

## Why is it Important?

Multiculturalism is part of our national identity, history and character. Every year, more people immigrate to Australia than emigrate from it. In 2014, 28% of Australians (6.6 million people) were born overseas.<sup>1</sup> What's more, 46% of Australians had a parent who was born overseas and there were over 200 languages spoken.<sup>2</sup>

Health issues experienced by culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities are often complex. Poor health outcomes for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities often involve *systemic barriers*. These are patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of social or administrative structures—for example, a lack of appropriately translated information about different services can limit access by people from non-English speaking backgrounds. These barriers unconsciously discriminate and cause inequality for people. Racism and stigma are the biggest barriers of all.

Research shows that people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities can face numerous challenges including lack of access to educational opportunities, lack of employment, increased mental health issues, housing difficulties, lower social economic status and loss of identity.

Refugees and asylum seekers are among the most vulnerable people in the world. They may suffer from diseases and conditions rarely seen in Australia. Many have nutritional problems or untreated health conditions and injuries exacerbated through poor living conditions and lack of access to treatment.<sup>3</sup>

Although refugees and asylum seekers may experience psychological problems, they can also show great resilience. Studies indicate that psychological difficulties of asylum seekers may arise from their pre-arrival experiences and also from detention. For many refugees the initial settling in period in Australia may be traumatic. As such, there is potential for our health and social services to make a significant difference to the lives of these people.<sup>3</sup>



## Why is being CaLD an issue for the health of Tasmanians?

- CaLD people are part of our communities** In Tasmania, 84% of people were born in Australia. The most common countries of birth other than Australia, were England 4%, New Zealand 1%, Scotland 0.5%, Netherlands 0.5% and Germany 0.4%. 75% of Tasmanians had both parents born in Australia and 15% of people had both parents born overseas. 92% of people only spoke English at home.<sup>4</sup>
- Some CaLD people don't speak English** Hobart, Launceston, Kingborough, Clarence and Glenorchy are the local government areas with the highest numbers of people born overseas. These are also the five local government areas with the highest numbers who speak English not well or not at all.<sup>5</sup>
- Our diverse communities are changing** The fastest growing overseas birthplaces for Tasmania are Congo (DR), Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, India, Taiwan, Pakistan and Iran. For example, there has been a 300% increase in the number of people coming from Congo (DR) since the 2006 Census.<sup>5</sup>
- Australia offers limited places for humanitarian entrants** Australia's existing humanitarian program has places for about 14,000 people per year. In 2015, the Government announced it would offer an additional 12,000 places in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The humanitarian program is set to rise to 19,000 places in 2018-19.<sup>6</sup>
- An increasing number of refugees are settling in Tasmania** Tasmania gets 23% of its total migration from the humanitarian stream as compared with 8% for Australia as a whole. This means that the makeup of migration by country of birth is different for Tasmania, with more of the smaller emerging refugee communities represented.<sup>7</sup> There is an increasing number of refugee communities from countries such as Sudan, Congo (DR), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Bhutan, Burma, Iran and Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>
- Mental health is a major concern** There is an over representation of mental health issues within CaLD communities in Tasmania. An analysis by Tasmania's Phoenix Centre found that if people had experienced extreme interpersonal isolation and dislocation from their countries of origin, they were more likely to exhibit serious mental health or health symptoms, were difficult to engage, and had an increased risk of suicide. Unemployment, financial hardship, racism, family conflict and breakdown, intergenerational conflict, lack of control over lives, drug and alcohol use and family violence also emerged as concerns among the newly-arrived African communities. Older migrants faced a different range of mental health concerns, especially as they reached later life stages.<sup>9</sup>
- Culture and religion are determinants of health** All major religions are practiced in Australia. Different cultures attribute different meanings to parts of the body, types of illness and compliance with, and understanding of treatment. Different meanings can be given to specific cultural issues such as female genital mutilation, domestic violence and sexual violence. These are often considered private matters, not public issues.<sup>10</sup>

### References and Resources

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8. iD The Population Experts 2011, *Immigration in the past 5 years – focus on Tasmania*: [blog.id.com.au/2011/population/australian-demographic-trends/immigration-in-the-past-5-years-focus-on-tasmania/](http://blog.id.com.au/2011/population/australian-demographic-trends/immigration-in-the-past-5-years-focus-on-tasmania/).
9. Phoenix Centre, Accessed May 2016, *CaLD community connections- Suicide prevention project*: [mrchobart.org.au/programs/cald-community-connections-suicide-prevention-project](http://mrchobart.org.au/programs/cald-community-connections-suicide-prevention-project).
- Anglicare (Flanagan J) 2007, *Dropped from the moon-the settlement experiences of refugee communities in Tasmania*.

## Communities

- Welcome new arrivals to your neighbourhood.
- Celebrate the arts, food, culture and traditions of CaLD communities.
- Support CaLD communities to establish social enterprise programs, and work with them to build their skills for employment and business establishment.
- Invite CaLD communities to share their culture and traditions with others through schools, community groups and organisations.
- Build a sense of acceptance in your community and speak up against racism and discrimination.
- Organise fundraising activities to support those living in refugee camps abroad.
- Speak out on humanitarian issues (write letters to politicians, become part of lobby groups or write to the media).
- Establish programs that aim to protect and promote mental health and wellbeing.
- Reach out to socially isolated families, single-parent families and women from culturally diverse communities.

## Individuals

- It is essential when working and living with CaLD Tasmanians that we are aware of our own cultural lens. Challenge your own thoughts and behaviours in relation to racism and discrimination.
- Speak out on humanitarian issues (write letters to politicians, become part of lobby groups or write to the media).
- Join and support organisations such as Save the Children, Amnesty International, Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders, Red Cross, Tasmanians for Refugees and others.
- Engage with local CaLD community members, ask questions, listen and learn.
- Attend events organized by CaLD community associations.
- Read books to children about other cultures.
- Host a student from another country while they are studying in Australia.
- Volunteer your time to work with the CaLD community, e.g. become a mentor to help someone get their driver's licence. Contact the Migrant Resource Centre in your area.
- Become a literacy volunteer. Contact your local LINC.
- Be nice, friendly and helpful to people you meet on the street.



## Workplaces (Managers, Workers, Volunteers) & Service Providers

- Under no circumstances tolerate stigma and discrimination in the workplace or in delivering services to the community.
- Learn about the network of services that exist for people from CaLD backgrounds and link them in accordingly.
- Provide English language courses.
- Provide all workers with cultural competency training.
- Review the Diversity Guidelines from Mental Health Carers Tasmania and see if your workplace can implement some of these standards: [arafmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DiversityGuidelineandStandards.pdf](http://arafmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DiversityGuidelineandStandards.pdf).
- Provide information about health and related services in multiple languages, and always use professional interpreter services.
- Employ people from culturally diverse backgrounds—don't underestimate their knowledge and skills.
- Collect, analyse and report data on CaLD health and wellbeing.
- Celebrate National Refugee Week/Day.
- Create partnerships with organisations working with CaLD communities.
- Develop outreach programs and visit CaLD people where they live.
- Decorate workplaces and service settings with images and artwork that reflects our diverse communities.

## Politicians & Governments

- Work collaboratively with other nations to build peace. Reduce Australia's involvement in conflicts. Show leadership so others will recognise Australia as a peace-seeking nation.
- Welcome more asylum seekers and refugees to Australia.
- Provide more funding for migrant and refugee services, including volunteer programs that support new arrivals upon settlement.
- Invest in high quality initiatives that work with refugees and asylum seekers to improve mental health and wellbeing.
- Improve access to information and education for CaLD people as many migrants are not given appropriate access to English language courses, despite the expectation that they find employment within 12 months.
- Make CaLD health a priority, invest appropriately, focus on health promotion, and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies that aim to enhance CaLD health and wellbeing.
- Challenge misinformation and negative perceptions of CaLD communities.
- Enforce antidiscrimination and racism laws.
- Support research into the needs and issues of CaLD communities.
- All politicians and government employees should participate in cultural competency training.