	109
6.2.5 Reasons for why Arabic-specific services not accessed	111
6.2.6 Types of services sought from Arabic specific services	112
6.3 Humanitarian Entrants: results from questionnaire	115
6.4. Conclusion	123
7. Research findings: the VASS case study	124
7.1. A capacity building case study – VASS	124
7.2. Indicators of success	125
7.3. Results from VASS staff questionnaire	126
7.4. VASS’ limited resources and its future viability	129
7.5. Conclusion	130
8. Discussion/conclusion	131
8.1. Summary of findings	131
8.2. The challenge of improving services	132
8.3. Future actions	133
References	141
Appendices	146

Knowledge of existing services

Respondents were next asked to identify how they learnt about existing support services. Results showed that for the majority of the respondents, this information had been passed on to them from family and friends (63 per cent). The next most common way in which respondents learnt of existing support services was by going to mainstream support services and requesting the needed information (37 per cent). It seems that these respondents have received little or no information via mail from either mainstream and or Arabic-specific services (21 per cent). Further, only a small number of the respondents had learnt of existing support services from having visited an Arabic-specific service. Knowledge of existing services had least of all come from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMIA).

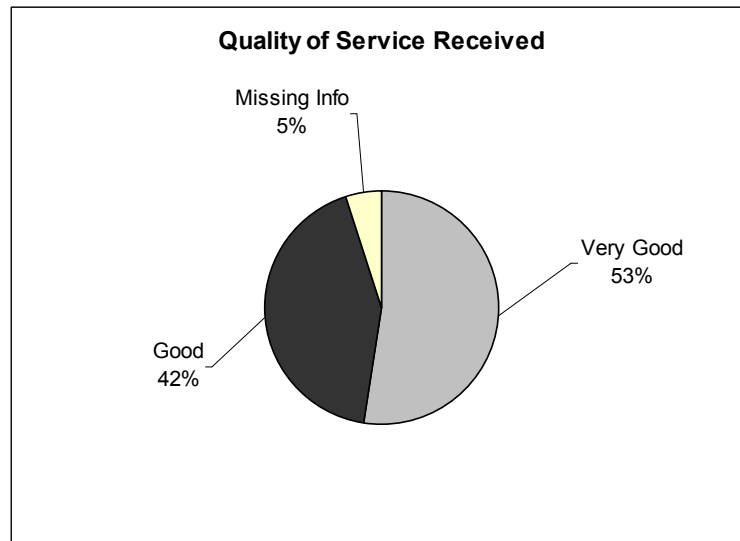
Figure 90: knowledge of existing services



Quality of service received

One respondent (5 per cent) did not answer this question, but of those who did the majority felt that the support/assistance that they had received was 'very good' (53 per cent). A further 42 per cent of the respondents felt that the quality of service received was 'good'. No respondents checked 'poor' for quality of service received.

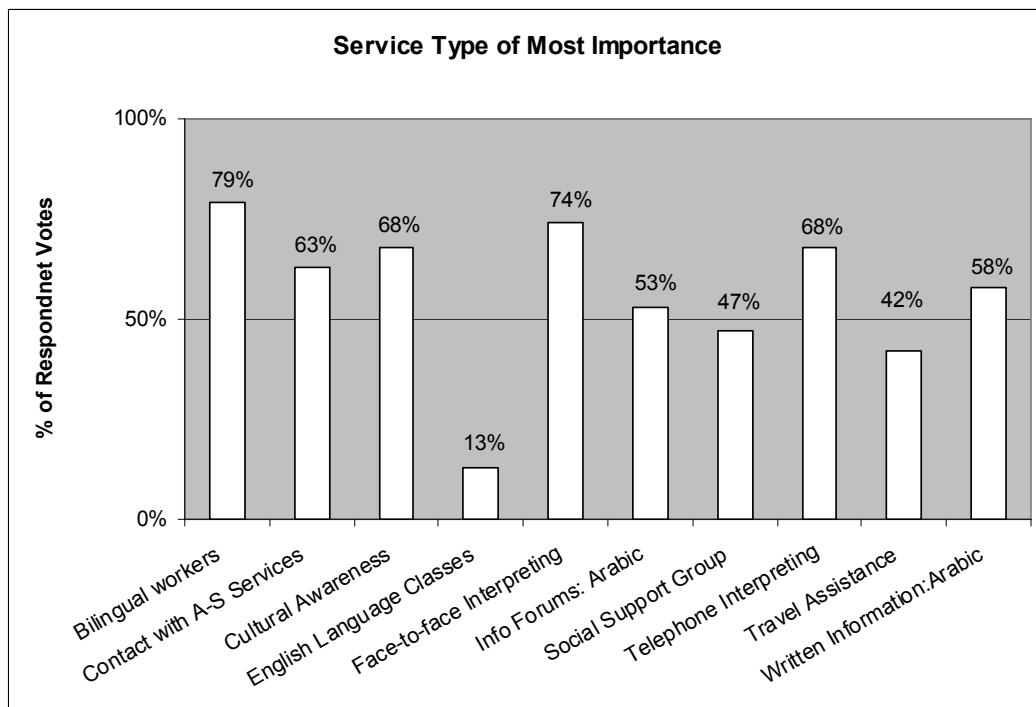
Figure 91: quality of service received



Service type of most importance

Respondents were asked to identify the type of service/s that was of greatest importance to them. Ten service types were identified for them as well as the option of adding to the list. The most checked (79 per cent) by respondents was the need for bilingual workers. This was followed closely (74 per cent) by face-to-face interpreting. The next 3 services that were considered of importance by 68 per cent of respondents were telephone interpreting, the availability of English language classes and the need for cultural awareness by mainstream services. Sixty three per cent of respondents also identified the need for more contact with Arabic-specific services as important.

Figure 92: service type of most importance



Assessment of current settlement situation

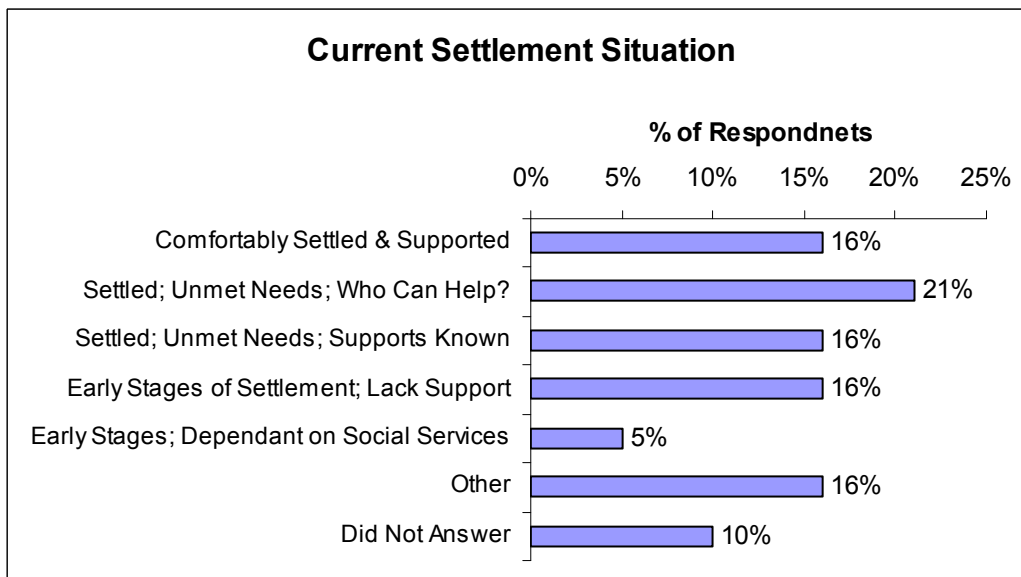
The purpose of this question was to gain some understanding of what stage these respondents were at with regard to settlement, and whether or not they: 1) had the support needed and/or 2) knew of where to get this support. Respondents were given 6 options as well as the opportunity to identify an alternative situation more reflective of their own. The 6 options were:

1. I am comfortable settled and have found the support I need;
2. I have settled but there are unmet needs. I don't know who can help me;
3. I have settled and there are unmet needs. I know who can help me;
4. Still in the early stages of settlement and am lacking the support I need;
5. Still in the early stages of settlement but have family to lean on for support;
6. Still in the early stages of settlement and am dependant on support from social services.

Two respondents did not answer this question and three others identified another situation more reflective of their own circumstances. Of the remaining respondents the answers were spread out across five options. The most common situation as identified by 21 per cent of the respondents was option number two. That is, they considered themselves to have settled but continue to have unmet needs and do not know who they can turn to for assistance. A further 16 per cent of respondents considered themselves to be in the early stages of settlement and lacking the support needed (option number 4). None of the respondents identified as being in the early stages of settlement, yet having family to lean on for support.

This result is a little surprising since the majority of the respondents have not been in Australia for more than 3 years and most (89 per cent) identified housing needs, with only 32 per cent having received support from housing agencies. Further, most (74 per cent) had previously identified as having received support from family and/or friends. Besides this, the least checked option was number 6. Only one respondent considered themselves to be in the early stages of settlement and dependent on support from existing services. The remainder of the options (numbers 1 and 3 above) were checked by 3 respondents each. That is, 16 per cent of respondents considered themselves to be: 1) comfortably settled and have the support needed, and 2) settled with unmet needs, but knowing who to turn to for assistance.

Figure 93: assessment of current settlement situation



6.4. Conclusion

The findings of this study relating to refugees are not surprising. In fact, the situation of asylum seekers in general and temporary protection visa holders (TPV) in particular remains unsatisfactory at all levels: policy, public awareness, media coverage and access to settlement services. There are signs at the federal level that the situation could improve in the future in particular in light of the recent Conservative politicians lobbying the Howard government and more positive, if not perfect, policy announcements by the Australian Labor Party.

The needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants are, undoubtedly, essential to successful settlement outcomes. These needs as have been consistently reported in studies are not being easily accessed because of limited government funding arrangements. Perhaps, equally important from the refugees' perspective is the sense of social dislocation and cultural alienation that have developed as a result of the negative attitudes towards asylum seekers coming out of Canberra and certain section of the media. The work of community organisations to provide settlement services and social and cultural support is all the more critical for this vulnerable group of settlers.