

Submission

No 105

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

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Date Received: 9/09/2008

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8 August 2008

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Although my responses are in general relevant to all children and young people, I will be focusing on the needs migrant refugee and humanitarian children and young people, specifically from the Assyrian community. This is a group which I have worked with since 2004 in the Fairfield LGA.

1. The needs of children and young people in the middle years, ie between about nine and fourteen years of age.

Crime prevention and minimization

Schooling:

- Settlement:
 - School mentoring program, standardized to assist with orientation and integration for newly arrived young people (year 7 onwards).
 - Schools to provide information about its expectations from parents and students, information on educational pathways to parents, provide opportunity to establish contact with school year coordinators and teachers, provide an understanding of disciplinary procedures and invite early access to school at times when students need assistance.
- English Language:
 - Length of Intensive English Centre attendance determined by competency assessments, restricting accesses to mainstream schooling if inadequate.
 - Evaluate effectiveness of Intensive English Centres (in relation to students' academic level of English competency)
- Academic Support:
 - After school hours homework support programs, offered to groups (e.g. The Australian Assyrian Academic Society) and for individuals who require home tutoring due to their learning difficulties and lack of previous structured education prior to migration.
- School youth workers:
 - positions for prominent ethnic groups in LGAs to support children and young people experiencing difficulties and needing casework support.

Parenting:

- Parenting programs to assist parents to manage their children's behaviour in a manner that reduces cultural transition and settlement stresses.

- Programs which engage families and assist settlement processes restructure offer of 500 hrs of English language (e.g. at ACL) to develop and orientation program (including e.g. FICT) as part of offer for newly arrived migrants.
- Counselling services that are linguistically and culturally sensitive (e.g. for Assyrians, not provided by Muslim or Arab counselors).

Positive Peer Groups:

- Provide assistance for voluntary community youth groups (social and religious), through small grants to engage children and young people more effectively, with criteria that specifies participation, orientation and integration in Australia and local LGAs.

After school/holiday activities:

- With an emphasis on encouraging community groups (including ethno-specific) providing activities and events, either independently or in partnership with mainstream services.
- Due to their resources, for sporting clubs to be encourage (through grants) to provide unstructured sporting activities for young people.

General Mentoring programs:

- With an emphasis on engaging potential leaders to participate in the relevant activities listed above.

Crime Minimisation:

- Street Outreach work for young Assyrians, who liaises with parents, schools and police.
- Provide information to youth groups, schools, parents about the law and legal system.
- Provide casework support for young people identified as engaging in high risk activities/behaviour.

Casework Hours/Positions:

- Great need for casework support for children and young people, requiring complex support in areas of health, law, education, family relationships, employment and other issues. Often with refugee young people, there is a need outreach and advocacy work (attending meeting and appointments, etc).

2. the extent to which the needs of children and young people in the middle years vary according to age, gender and level of disadvantage.

- Prevention work and parental support is far more effective for younger age groups. Casework support is more effective for older age groups.
- Mainstream and specialized services (including ethno-specific) should be mapped on a continuum of community support interventions.

3. *the activities, services and support which provide for children and young people in the middle years to develop resilience.*
- Children and young people are already very resilient.
 - There are many good services in the community, both mainstream and ethno-specific that are providing different levels of support. Often, the level of effectiveness is directly linked to an agency's cultural sensitivity, its ability to engage specific ethnic communities and the level of resource (including financial) to employ staff who can implement programs that build resilience.
 - Government departments, e.g. DOCS, Health, Education need greater input from the Assyrian community and employment of Assyrian-background staff to assist in developing services that help build resilience for the community and its children and young people.
4. *the extent to which changing workplace practices have impact on children and young people in the middle years, including possible changes to workplace practices which have the potential to benefit children and young people in the middle years; and*
- Less secure income with casual Employment.
 - Low wages make Centrelink benefits for attractive.
 - Fairfield highest problem gambling region in NSW (78% of disposable income is gambled, over twice as much gambled per person in Fairfield than elsewhere in NSW).
5. *any other matter considered relevant to the inquiry by the Committee.*

None.

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