

Submission

No 62

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

Organisation: Immigrant Women's Speakout Association
Name: Ms Jane Brock
Position: Executive Officer
Telephone: 02 9635 8022
Date Received: 6/05/2008

Immigrant Womens' Speakout Association NSW, Inc

The Committee Manager
Committee on Children and Young People
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

6 May 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW

On behalf of Immigrant Womens Speakout Association of NSW please accept our submission into the inquiry on children and young people 9-14 years in NSW
If you need more information please call (02) 9635 8022 or email:
executive_officer@speakout.org.au

Yours sincerely
(signed)

Jane Brock

Prepared by:
Sussie Lee, Domestic Violence Project Officer

Authorised by:
Lina Cabaero, Chairperson

Organization: Immigrant Women's Speakout Association (IWSA)
Contact Person: Jane Brock, Executive Officer
PO Box 9031
Harris Park NSW 2150
Tel: (02) 9635 8022
Email: executive_officer@speakout.org.au

The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association (IWSA) is the peak advocacy, research, information and lobby body representing the issues and ideas of women of Non English Speaking Background (NESB) in New South Wales.

Background

In March 1982, 300 women gathered in Sydney to speak out publicly on issues affecting women of Non English speaking background. As a result of this landmark meeting, a working party was convened which led to the establishment of the Immigrant Women's Speak out Association of NSW in 1985.

Since then, the IWSA has focused on key areas including education, employment and training, domestic violence, immigration, industrial issues, child care, health, housing, legal issues, anti-discrimination, and issues of access and equity,

IWSA objectives are:

- To identify key issues and areas of concerns of immigrant and refugee women.
- To provide information and referral services to Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women.
- To advocate and lobby on issues affecting CALD women.
- To promote employment, education and training opportunities for CALD women.
- To monitor and evaluate access and equity in the provision of services.
- To assist in development of policies that is responsive to the diverse needs of CALD women.
- To undertake and develop community based research, act on outcomes and recommendations relevant to CALD women.

IWSA is committed to:

- Achieving equity for women of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) regardless of race, ethnicity or cultural background, age, ability, religion, sexuality or socio-economic background.
- Addressing the diverse needs of immigrant and refugee women in NSW. Ensuring that Non-English Speaking Background women participate fully in decision-making structures and process.
- Advocating and lobbying on social justice issues.
- Actively promoting social justice issues within a culturally diverse society.

Inquiry into Children and Young people 9-14 years in NSW

Terms of reference of the inquiry:

- 1) The needs of children and young people in the middle years (9-14 years)
- 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
- 3) The activities, services and support which provide opportunities for children and young people in the middle years to develop resilience
- 4) Any other matter considered relevant to the inquiry by the committee;

IWSA's aim on this policy submission:

The aim of this submission is to explore the current issues and concerns of NESB families with children (9-14 years old) who are settling in Australia. The paper will also discuss recommendations and actions needed to address the issues and to support those families and children.

Methodology:

The project worker of IWSA gathered information from interviews and notes from meetings with past and present clients of IWSA. All of the families are of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) with children 9-14 years. The ethnic background of the

families ranged from countries in Asia, Middle Eastern and Africa. Each project workers presented the information of their clients and identified the main issues and concerns, which were raised whilst working with NESB families with 9-14 children.

All of our clients were provided with information and overview of Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW and our involvement in submitting submission. IWSA stressed confidentiality and respect for the integrity of our clients and their family. After researching and gathering data and information we have identified the following issues:

- 1) Domestic Violence
- 2) Housing
- 3) Employment
- 4) Intergenerational conflict
- 5) School experiences

For each issue identified, IWSA researched and made a review of available literature and data. Each issue has been compared with past and recent studies, relevant projects, or current literature. This provided a deeper understanding and framework in analysing the issues presented above.

1) Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is an abuse of power, always perpetrated by the more powerful member of the relationship against the less powerful member in order to gain control.

Domestic violence is a serious crime that affects women across all cultures and communities. IWSA caseworkers help and support in many areas ranging from advocacy and referral of NESB women and children who are in the process of ending domestic violence in their lives.

When families migrate to Australia they are not informed about Australian laws on domestic violence. They do not have easy and quick access to plain language and translated information about what constitutes abuse and violence in Australia (which could be very different to their home country), nor what can be done about it. There is

also insufficient awareness about relevant support agencies (including ethno-specific services), which can be contacted for assistance.¹

Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Arriving to a new country and settling in a foreign country is very stressful on young children. It is even more distressing if they witnessed domestic violence. NESB children who are exposed to domestic violence have deeper problem in personality and behaviour. The problems among children exposed to violence in the home can take form of illness, depression and being suicidal. Many children who witness family violence have been found to have higher levels of behavioral and emotional problems than other children. The impact can vary according to their age, sex, and role in the family. Some children feel responsible for the violence. They may think they are making things easier for their mother by appearing to cope with the situation, by trying to be silent, or by not expressing how they feel.

While most children escape without physical injury in situations of DV, they may bear emotional scars, which in many cases can last a lifetime.

Case study A

A Philippine woman's 14 year-old son slashed his wrist because the violence at the home was too much for him to take. The mother and her son are victims of domestic violence from the stepfather. IWSA reported the abuse to DoCS. However, the psychological and mental trauma on the son was too much and led to the son harming himself.

¹ Want, Cathy (1996), 'Issues regarding clients from NESB', in *Many Voices, Different Stories*, Conference proceedings, Fairfield Multicultural Family Planning, Liverpool Printing Service, Sydney.

Other issues in relation to Domestic Violence:

a)Housing

One of the most devastating consequences of domestic violence is that the woman's home becomes the unsafe place for her and often for her children. This result in many women being forced to leave the home and in this process makes themselves and the children homeless in order to access safety.² The experience of domestic violence is inextricably linked to women's homelessness. Due to DV, over half of these women are accessing services that are funded by the DoCS Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (54% in the 2005-2006 year (AIHW, 2007)). Given the demographic profile of New South Wales, there is an urgent need for crisis accommodation that will provide services to meet the needs of women with children (9-14 years old) from culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD). Nevertheless, there has been little research on NESB homeless women experiencing domestic violence in particular and the impact of homelessness on their children.

Furthermore, it is not easy to meet the complex needs of NESB women and children due to a number of factors such as limited rooms in women's shelters or accommodations in particular for women with teenage children because many refuge accommodations disallow teenage boys.

NESB women and their children often need additional and continuing support for a long period after leaving crisis accommodation and moving to independent living.

Some women in these situations may find they are unable to care for their children due to trauma. They may be forced to place their children in the care of family, friends or social services. Certainly children are affected by this sudden change of lifestyle. Children's life routine can be disrupted. Many children feel isolated and are more in the higher risk of being emotionally depressed and feeling lonely.

² L. Syngajewski, D. O'Leary, J. Koch, D. Flynn and H. Owens, 'Women Who Are Single and Homeless: Myths and Realities' in *Parity*, May 2007.

Case study B

A Chinese woman and her three children were refused by a refuge accommodation after leaving her husband due to DV. One of the children is a teenager and other refuge services cannot take them in. This woman and her children were transferred from one crisis accommodation to another until IWSA found a suitable accommodation that can support the woman and her three children. The children had to be pulled out from their school until the situation was resolved. The children were deeply upset and stressed due to the disruptions in their lives.

b) Family Violence Provisions (FVP) under the Migration Regulations

Some NESB women who have been sponsored as spouse or partner are in temporary residency for two years and have to prove that they are in continuing spouse or partner relationship in that period of time. Many NESB women who are not aware of the Family Violence Provisions will remain in abusive and damaging relationships with Australian partners for fear of having their application for permanent residence rejected if they leave the relationship. Often the Australian partner is aware of the woman's fear and will use the permanent residence application as a means to establish control and domination over the woman, threatening to inform the Department of Immigration if the woman would leave or not do what the Australian sponsor/partner wants.

Further complications can arise if there are children from the relationship. Often the Australian partner will make threats to the woman that, if she would leave, he will not allow her to take the children with her. The sponsor-partner also tells the woman that she cannot have custody neither access the children. These threats have very real consequences. If the father does not consent to a child being issued with a passport, then the mother will not be able to obtain a passport for the child. Many women stay in abusive relationships out of fear that they will never see their children again if they leave.

In DV situation, NESB women feel particularly marginalized and isolated. Many of them will not have been in Australia very long and may not speak English. They will know

nothing of the services available to them or even where to find information. Often they do not have friends or family in Australia to whom they can turn for help. Sometimes they are hesitant to seek help from members of their own community due to cultural taboos, social stigma and privacy issues. These problems are compounded by the fact that many NESB women are financially dependent on their Australian partners. Until a woman obtains permanent residence, she does not have any entitlement to social security except for crisis payment if they have a child. This crisis payment has to be repaid by the husband to Centrelink, the agency that advanced the crisis payment.

The situations of a woman in the above situation result into her children exposed to DV and are themselves at risk of abuse.

At IWSA we assist women and her children in obtaining permanent residency through FVP (Family Violence Provisions). The Family Violence Provisions (FVP) of Australia's Migration Regulations allow certain people applying for permanent residence in Australia to continue with their application after the breakdown of their relationship from their sponsor/spouse or partner due domestic or family violence.³

However, the process of applying for FVP is a time consuming. In order for the victims to seek FVP not only do they have to relive their violent but the process of gathering evidence is just as painful.

Case study C

A Chinese woman married to Australian man is in the process of applying for FVP. Her application for FVP was refused twice because there was insufficient evidence to support that she was a victim of domestic violence. The woman is under a lot stress and is emotionally distressed because the process is time consuming. Further she has to relive the horrible moments of the abuse every time when she had to sign or fill in required documents or when she is continuously interviewed relevant departments about the abuse. Her mental state also affects the way she looks after her children.

³ Australian Government Department of Immigration and citizenship 2007

Case study D

A Middle Eastern woman escaped with her child from abusive relationship. They sought shelter at a refuge, a crisis accommodation. She applied for FVP but the process was slow and time consuming. Whilst staying at the refuge she was also trying to find a permanent accommodation because many crisis accommodations offered short- term stay. The child did not attend school and was constantly with his mother because he was afraid because of the abuse.

Recommendation/ Actions:

- NSW government provide more funding to services dealing NESB families who are experiencing family violence, and training services that equip community workers with skills in effectively assisting NESB families with children who are 9-14 years of age.
- More communication and partnerships among neighbourhood centres, community organisations, government committees and other appropriate agencies with the focus on developing current information sessions and programs on learning about mainstream Australian culture, parenting practices and other family-related information for migrant communities. Through these information sessions NESB families will learn about child protection and the importance of having a safety in the family abode. Local councils, child protection agencies, family support services, women's services and other organisations working with abused NESB women and their children are avenues in spreading the reach of these information sessions.
- Increase funding to SAAP, so that there will be more access to long-term housing options for NESB women and their children who are in DV situation.
- Partnership with housing support services in promoting cultural and social inclusion principles. Ensure that services are responsive to the social context of homeless NESB women and children.

- Holistic program to provide ongoing support and care for NESB women and children who are in DV situation. To provide sufficient funding to implement these support programs and use culturally appropriate interventions to support NESB women and their children.
- Provide information on DV and Family Violence Provisions, to women migrating to Australia. Information materials must explain about DV and Family Violence and where they can go for help. Ethnic welfare agencies and community organisations should given support and guideline so that they can transmit the information to their community.
- Update the current videos or other forms of visual presentation that are being used by Australian embassies in providing information to who will migrate to this Australia. Prior to their departure or as soon as they arrive in this country, relevant booklet in their own language with all the support services contact details and information about domestic violence should be handed out to women.
- Provide training to NESB community workers and give instruction on how to implement the law on child protection, DV and Family Violence.
- Develop links between the Community Health Centres and community-based migrant and refugee groups and organisations to enable them to work in partnership in enhancing the health status of NESB families and their children through joint projects.

2) Housing

It is important to remember that right to housing is recognised in Article 25 of The Universal Declaration of Human rights, which states that

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his families, including food, clothing housing and Medical care and necessary social services...”

This instrument is binding upon Australia because it is a party to this Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As identified by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1998) in a study of the settlement experiences of migrants over a three-year period from 1994 to 1997 most migrants (89%) shared accommodation,

mainly with relatives or friends when they first arrived in Australia. *“Within between three to six months, just under half (46%) had moved accommodation at least once, primarily either to gain some independence or to seek a better location and up to 70 per cent of all immigrants moved accommodation within their first eighteen months in Australia.”*

Settling in to a new country, community and home is a different experience for everyone. The journey from arrival to feeling settled and part of the community could be very challenging. One of the biggest concerns is finding a place to live and settle once the families arrive in Australia. In a recent research conducted by NESB Housing Taskforce⁴, many NESB families encountered ranges of problems, varying from ‘cost of renting, harassment by the landlord, the poor quality of housing and difficulties in finding accommodation when you lack referee’.

At IWSA, we assist and support immigrant women and her children who are in leaving violent situation to access housing or accommodation. Many of IWSA clients have had difficulties in accessing rental properties. This due to the fact that in order to rent a property many NESB families were faced with many essential requirements and obligations from the agent such as applicant’s income, employment, guarantee, visa status, character references and so on.

Furthermore, the biggest concern was the language barrier between the NESB families and the agent. Miscommunication is very common and many families end up having to bring in a friend or translator at their own expense to communicate with an agent.⁵ Information about housing, including public housing, private rental housing and home ownership needs to be provided in plain English.

Case study E

An Afghanistan refugee family who migrated to Australia was very distressed because she and her family were unable find an accommodation. This is due to language barrier and there was no immediate translator available. The family

⁴ Submission to FaCSIA on increasing the social housing supply. NESB Housing Taskforce, September 2007; Francis S, & Cornfoot S. (2007) Multicultural Youth in Australia; Settlement and Transition, Centre for Multicultural Youth issues Victoria;

⁵ Beer A & Morphet S (2002), The housing and other service needs of recently arrived migrants, Australian Housing and Urban research Institute, Southern research Centre

cannot afford the cost of high rent. There was also delay and long process of meeting the requirements such as: guarantee, checking upon visa status, income and employment status and so on. Therefore, the family relied upon friends to find affordable housing. However, the condition of the unit was poor but the family settled in the unit because they were able to afford the unit. The children expressed their sadness and felt neglected and isolated '

Case study F

An African woman refugee stated: "Low income means renting in remote far areas. This is really distressing for families with children where they have to travel far in going to school. Many families have been given notice of eviction from the agent and landlords.

Impact on children

Children are emotionally and mentally affected when there is uncertainty in settlement and housing.⁶ Children and their families who are constantly relocating from place to place and seeking shelter in houses of other families and friends could feel isolated and most often they may feel that they are not unaccepted in places where they relocated.

Client G

An African refugee family who migrated to Australia was seeking shelter at an emergency crisis centre. The family was constantly looking for a place to live. The children showed signs of depression and felt very isolated and lost. At the same time, the children were even more upset because they were missing out on school.

⁶ Babacan, H. (1998). "I still call Australia Home- an exploration of Issues Relating to settlement and racism", Centre for Multicultural Pastoral care, Brisbane; Francis S, & Cornfoot S. (2007) Multicultural Youth in Australia; Settlement and Transition, Centre for Multicultural Youth issues Victoria.

Recommendation/Actions

- State and Commonwealth governments to make immediate action to meet the housing needs of those all peoples in vulnerable situations such as NESB women and their children who are in DV or Family Violence.
- Ensure that all the housing agent and other housing organisations and providers are aware of the needs of NESB families in particular their difficulty in using English language.
- Provide clear information and sufficient resources to newly-arrived families and to NESB families seeking housing and accommodation.
- Provide information to potential landlords on the various needs of NESB people in seeking housing and accommodation.
- Translators and interpreters should be provided in housing agent for NESB people and families to allow better communication.
- Increase funding to programs that will culturally appropriate housing information, which is translated in various languages of NESB families. This information will ensure that newly-arrived families will understand the housing system in Australia with the focus on the right of children to have suitable accommodation.

3) Employment

New arrivals to Australia face important challenges that can determine the success of settlement in their new country. For many of them, finding employment and earning income are essential elements to successful settlement.

Depending on the circumstances under which migrants arrive, they can be faced with a range of barriers to finding suitable employment. These include non-recognition of their overseas qualification and work experience, difficulties with language, access to limited information about the job market and requirement process of upgrading their skills and racial discrimination. As stated by Stapp (1998, 169)⁷,

Employers are often impressed by the competence and motivation for immigrant employees. However, career potential of immigrant employees can be undermined by limited English skills...

⁷ Stapp, Y (1998) 'Instructor –employer collaboration: A model for technical workplace English', *English for Specific purposes*, 17, 2 169-182.

Migrant women, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds, are still subject to stereotyping, still suffer from lack of skill recognition, still mainly work in manufacturing industries, and bear the brunt of settlement, transport difficulties, lack of access to culturally appropriate child care and lack of access to appropriate job seeking information recourse.⁸ They face lack of recognition of their skills, low level of English proficiency and no knowledge of work culture. As stated by Piters and Lim 1997, 532⁹,

Some NESB people are highly qualified and experience in a chosen trade or Profession but do not have local experience and their qualifications may not be recognized.

At IWSA many NESB women express concerns and are distressed that they are unable to find permanent work and employment. Many job positions require essential skills and requirement in which many NESB women are unable to fulfill. It is not just the NESB women but also for men who are experiencing tremendous hardship in gaining stable employment.

In a research conducted by Janet Taylor 1998¹⁰, it was demonstrated that the situation for immigrant families in employment was a concern, of the families parents from NESB 73% were on low incomes in 1990's and in the year 2000, a similar proportion of the NESB families (71%) were still on low incomes.

Impact on children

Often many of the NESB families who come to IWSA for help are employed in very low-income positions due to their limited English, level qualifications and skills. The impact of low income means that the families are unable to afford proper housing, unable to support their children's full needs because they have difficulties in having both ends meet.¹¹ Further due to a family's low income and financial pressure, children could be required to take on additional responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings so that

⁸ Foster, L & Rado, M (1992), 'Literacy needs of NESB women; Implications for education and training', Journal of vocational Education and Training, 50,3,387-402

⁹ Pithers, R & Lim, R. (1997), 'A NESB in adult vocational education: Breakthrough the Barriers', Journal of Vocational education and Training, 49, 4, 531-544.

¹⁰ Janet Taylor, (1998) 'Now We Are Six': Changes and Challenges for the 'Life Chances' Children; Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne

¹¹ Janet Taylor, (1998) 'Now We Are Six': Changes and Challenges for the 'Life Chances' Children; Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne;

their parents could work overtime or the children finding work themselves to contribute to the family income.

Case study H

An African refugee woman expressed her sadness that she and her husband are unable to provide the needs of her teenager children. Due to family's low income and the fact that the family are struggling to make both ends meet, their young teenage children are missing out on some basic needs. Her children would often wonder around the street, staring at the shop windows and envious of other fellow teenagers.

Recommendation /Actions

- Government must provide adequate social security payments for sole parents and unemployed parents and families on low-income.
- Enhance and upgrade policy for employers and workplaces to provide and develop training to employ NESB people. To provide opportunities for NESB communities to learn and adapt to the workplace culture based on OH & S.
- Implement program and guidelines for all employers and workplaces and employment agencies to understand and recognise the needs of NESB people, their limitations on required skills and access to employment.
- Government must provide funding to employment and training organisations that assist and support NESB people in acquiring the basic skills and essential requirements to get jobs.

4) Intergenerational conflict and impact on children

The increasing number of Australian cross-cultural and acculturation research projects over the past few years has served to advance the knowledge about the difficulties faced by non-English speaking background (NESB) children and teenagers who migrate to Australia. It has recently been highlighted that migrant groups vary in their experiences of cultural adjustment, emotional distress, and coping ability. Although it is broadly recognized that acculturative-stress is a major cause of internalising problems, and that culturally diverse groups have specific needs, strengths, and weaknesses, little work has been undertaken to develop an action-research approach to respond to these needs .¹²

¹² Lynch, E.W & Hanson, M.J(eds) (2004) 'Developing Cross cultural Competence: A guide for working with Children and their families, Third edition, Paul H Brookes publishing, NSW.

Most parents, irrespective of their culture identity want the best for their children. Many people who migrate to Australia may have made the decision to do so in a part to secure a good future for their children. This can lead to parents having very high expectation of their children, including expectation regarding the child educational performance.¹³

Another important factor in relation to intergenerational issues is the concern at the rate of acculturation of various family members. Children and young people from migrant backgrounds often acculturate more rapidly than their parents. Given their daily exposure to the host culture and language through school attendance, the potential role reversal as the parents rely on their children's English language proficiency to interpret and negotiate for them in various situations.¹⁴

A further related problem that can arise as a product of migration is cultural difference leading to intergenerational conflict. Young people raised in Australia (either Australian-born or who have migrated when young with their family) frequently reject the traditional cultural values of their parents. This can be a significant source of conflict in some families, and may lead to tense relationships between parents and children and a desire by young people to leave home. Because the children are more exposed to and take on some of the behaviour and attitudes of their peers who are part of the dominant culture, some parents are concerned about their child's loss of cultural identity.¹⁵

Case study I

An Indonesian woman expressed her concern about her 13- year-old son who was becoming rebellious and wanted to do things his way. He wanted to live freely and live the life of the western culture. The mother could not understand her son's

¹³ A Three-way Partnership? Exploring the experience of CLD families in schools (2006) , The Centre for Multicultural Youth issues, Victoria

¹⁴ A Three-way Partnership? Exploring the experience of CLD families in schools (2006) , The Centre for Multicultural Youth issues, Victoria

¹⁵ Francis S, & Cornfoot S. (2007) Multicultural Youth in Australia; Settlement and Transition, Centre for Multicultural Youth issues Victoria; Fred R (2006). 'The Practice of Discipline: the child's right to a Culture vs. The child's right to safety , paper presented at the Multicultural Child safety forum, Logan June 2006;

behaviour and wanted her son to diligently follow the traditional cultural beliefs and values. When IWSA project worker contacted the child, he indicated that his mother was too over protective and that he was not given the freedom to do things and make his own choices. The son expressed that his mother wanted to control his life and was unwilling to understand and accept his wishes.

This reflects the outcome of recent report done by Kids- HelpLine (January 2006) which indicated that the proportion of calls on Kids Help Line received each year were from children and young people of Non- English Speaking Background. According to a research, as many as 43.4% aged between 10 -14 years old reported that there is problem on the relationship between the child and their parents. Conflict and communication problems are concerns among NESB children and their parents. Many NESB children expressed that they were unable to communicate with their parents and that their parents were trying to control their lives in Australia. Further, many children feared that their parents will eventually take control over their lives.

In addition, for some families and those who have been sponsored to migrate to Australia by other family members, they are required to 'respect' and 'listen' to the host or the sponsor-family because they have assisted them to migrate to Australia. Perpetual indebtedness is part of cultural tradition and values.

Case study J

An Afghan refugee woman have expressed her concern and stress over their sponsor friend who gave instructions and pressured her family to obey and listen to them because the sponsored family provided new life by way of sponsoring them to Australia. This behaviour is very common in some cultures because it is a cultural value on paying respect and honor to the family who provided assistance. Her husband is in deep depression due to tension, stress and overwhelming dominance by the host family. They are practically being told how to live their lives, who to talk to and communicate with, where to go and whom their children can be friends with. If they disobey the sponsor- family than they will be given bad name in the community. They will be shamed in the community, because they brought shame onto to their sponsor-family.

The pressures on newly-arrived families as expressed on Case Study J, have negative impact on children of all ages. These children also could suffer from stress and abuse because of pressures from the sponsor-family.

While culture could be seen as excuse for child abuse or neglect, it is important to recognise that approaches to parenting may vary considerably across different cultural groups. As identified by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1998:7) in a study of the settlement experiences of migrants over a three-year period from 1994 to 1997, disciplining children in Australia was of particular concern to some families. As stated by one migrant parent: *“If you touch children they can call the Police. Fathers slap their children across the face because they love them. It hurts fathers to do it but if you take away the fear, you take away respect.”*

Case K

An African refugee family found the whole concept of western culture lifestyle distressing because their teenage daughter was learning and behaving in very western way. The parents could not discipline them nor yell at them because their daughter threatened to report her parents to the police. Parents also have the perception that the child protection law in Australia is very strict for parents living no room to discipline their child.

Recommendation/Actions

- State, local government and community organisations actively engage families from cultural and linguistically diverse communities and dialogue about intergenerational conflict and the legal system in Australia.
- Monitor and reviewing data at a local government area level about culturally and linguistically diverse children and families to identify and respond to possible issues relating to intergenerational conflict and other settlement issues.
- Improved media coverage and other forms of information dissemination regarding information referring to child protection and ensuring information will be used appropriately by schools, community organisations and NESB parents and cares.

5) School experiences

Schools play a very important role in supporting families, children and young people in the community. However, for migrant families, proficiency in English, cultural diversity and differing expectations between schools and migrant communities, can impact on the support that schools feel they could provide. For migrant children and young people, starting school may represent the first opportunity for making new friends and learning new cultural values and practices. For migrant parents, school systems in Australia may be confusing or contrary to their expectations of a proficient education system.¹⁶

At IWSA we have had many families who said that their children were being harassed and bullied at school because they looked different, dress differently and were unable to speak English very well. Many young teenagers were subject to constant harassment and many felt isolated and had no social interactions with students.

Case L

An African refugee family was worried about their teenage child because she was subject bullying and harassed at school because she was unable to speak English and they looked different. The parents took action by lodging a complaint to the school. The school responded and took immediate action. The school began educating students about “bullying” to prevent further bullying at school.

In a recent finding from *Kids Helpline* (2006)¹⁷ of the calls received by the caseworkers school based bullying’ was the 4th biggest concern among NESB children, especially aged 10 to 14 years old.

The finding from the Kids-Helpline (2006) indicated that compared to Anglo- Australian counterparts, NESB children and young people made more calls about bullying and report more severe to frequent incidents and continual harassment (52%).

¹⁶A Three-way Partnership? Exploring the experience of CLD families in schools (2006), The Centre for Multicultural Youth issues, Victoria.

¹⁷ Issues and concerns facing young people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds’ Kids-Helpline 2006.

At IWSA many of the parents expressed their need to better understand the education system in Australia. In particular, parents spoke of the need to understand how they could best support their children in the situation when their child/children are bullied.

Recommendation/Actions

- Implement strategies and guidelines on child protection and promote the well-being of NESB children; and protect vulnerable NESB children at home, school and all public places.
- Provide guidelines to teachers and train them to understand and respond to the needs of NESB at school environment.
- Education system in Australia to prevent and end bullying at school and to educate the children on the effects of bullying on other fellow students and community.
- All school to implement assistance and support to NESB parents, to help them understand the Australian school system.
- School principal and teachers to have regular meeting with NESB parents about their children's situation at school and to immediately address pressing issues and concerns.
- Promote pro-active education strategies on "bullying and other forms harassment at school" and for the government to fund such education program.

References

- 1) Want, Cathy (1996), 'Issues regarding clients from NESB', in *Many Voices, Different Stories*, Conference proceedings, Fairfield Multicultural Family Planning, Liverpool Printing Service, Sydney.
- 2) L. Syngajewski, D. O'Leary, J. Koch, D. Flynn and H. Owens, 'Women Who Are Single and Homeless: Myths and Realities' in *Parity*, May 2007.
- 3) Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007. Submission to FaCSIA on increasing the social housing supply. NESB Housing Taskforce, September 2007.
- 4) Stapp, Y 1998 "Instructor –employer collaboration: A model for technical workplace English", *English for Specific purposes*, 17,2 169-182.
- 5) Pithers, R & Lim, R. 1997, 'NESB in adult vocational education: Breakthrough the barriers', *Journal of Vocational education and Training*, 49, 4, 531-544.
- 6) Janet Taylor, 1998 'Now We Are Six': Changes and Challenges for the 'Life Chances' Children; Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne.
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