

CULTURAL CHASM:

The changing cultural and linguistic demographic in Queensland schools and the need for reform

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Almost 150 young people from African, Asian, South American, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, European and Maori backgrounds, now attending schools in towns and cities across Queensland, participated in the consultations for this paper. I would like to thank them for opening up and sharing their stories, and to praise them for their demonstrated resilience and optimism, often in the face of considerable adversity. I would also like to thank these young people's elders, who also offered their wisdom and support for the project.

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¹ Formerly the non-English Speaking Background Youth Issues Network (NYIN)

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Executive summary

Queensland is behind its state counterparts when it comes to meeting the education and training needs of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The current Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) provides an ideal environment for Queensland to address this situation. Queensland's CALD population is growing and changing rapidly and the education system needs to move with this changing demographic in order to ensure that it is one in which all young people, regardless of their cultural background, are able to meaningfully and successfully participate.

The Queensland Government's vision for the Smart State is "to create a state of prosperity and social justice with a commitment to equality of opportunity" (ETRF White Paper). This paper explores how social justice and equality of opportunity might be realistically delivered to young people from CALD backgrounds in the education arena.

This paper also acknowledges the outstanding achievements of many CALD young people in Queensland schools and the positive contributions they have to offer our society by virtue of their individual uniqueness.

Purpose of this paper

This paper explores some of the reasons why young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds disengage from education and training. It also offers recommendations as to how the education system, through its current Education and Training Reforms for the Future, can better meet the needs of these students.

The findings in this paper are based on consultations over the last eight months with CALD young people, elders and service providers (including schools) in Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Caboolture, Brisbane, Logan and the Gold Coast. Communities consulted include African, Asian, South American, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, European and Maori communities.

It would be impossible to capture in one short paper the diversity of experience and needs of CALD young people and communities across Queensland. There is enormous diversity even within each cultural, country or religious group. In order to keep this paper brief, I have not recorded the extent of the complexity and diversity of issues faced by CALD young people in Queensland. This paper focuses considerably on the issues faced by young people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, as these were the voices which spoke the loudest in the course of my consultations. This paper does not explore issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

The recommendations in this paper have been presented to the ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce and many of the recommendations have been included in the Taskforce's report to the ETRF Board (see Appendix 4). The Intersectoral Taskforce is a body

consisting of government, business and community stakeholders which meets quarterly and reports to the ETRF Board.²

This paper will also be disseminated to YANQ's network of community organisations, schools, CALD communities, and relevant government stakeholders.

What is ETRF – a refresher³

The Queensland Government's Education and Training Reforms for the Future commenced trial phase in 2003 and will move into full implementation in 2006.⁴

The reforms aim to reshape Queensland's education and training system “to cater for students’ individual needs, inspire academic achievement, and equip them for the world of work.”⁵

The main reforms that are relevant for the purpose of this paper are:

- Introducing new legislation so that young people **must stay at school** until they achieve Senior, *or* finish a Certificate III vocational qualification, *or* get an apprenticeship, *or* get a job, *or* turn 16.
- Schools will be required to develop plans (called ‘Senior Education and Training Plans’, or SETPs) for each individual student about their studies from Grade Ten onwards. These will be developed with the student and their parents or guardians.
- Each region will be required to develop a plan on how to help young people stay at school. These are called ‘**District Youth Achievement Plans**’. In some areas, there will be more than one.
- Building community commitment and new community partnerships
- Schools will have access to **more community-based workers** called “youth support co-ordinators” who will support young people at risk of leaving school early
- The Senior Certificate will record a broader range of learning, including learning in school, vocational education and training and other learning

² It is noted that the Intersectoral Taskforce has no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representatives, and only two young people compared with approximately 30 non-youth representatives. The Queensland Government defines young people to be those between the ages of 12 and 25, inclusive.

³ To read YANQ's previous publications about ETRF, a response to the ETRF Green Paper, *What are Schools For?* and *Let's Invite Everyone*, visit our website at www.yanq.org.au.

⁴ The relevant legislation, the *Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003* (Qld), takes effect from 1 January 2006.

⁵ <http://education.qld.gov.au/etrf> (28/09/2004)

So what does ETRF mean for CALD young people?

According to the 2001 Census, 22.2% of Queenslanders were born overseas, and according to Education Queensland's 2004 enrolment statistics, 27,760 students at Queensland state schools speak a language other than English at home.

Therefore it is imperative that the particular needs of CALD students are taken into account in the education reforms to support the Queensland Government's goal of engaging **all young people** in education and training.

Furthermore, the cultural demographic in Queensland schools is rapidly changing and this calls for an immediate response from the Education Department if students and teachers alike are to cope with the new demographic. Notably, large numbers of refugee young people from the Horn of Africa, particularly Sudan, are escaping crises in their own countries and resettling in Queensland.

In the last five years, Queensland has taken 1671 humanitarian arrivals from 18 African countries (*unpublished data*, *Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA)*), and DIMIA anticipates that in 2003-4 Africans will account for 75% of all people resettled in Australia (*unpublished data*, *DIMIA*). It is also important to note that many families arriving under the humanitarian program are settled in regional areas, and thus the education reforms need to specifically address the needs of vulnerable groups in these areas.

Shala is Year Ten student at a Brisbane state high school, having spent a year at Brisbane's intensive English language preparation centre. She is a 16-year-old refugee from the Horn of Africa, who witnessed her father's murder and whose mother and two older brothers are missing. She lived in a refugee camp for the seven years preceding her arrival in Australia, where she was tortured and possibly raped by militia. She came to Australia with her older cousin as an unaccompanied minor. She has not had any schooling in her lifetime and spoke no English when she arrived. She is of Muslim faith and wears a hijab, and now lives alone following arguments with her cousin and family breakdown. She is struggling to support herself in a strange new world.

Q: How is Shala expected to function in a mainstream school in Queensland? How are teachers expected to cater for her deep and complex needs? And how will she relate to her classmates?

This case example illustrates the specific needs of CALD young people and demonstrates that "one size does not fit all" in education and training. The impact of

past torture and trauma experience upon refugee and asylum seeker young people's participation in mainstream Queensland schools and training institutions is easily observable by teachers and other service providers and increasingly recognised by academics and government.

However, although it is necessary to highlight the particular needs of certain groups of young people in education, it is also important to highlight the outstanding achievements of the same young people, and their positive contributions to the education system and society as a whole, as there are many things to be learnt from these young people's experiences, lives and culture.

Findings

1. African refugee students are the most high-needs / high-risk group

African refugee students appear to be the most high-needs / high-risk group in Queensland schools at the moment. Other high-needs / high-risk groups include school students from Pacific Island communities, young people from Islamic cultures, unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders. In the Cairns area, one other high-risk group is young people from the Hmong community.

2. Low English language ability and insufficient English as a Second Language (ESL) funding

I loved going to school in New Zealand but ever since I came to Australia I had difficulties with understanding English so I started wagging school.

– Maori/Cook Islander student, 14, Brisbane.

The repercussions of a student's limited command of English are fairly obvious: it leads to low self-esteem, difficulty in communicating with students and teachers and resulting isolation, and greatly increases a student's workload.

ESL teachers do not only provide vital English language support to school students who speak English as a second language, but they are often more sensitive to the special needs of their students than other school staff and therefore often provide the emotional support that these students need to cope with study and school life generally.

The State of Queensland is far behind its state counterparts in ESL support, funding only 24.9 ESL posts out of 162.4 in Queensland (*unpublished data, Education Queensland*). NSW, Victoria and South Australia provide much greater assistance. Queensland also has only one intensive English language preparation centre (Milpera State High School in Brisbane), compared to up to three in other states.

Yeronga State High School in Brisbane has up to 120 refugee students per year plus up to 20 other ESL students. The school has 3.8 ESL teachers. This means there are

up to 35 students in ESL classes, including students with no age-equivalent schooling, little or no literacy and numeracy, limited English ability, homelessness, and experiencing torture and trauma issues, deep grief and cultural shock.

There is a risk that without appropriate and explicit intervention for refugee students arriving at post-compulsory age in the senior schooling phase without prep or early childhood schooling, let alone a middle school phase, they will end up as a grossly under-educated sub-class of highly visible young people who may never be schooled or employable. This issue of inadequate funding needs to be addressed to support the implementation of the ETRF agenda.

But it is not only refugee students who are missing out on vital ESL support. Restrictive ESL guidelines in Queensland mean that large numbers of school students who speak English as a second language do not even qualify for ESL tutoring and must struggle through schooling in an unfamiliar language with no extra help.

For example, at Redbank Plains State High School (RPSHS) in Brisbane, there are 170 “Pacifika” (South Pacific Island) students, representing over 10% of the school population. Most of these students speak Samoan at home and speak English as a second language. However, under the current ESL guidelines only three of these students qualify for ESL tuition. Last year RPSHS had a visiting ESL teacher for half a day per week. This year there is no ESL teacher at all. These high-needs students must be supported through existing programs by subject teachers.

3. Perceived racism from teachers and peers

Of the 144 CALD school students surveyed across Queensland, almost half (61) reported experiencing racism at school. Here’s what some of them said:

Some teachers only give white people the chance to talk.

– Samoan student, 12, Brisbane

Sometimes I too scared to walk through the gate because people wait for me so they can bash me up and tease me for be a different colour... sometimes I feel like killing myself.

- Maori student, 13, Brisbane

Bullies and some teachers are mean to me because I don’t think they like Yugoslavians. I have been teased a lot but I try to ignore it and just stay home so then I can’t get teased.

– Yugoslavian student, 13, Brisbane

Some student racism me like tell me you horrible people. It make me don’t want to come to school.

– Thai student, 14, Cairns

I find people who look down on you and expect you not to understand certain thing because you are a black refugee.

– Somalian student, 15, Cairns

The continuing international attention on terrorism post-September 11 has also posed particular challenges for young people from Muslim backgrounds.⁶

Experiences of racism such as those expressed above erode the possibilities of enjoying safety, and create an environment of mistrust and fear for these young people. The high level of racism faced by CALD students will need to be addressed to support these students to remain at school or other vocational options.

4. Torture, trauma and grief issues and access to appropriate counselling

This issue is specific to refugee school students, who have come to Queensland from war-torn countries and who have often had experiences unimaginable to many Queenslanders. For example, over 60% of students at Milpera High School are refugees, and 50% of these have one or both parents deceased or missing. Many refugees have also been separated from other family members, have been raped and tortured, endured starvation, bombings and endless other hardships.

Torture, trauma and grief issues must be addressed before young people can attempt study. In Brisbane, organisations such as the Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) and Mercy Family Services provide specialised counselling for refugee young people. In other areas in Queensland there is little access to appropriate services or trained staff. Existing programs are under-resourced and concentrated in the South-East corner of Queensland.

Inadequate access to necessary and appropriate counselling may contribute to behaviour management issues that affect other students and teachers.

5. Cultural insensitivity from teachers and students, and embedded in the school curriculum

This is closely related to the above issue. A simple activity that may be an enjoyable game for many school students might be traumatic for another. For example, a student out-of-war studying a vocational child care course at a Brisbane high school was extremely distressed and upset by a game where the students had to wink at each other and play dead. Similarly, fire alarms have been known to be very traumatic to some young people out-of-war.

However, this issue is not limited to refugee students. Students from various religious denominations have been punished or excluded for observing religious practices. One Laotian student surveyed in Brisbane said, "I am a Jehovah's Witness. My year six teacher thought it was an excuse to skip work."

⁶ See *Ismae – Listen: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004.

6. Intergenerational conflict and lack of parental support in schooling

In emerging African refugee communities in Queensland, parents themselves have experienced education, training, employment and professional development disruptions due to persecution, years of displacement and very poor living conditions such as living in refugee camps for many years. Under these circumstances they place a very high value on their children's education. It is difficult for them to understand how the education system works, as throughout the settlement process they are trying to grasp the functioning of an entirely new society. They may dream for their kids to become lawyers and doctors without understanding language barriers and literacy and numeracy issues. A student may be doing well in a vocational course and their parent will pull them out because it will not get them into University. This leads to undue pressure on the student and family conflict, making it even harder for the student to perform at school. Additionally, these students often have little help at home from parents as they themselves are not highly educated and have limited English.

Similar issues are also present in other communities, such as Pacific Island communities, Hmong, and other newly arrived groups. The Caboolture Shire Council prepared an education kit for parents of Samoan students in the Samoan language, describing how the school system works and what their role is as parents within it. It has been well-received and had some positive outcomes.

The emphasis here is that parents of students need to be included in the school system. There are a number of low-cost options that are being explored by various schools and communities.

7. Little or no previous schooling (low or no literacy and numeracy skills, even in their own language)

I didn't go to school in my country there was a war sometimes we had school for one month and next month they were fighting again so no school.

– Liberian student, 16, Brisbane.

There is often a chronological gap between ages of refugee students and their appropriate grade placement. For example, a 20 year old with no previous schooling cannot reasonably sit in a primary school class. Also, many refugee high school students are over the age of 17, and therefore don't fit into the ETRF reform agenda for disengaged young people between the ages of 15 and 17 years.

8. Settlement issues (housing, orientation, awareness of and access to services)

Refugee students may have one or no parents and may be living alone or with extended family. They may also be looking after younger siblings. Even those with parents, if they have lived in refugee camps, may have never previously had access to

medical services, never had money to manage and have no idea how to budget, and furthermore don't understand our social welfare or legal system. At the moment DIMIA's Community Settlement Services Scheme offers six months of settlement support for new arrivals. Consultees said this is not enough: students are still disoriented after six months and this greatly impacts on their ability to study.

Added to this is the situation of poverty and stress associated with settlement which many CALD refugee families experience. The income support is barely sufficient to cover their basic expenses, and consequently many families feel trapped. Many families resettled in Australia also take on the burden of financially supporting family members in their home country to come to Australia. Many refugee families are facing huge debts due to this. Furthermore, it has been well-documented that housing is a significant problem for many Queenslanders let alone refugee families who often pay higher rents in the private markets (as public housing is not a solution), with unemployment and lack of recognition of qualifications adding to the problem.⁷

Furthermore, many government and non-government services are often culturally inappropriate for potential CALD clients: cultural awareness training for workers is limited and the system itself is often exclusive.

⁷ See the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's report on the housing needs of recently arrived refugees by Andrew Beer and Paul Foley at <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/global/docs/728.pdf>. Also, for access to Peter Westoby's current PhD research *Southern Sudanese Narratives of Distress*, email him at s3160338@student.uq.edu.au.

Recommendations

At this time of educational reform throughout Queensland there is an ideal opportunity to address the needs of CALD students. While it is evident that a number of initiatives are happening at district level, it is crucial that there is a coordinated response to the identified needs of CALD students at a system/policy level. Such an approach would give coherence to the response and could enhance communities' capacity. To that end, it is recommended that:

1. **ESL funding**
Queensland Government to provide more ESL funding to match other States
2. **District Youth Achievement Plans**
District Management Committees consult with CALD groups and take CALD issues into account when developing their District Youth Achievement Plans
3. **Fostering of diversity in schools**
 - a. Ongoing cross-cultural training for all school staff
 - b. Cultural awareness training for students, within the curriculum and through initiatives such as school multicultural festivals
 - c. Employment of office staff from CALD backgrounds to match the local communities as trainees, office administration and teacher-aides etc.
 - d. More funding for bicultural/bilingual liaison workers between schools and communities
 - e. Increase school contact with multicultural groups
 - f. Resource schools to include active participation from parents and families and parental education about the Queensland education system in their language
4. **Promotion of best practice**
Better promotion and documentation of best-practice schools in the multicultural area such as Milpera and Yeronga State High Schools, to share with other schools

Conclusion

It is clear that the issues confronting school students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are deep and complex, and that their resolution requires systemic change and the commitment of funds. Young people from migrant and refugee communities have a documented fear of authority, of speaking out, and of accessing services. Therefore it is essential that community advocates, service providers and the government respond to the issues and recommendations in this paper to make sure that “*everyone* is invited” to participate in and (for young people) to benefit from the Queensland Government’s Education and Training Reforms for the Future.

The real inclusion of CALD young people will highlight their contributions to the education system and society as a whole, as there are many things to be learnt from these young people’s experiences, lives and culture.

ooooOOoooo

Acronyms

CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DIMIA – Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
ESL – English as a Second Language
ETRF – Education and Training Reforms for the Future
EQ – Education Queensland

Appendix 1

Questions for young CALD consultees

How do you feel about school? Do you think that things could be better for you and people like you?

At the moment, the Queensland Government is trying to make education better for all young people in schools in Queensland. However, we realise that people who come from different cultural and language backgrounds to most Queensland school students (such as yourself) have different needs to other school students. To make sure that you and people like you benefit from the Government's education reforms, it is necessary to let the Government know what your needs and ideas are.

Because you are the most highly qualified expert in your own life, we would like to ask you personally about your experiences at school and your ideas on how school life could be better for you. **YOUR VIEWS ARE VERY IMPORTANT!** However, we will keep your answers anonymous (that means that no-one will know that the comments are yours). If there are any questions you do not wish to answer you need not answer them, but try to answer as many as possible!

We will then put together the information we have gathered from you and other young people from different backgrounds and give that back to the Government so that they know more about how they can help to make school better for you.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION 😊

1. About you:

- a) What country do you or your family come from?
- b) Which culture or cultures do you strongly identify with?
- c) What language is spoken at home?
- d) How long have you been in Australia?
- e) What is your visa status?
- f) Where do you live in Qld (which suburb/city)?
- g) How old are you?

2. About school:

- a) How would you describe your school experience prior to coming to Australia? What would you say was the best and worst of that experience?
- b) If you came from overseas, did you go straight into a mainstream school when you arrived in Australia? What school?
- c) What kind of support is/was offered at school: ESL? Counselling?
- d) How did you get on with ESL teachers, counsellors, other teachers at the school?
- e) What are the activities, programs (maybe you could name the programs) and people, that you find the most helpful and why?

- f) Similarly, what are the activities, programs and people that you find the most difficult and why?
 - g) Have you encountered any form of racism within the school? From other students or teachers? Has this affected your school performance or desire to attend?
 - h) In general, how did/do you feel about school?
 - i) Can you see yourself finishing year 12 or going into other training after year 10?
 - j) What kind of education or training would you like to receive through school, TAFE or other education and training providers?
 - k) Have your parents/family supported you in going to school?
 - l) Have you had support from other organisations outside school (youth services, Centrelink, community organisations)?
 - m) Why do young people drop out of school and how can we help them?
 - n) What are the things that you think you can contribute to the school system, what would you like from the school system to make you feel not only comfortable but valued?
- 3. Air your complaints: what's tough about going to school in Queensland?
 - 4. What do you like doing to relax and have fun?
 - 5. What are your dreams for the future?

Appendix 2

Questions for service providers for CALD young people

The Queensland Government is currently implementing educational reforms across the State (under the Education and Training Reforms for the Future, or ETRF). In order that the needs of school students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are taken into account in ETRF, it is imperative that the needs of these young people and the organisations which support them and their families are taken into account.

Your time taken in answering this questionnaire will greatly help us to collate the information that we need to help make this happen.

If you have any questions, please contact Claire Cottone at YANQ on 3844 7713 or at cald@yang.org.au.

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION ☺

1. Name and contact details of your organisation.
2. What service does your organisation provide for/ what is your involvement with young CALD people?
3. Which particular CALD group/s do you work with?
4. Have you heard about ETRF? If so, how familiar are you with the Education and Training Reforms for the Future?
5. Has your organisation become engaged in the ETRF process? Eg, have you participated in the District Youth Achievement Plan (DYAP) process or applied for a Youth Support Coordinator position? Have you been contacted by district leaders with respect to this or made contact yourself? Have you felt included or excluded from the reform process?
6. Are you interested in finding out more about ETRF and becoming more involved?
7. What gaps are there in service delivery for young CALD people, at school and in the wider community?
8. What are the difficulties faced by your organisation in providing services to young CALD people? Eg funding, training, working cross-culturally.
9. What are the main issues faced by your young CALD clients?
10. What are the main issues faced by your clients **at school** or in education and training generally?
11. What changes need to be made in Queensland schools (and the wider community) to satisfy the needs of CALD young people, including refugee and asylum seekers? Eg, more ESL support, cultural awareness training for teachers and counsellors, more special schools for kids from different backgrounds.
12. Any other comments?

Appendix 3

Letter from ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce to the Director General of Education and the Arts

Mr Ken Smith
Director-General
Department of Education and the Arts
PO Box 33
BRISBANE ALBERT STREET 4002

8 September 2004

Dear Mr Smith

During the course of its recent deliberations, the ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce has been considering the needs of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. As this exploration continued, it became evident that whilst some of these concerns lie within the ETRF ambit, and are therefore within the terms of reference of the Taskforce, other concerns lie beyond the ETRF agenda. Nevertheless, the members of the Taskforce asked that I respectfully bring these concerns to your attention in the hope that you consider them in future education planning.

Members of the Taskforce are concerned that whilst the number of children and youth arriving in Queensland from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has grown from 720 new arrivals in 1999 to approximately 1000 new arrivals in 2003 (*unpublished data, Education Queensland*), the number of ESL specialist teachers in Queensland is not keeping pace. There are still only 162.4 ESL specialist teachers in Queensland (of whom only 24.9 are state-funded) (*unpublished data, Education Queensland*).

Many of these children and young people are younger than the 15-17 year cohort that is of particular interest to the ETRF 'earning or learning' pathways, but members of the Taskforce wanted to emphasise the importance of appropriate ESL supports at the primary and lower secondary levels, if these students are not to 'fall through the cracks' before age 15.

Similarly, many of these CALD young people- particularly refugees, for whom Queensland is a haven from earlier phases of lives lived out in war-torn or severely disadvantaged nations, are older than 17 years, but are very much in need of the basic education services we would normally associate with primary, rather than secondary schooling.

There is a rapidly changing cultural demographic in Queensland schools with increasing numbers of refugee young people from the Horn of Africa, particularly Sudan, who are escaping crises in their own countries and resettling in Queensland. In the last five years, Queensland has taken 1671 humanitarian arrivals from 18 African countries (*unpublished data*, *Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA)*), and DIMIA anticipates that in 2003-4 Africans will account for 75% of all people resettled in Australia (*unpublished data*, *DIMIA*).

Members of the Taskforce understand that CALD groups represent a significant and complex set of educational and support needs that will be extremely challenging for all educational and community agencies to meet, whether in the public or private sector. Undoubtedly, there will be serious resource implications in delivering the package of services needed by these children and young people. It may be necessary to review the demographics of this growing population, and map existing support services against those demographics. For while several members of the Taskforce spoke very positively of the excellent work being done in some TAFE Colleges and Schools, there was doubt that these services were either sufficient to the need or geographically well matched to the location of the need.

The workforce needs also go well beyond specialist ESL teachers. Given that there are undoubtedly numerous small pockets of CALD children and youth across many urban and regional Queensland locations, it is unlikely that specialist ESL teachers could be provided in all settings. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that mainstream teachers- primary, secondary and VET, are well versed in inter-cultural communication and cultural awareness.

Further, given that so many of these CALD children and youth have come to Queensland bearing the physical and emotional scars of earlier grief, torture and trauma (for example, over 60% of students at Milpera High School are refugees, and of these 50% have one or both parents deceased or missing), there is a need for enhanced, culturally appropriate counselling services to support their transition into Queensland communities. Again, while excellent counselling services are provided by some community organisations such as the Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) and Mercy Family Services, who work closely with a small number of schools which have developed excellent ESL departments and who have high numbers of refugee and other migrant students (such as Milpera and Yeronga High School) other smaller concentrations of CALD children and youth appear to be far less well-served particularly in regional Queensland.

Other CALD-related workforce needs in terms of professional knowledge and skills that are specific to the ETRF agenda (for example the need for District Youth Coordinators to have cross-cultural training and updated information of available support services for CALD youth) are contained within the taskforce's most recent report to the ETRF Board.

On behalf of the members of the ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce, thank you for the opportunity to express these concerns. As a group, we are concerned that Queensland live up to its potential as a safe haven for children and youth from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds. The humanitarian commitment behind our statements should be clearly evident, but we would also point out that these resilient and talented young people constitute an enormous human resource for the state of Queensland that we would be loathe to waste.

Yours sincerely

Professor S.V McLean

Chair

ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce

Appendix 4

ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce's Report to the ETRF Board on CALD issues

Education and Training Reforms for the Future

ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce Chairs' Report to the Board *Item 4.3*

The second meeting of the ETRF Taskforce for 2004 took place on 14 July 2004.

Presentations

Middle Phase of Learning [edited out for this paper]

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students (CALD)

A group of Sudanese young people attended the Taskforce meeting and gave a short presentation on their experiences of settling in Australia as refugees.

Claire Cottone, CALD Officer, Youth Affairs Network Queensland and Eleesa Johnstone, Office of Youth Affairs presented on issues facing CALD young people, and CALD services and support mechanisms respectively.

Members of the Taskforce acknowledged the fine work being done in some schools (including Milpera and Yeronga High School) and some TAFE Colleges, to support CALD youth. Members also expressed concerns about the extent of unmet needs and raised questions about the degree of fit between support services and the geographic location of CALD children and youth. After discussion, members of the ETRF Intersectoral Taskforce would like to bring forward for your consideration, the following comments and recommendations:

District Youth Achievement Plans:

- The developers of DYAPs need to be well informed about CALD issues, so local CALD expertise should be actively sought and incorporated into planning teams wherever possible.

Workforce Professional Knowledge and Skills:

- It is desirable for professional development programs at all schools to include cross-cultural awareness and the development of cross-cultural communication skills.

- District Youth Coordinators should have cross-cultural training, updated information of available support services for CALD youth and a high level of consciousness of CALD student issues. Whilst it may not be possible to provide direct counselling services for CALD youth in all parts of the state, key staff such as District Youth Coordinators should have access to professional advice from trauma counsellors to assist them in meeting the needs of young people from CALD backgrounds.
- The importance of cultural knowledge should be formally recognized in hiring both professional and support staff from within the relevant cultural groups, whenever possible, so that the cultural demographic of the student body is reflected in the cultural demographic of the school workforce.
- It would be valuable if the elements of good practice in supporting CALD young people (as found in schools such as Milpera and Yeronga High, and some TAFE Colleges) could be fully documented and more actively promoted. This could be a very valuable resource for up-skilling staff in other schools and learning organizations.

School Communities: On-campus and Off

- Cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skill development would be beneficial for students and staff in all Queensland schools.
- The cultural diversity inherent in schools communities should be celebrated as a dynamic component of school identity.
- Schools should ensure their curriculum practice is sensitive to the cultural differences reflected in their particular community.
- In providing workplace experiences for students from CALD backgrounds, Youth Coordinators and other responsible staff need to ensure that employers and workplace staff are aware of the particular cultural and language needs of the students. (Local partner groups, CALD support service staff and school-based staff might be able to work together to develop appropriate briefing materials for employers.)
- The school community, broadly defined, should incorporate local CALD support service staff, multicultural groups and community volunteers.
- Parents and families of students from CALD backgrounds should be valued as essential members of the school community, involved in meaningful ways and fully consulted in local educational decision making. It is noted that this often will require communication in their first language, so schools need to be effective users of interpreter and translator services.
- Whilst service delivery sometimes may be rendered simpler by placing students from CALD backgrounds in same-language cohorts, this practice of segregation is not supported. It is believed that students from CALD backgrounds benefit more from the opportunity to learn and live within linguistically diverse groupings, i.e. a mainstream experience that is inherently, linguistically diverse.
- Schools need to ensure that both their staff and students from CALD backgrounds are fully informed about the existing flexibility in English language testing that is available to high school students from CALD backgrounds. Similarly, information on alternate entry pathways to TAFE and university study as well as other customized career counselling advice should be a key component of DYAP programs.

