REGIONAL AND RURAL MIGRATION IN AND FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION: FAMILY HISTORY

To stand here before you this morning represents a poignant moment in my life. Bendigo is the city of my birth. My parents were married in the nearby Sacred Heart Cathedral, and my birth took place about a kilometre away in a small private hospital no longer in existence. My mother's grandparents and their siblings had selected land for sheep and wheat production in the Elmore-Colbinabbin area, 50 – 60 kilometres north-east of Bendigo, and were part of the huge Irish migration movement to Australia in the 1860s.

In 1968, as a young student, I was the first of my family to make the return trip a hundred years later and, in Ireland, I was able to view a letter written in 1868 from Heathcote telling my great-great-grandparents about Australia. These parents never saw their adult children again nor any of their grandchildren – such were the times when transportation by sailing vessel was long, arduous and expensive and well before the telephone, the mobile and the internet. Migration from Ireland, because Australia was so far away, was always a more thoughtful affair. In the letter, the adult children complained about the Australian heat and the many flies – nothing has changed! As well they were making arrangements for their youngest sister to be sent from oppressed and impoverished Ireland. They also commiserated with their parents who had just been evicted from their farm home by an English family.

To show how the wheel of history turns down along the generations, later this year in November, at the invitation of the Irish government and the Irish bishops, I am giving a series of lectures in Ireland to politicians, government officials and members of the clergy as Ireland thinks about strategies to deal with the many immigrants from places such as Eastern Europe and Africa now flooding into Ireland.

With the end of the Pacific War, my late father, a RAAF navigator, who had grown up on a fruit block outside Mildura near the township of Merbein, resumed his pre-WWII occupation as a primary schoolteacher, teaching at a small rural school in the Mt. Prospect/Blampied area half-way between Daylesford and Creswick. So my family roots are very much in rural Victoria because besides Mt. Prospect we lived at Koorlong (outside Mildura), Myola East (between Heathcote and Elmore) and Tatura. This morning, I want to take a look at the current regional migration initiative based on a quick historical overview.

REGIONAL MIGRATION IN 19th AND 20th CENTURY VICTORIA

In the latter part of the 19th century, the settlement of international immigrants in Victoria was strongly rural. Colonial governments were always hoping immigrants would go 'up country'. Aside from the various gold rushes throughout Australia during the 1850s and 1860s, populating

rural areas outside the major cities has always been an issue. For example, Victoria lost population in the 1870s, gained it in the 1880s and lost it again in the 1890s during Australia's worst Depression (Sherington 2001). Hence, the present government initiatives with its Regional Migration Strategy is yet another turn in the wheel of history.

Of course, we cannot forget 19th century European settlement was to the detriment of the Aborigines, and we need to acknowledge that today we stand on land owned by the Jaara Jaara people who speak the Dja Dja Wrung language, and they are the true explorers, discoverers and settlers of this land. Of course, whereas in the post-WW11 period the essential issue in successful regional settlement has been employment, in the 19th century it was land, one of the major bones of contention between the British Protestants and the Irish Catholics and a major cause of the Ned Kelly incident in north-eastern Victoria (O'Farrell 1987). It was the Irish in particular who, with oppressed and occupied Ireland as a warning and inspiration, prevented the realization of the class-ridden vision of the squattocracy of Australia as the little Britain of the South. (O'Farrell 1987).

The Irish had their zones of ethnic concentration in regional Victoria in places such as Kilmore and Warrnambool/Port Fairy as well as Ballarat and Bendigo but they were more oriented to rural areas in Victoria than in other colonies (O'Farrell 1987; McDonagh 2001). The Cornish with their strong Methodism were prominent in Bendigo and Creswick (Payton 2001). The Welsh were especially concentrated in Ballarat and Sebastapol but also in Dunolly, Maldon and Stawell (Hughes 2001). The Germans, as the largest non-British ethnic group, were concentrated in what have become Melbourne's northern suburbs as well as around Geelong and in the Wimmera as 80 per cent of German families preferred to live in rural areas rather than in Melbourne and there were significant German presences in Ballarat and Bendigo (Tampke 2001). The Swedes had significant presences in Ballarat and Bendigo with a particular Scandinavian presence at Heathcote (Martin 2001). There were small numbers of Croatians around Mooroopna as well as Nagambie, Ballarat and Mildura (Alagich & Kosovich 2001). The Swiss Italians congregated in the Daylesford, Yandoit and Blampied areas and northwards up to Castlemaine and Bendigo and there were Italians around Walhalla. At the turn of the century, Indian hawkers were very active and living in the Corryong area and there were some "Hindoo Indians" working in the Mallee. (Bilimoria & Voigt-Graf 2001). Up until the 1920s, the most multicultural city in Victoria was Ballarat, and Bendigo was not too far behind. Yet, in another irony of history, in contrast to Shepparton, Mildura and the LaTrobe Valley, these two major Victorian cities were not nearly as affected by the post-WWII migration movement.

At the beginning of the 20th century, rural workers were the preferred immigrants, associated with land development and irrigation schemes (Sherington 2001). In Victoria, there was much fraud associated with some of these immigration schemes. "A Royal Commission in 1916 found many cases of misleading advertising and swindle, including a family of 12 who landed with 50 pounds being promised 40 acres and a house, only to be offered 10 acres and a tent" (Sherington 2001: 52). Young British lads aged 15 – 18 were a particular focus: from 1905 – 1918, the Victorian government brought out over 4000 boys for farms.

During World War II, many Italians and German, even if they were Australian citizens, were interned, including at Tatura. Over 17,000 Italian soldiers, prisoners-of-war held at places such as Rushworth, Tatura and Murchison, were brought to Australia – 130 were to die and their bones now rest in the beautiful, sombre but tranquil ossarium beneath its altar at the rear of the Murchison cemetery (Fitzgerald 1981). It bears the gold inscription, *Chi per la patria muor vissuto e assai* (He who has died for the fatherland has lived long enough) and an additional inscription, *This monument was erected by the Italian prisoners-of-war of the concentration camp*

of Rushworth. It is Italo-Australia's most sacred site (Cahill 2004). Receiving the casualties and victims of war is nothing new for rural Victoria.

Originally, the post-WW11 migration initiative, begun at the behest of John Curtin and administrated by Arthur Calwell in the Chifley Labour government (M. Calwell 2001), was initially intended to be 90 per cent British and rurally oriented. Hence, Australia's most important migrant reception centre was rurally located at Bonegilla outside Wodonga which received 370,000 migrants between 1947 and 1971 (Sluga 2001). In the aftermath of the Japanese threat, the catchcry was "populate or perish" which meant "people the rural rather than urban areas". But there were other reasons which have again become relevant, namely a declining birthrate. Immediately after the War, the Australian authorities suddenly discovered that, because the birthrate had declined during the 1930s Depression together and exacerbated by the deaths of service-men and -women killed in battle, there were fewer entering than leaving the workforce at a time when the government wanted to move Australia from its reliance on gold, sheep and wheat and build an industrial and manufacturing base.

Hence, in so many ways the Regional Migration Strategy is a return to history though there are significant differences, especially the direct settlement of refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. This is in no way to denigrate the Strategy because it is a worthwhile project. But it is a challenge full of both possibilities and dangers. As an indulgent aside, I see it as presaging the time when Australia will have to embark upon, at some stage in the 21st century, and sooner rather than later, another and larger project to seriously populate the northern and north-western parts of our ancient continent. There is much more water and it is easier to interface with eastern and western Asia which will become the world's economic powerhouse led by China, now the world's most populous nation, and India, destined sometime in the 2020s to become the world's most populous nation. It will be part of Australia's inevitable destiny: to move from being a European to a Eurasian country, best summarised in the statistic that at the 2001 census Chinese (including both Mandarin and Cantonese) replaced Italian as Australia's second language after English.

THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF REGIONAL MIGRATION IN AUSTRALIA AND VICTORIA

Australia's current population policy is being partly driven by the decline in the birthrate. Since 1960, Australian fertility rates have halved from 3.5 to 1.76 children per female and the average age at which women are bearing their first child has risen from 27 to 30 years (Victorian Government 2004), and they are having fewer children. These trends are unlikely to change. The current policy push to populate regional and rural areas began slowly in 1996 at the initiative of Mr. Ruddock in his address to the Centre for Economic Policy Research (Ruddock 1996). Some have suggested the push should be as high as 45 per cent of the total annual immigrant intake. It has been driven by several other factors: (1) many regional and rural areas were being depopulated, especially as the young moved to the city for post-secondary education and job purposes and for the sheer excitement of the city. (2) because of this depopulation, skill shortages in many occupational areas were beginning to appear (Cully & Goodes 2000) and (3) the relative population pressures upon Sydney in particular (Commonwealth/NSW Working Party on Migration 2003) and the other major metropolises had become very apparent. Regarding Sydney, the NSW government has argued for almost two decades that, hemmed in by the Hawkesbury, the Blue Mountains and Wollongong down the south, Sydney has a population limit of about 5.3 million. Also, the overwhelming majority of Australians want to live near the beach and hence the population pressures all along the east coast.

In its document, *Beyond Five Million: the Victorian Government's Population Policy*, the Victorian Government aims to grow its population to 6 million by 2025 in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner. In provincial Victoria, it aims to see a growth by 2025 from 1.4 million to 1.75 million. This would seem on the surface to be easily achievable but in fact it will be very challenging. Regional and rural Victoria is growing but needs to grow faster to maximise jobs growth and economic opportunities (p.31). During the 1990s, regional growth has averaged at about one per cent whereas during the 1980s it was up to 1.5 per cent each year.

In a demographic analysis of immigrants residing in regional Victoria according to the now very dated 2001 census, the following points can be made:

- For people born overseas, in terms of ratios or concentrations, both English-speaking and non-English-speaking, the top ten LGAs are, in order, Greater Geelong (16.3% of total population), Bass Coast (14.6%), Alpine (14.1%), Macedon Ranges (12.3%), Moorabool (11.9%), Hepburn (11.6%), Murrindindi (11.3%), Golden Plains (10.9%), South Gippsland (10.6%) and Greater Shepparton (10.2%). The five lowest, all in Western Victoria in the sheep and wheat country, are Buloke (3.7%), West Wimmera (4.4%), Gannawara (4.5%) Hindmarsh (4.5%) and Horsham (4.6%).

- For people born overseas in non-English-speaking countries, in terms of ratios or concentrations, the top ten LGAs are, in order, Greater Geelong (9.3%), Greater Shepparton (7.1%), Mildura (6.2%), Wodonga (5.8%), Hepburn (5.5%), Bass Coast (5.3%), Wangaratta (5.2%), Macedon Ranges (5.0%), Moorabool (5.0%), Mitchell (4.7%) and Wellington (4.7%). The lowest five are Moyne (1.1%), West Wimmera, (1.3%), Buloke (1.4%), Northern Grampians (1.5%), Yarrambiack (1.5%) and Southern Grampians (1.8%). In terms of actual numbers, the top five are Greater Geelong, Greater Shepparton, Mildura, Ballarat and Greater Bendigo.

- Across regional Victoria, the ten top birthplace countries are England, Italy, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Philippines and, in tenth place, Greece. In the 47 LGAs across regional Victoria, in 21 the Dutch-born are the most numerous, in 14 the Germany-born and in 12 the Italy-born. However, because of intermarriage and language shift factors, Italian remains the most widely spoken language after English.

- Other noteworthy features is the Filipino presence right across almost all cities, shires and boroughs, extremely heavily weighted towards the females, much more than in Melbourne. Noteworthy are the Turkish presence in Mildura especially and in Shepparton and the Tongan presence along the Murray from Mildura down to Swan Hill. Swan Hill also contains an interesting Vietnamese group as well as its more recent Afghani, Iraq and Sudanese presences. Wodonga has a notable Serbian presence and Delatite a Polish presence though they are still quite small.

- Except for the seemingly ubiquitous South Africans, in 2001 there was no noticeable African presence though the Asian presence in some areas has started to grow with some Chinese and Malaysians.

Because of the strength of the Dutch, German and Italian presences deriving from the 1950s, regional Victoria (median age = 38.2 years) is aging faster than Melbourne (36.2years). The

number of immigrants in regional Victoria will decline quite steeply over the next decade unless counterbalanced by migration. Many smaller Victorian towns will soon not be viable, especially those well away from Melbourne and the major regional centres – there is nothing new about this as there are plenty of places no longer on the map or towns whose heyday has long past. And there is a major problem with population growth in Western Victoria, especially the wheat and sheep areas.

On the other hand, in this new millennium, there are some regional centres experiencing strong population growth, especially Ballarat, Mildura, Warrnambool and Wodonga, all for different reasons. The most important component of regional population growth will be migration from Melbourne, even if such internal migrants continue to work in Melbourne. However, overseas migration can be a smaller but potentially greater source of growth (Victorian Government 2005). As Taylor and Stanovic (2005) in their fine study warn, "Because of the special humanitarian considerations for accepting refugees into Australia, we as a society have a strong obligation to assist their settlement as much as possible. They should not be seen as merely a source of cheap labour" (p. 52).

There are three basic elements to regional and rural overseas migration settlement:

(a) **The Family Reunion element:** this element allows Australians to bring in overseas spouses and relatives. There is a long history to this extending back to the Second World War with the entry of Japanese war brides. More importantly, beginning in the 1970s with the termination of the White Australia policy and the emerging political and economic crisis in the Philippines under President Marcos, many Filipino brides have been entering Australia so that now living across Australia are 35,480 Filipino males (34.5%) and 68,150 Filipino females (65.5%), a ratio of almost 2 to 1 in favour of the females, suggesting that there are about 25 - 30,000 Filipino women married to Australians. Their dispersal follows more or less the general Australian pattern except that there are concentrations of Filipino brides in isolated mining towns (Cahill 1990). Similar intermarriage patterns exist for Thais and, to a lesser extent, for Russian women.

(b) **The Skilled Element:** The issuing of Skilled and Independent Regional visas, based upon employers nominating skill shortages, began slowly in 1996 but government commitment to this element has increased. Since 1996 to 2005-06, about 15,000 such visas have been issued, especially for work situations in South Australia and Queensland. Victoria was slow to take up this element but this has changed very much in recent years. Approximately 1,350 skilled immigrants have come into regional Victoria over the past decade, according to DIAC figures. Across Australia, according to a 2005 DIMA study, the countries of origin of these skilled immigrants have been the English-speaking countries (UK, Canada, USA and NZ) (32%), South Africa/Zimbabwe (23%), and other European countries (13%). The same study suggest that this program has been extremely successful with very close to full employment (82%) for these settlers and with very few having moved from their original place of settlement in regional and rural Australia. Because of these factors and their ability to speak English very well, this group has low welfare needs. An example of this skilled element are the male and female African nurses from countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe in the LaTrobe Valley. However, we need to keep in mind that there is great competition worldwide in 'selecting for success' for professional and skilled workers (Hawthorne 2005).

(c) **The Refugee and Special Humanitarian Element:** For the last decade, the refugee intake has hovered in the 12,000 – 14,000, representing about 10 - 12 per cent of the

overall intake. In 2005 – 06, there were 81,682 applicants for refugee and humanitarian entry, and Australia accepted 14,144 entrants. The push to place refugees in regional areas began in 2001 though, of course, there had been previous initiatives such as the settlement of more than 3000 Iraqi refugees, mainly Shia Muslims, in the Greater Shepparton area - this was of a more spontaneous nature (Madden 2004; Taylor & Stanovic 2005; Monash University 2006). Shepparton is also the new home for Punjabis, Pacific Islanders and Sudanese. Mildura has become the home of Afghanis, Samoans and Tongans. All this activity has recently gathered pace, mainly on the basis of DIMA'a 2003 *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants* which recommended the finding of suitable locations in regional Australia for humanitarian entrants. In recent years, we have seen the relocation of Sudanese refugees in Colac and in Warrnambool (Taylor & Stanovic 2005) as well as in other regional cities such as Castlemaine and Swan Hill. Castlemaine is also settling a group of Burundians. Ten Congolese families were settled in 2005 – 2006 in Shepparton (Piper & Associates 2007), and first Karen family arrived in Ballarat in April 2007. Ten Togolese families from the camps in Ghana are being currently settled in Ballarat. The birth in NSW and the growth of the grassroots movement, *Rural Australians for Refugees*, has played an important role in the process of welcoming and settling refugees and their families. As Eileen Pittaway has written, "Australia has a long history of refugee resettlement and the economic, social and cultural contributions brought by each wave of refugees has now been well recognized" (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Eckert 2006: 5)

LESSONS FROM EARLIER PHASES OF REGIONAL MIGRATION

What are the lessons to be learned from earlier and more recent periods of migration, especially regional migration during the 19th and 20th centuries and in respect of refugees? What does the research evidence say? In a local community wishing to develop and plan a strategy – and planning by a steering committee is absolutely essential, I want to encapsulate those lessons in a series of 15 propositions:

1. **Every migration is a risk, and the settlement of immigrants and refugees in regional areas contains higher levels of risk**: Migration is a risk. Migration is always a risk, individually and collectively. In all immigrant and refugee groups, there is always a small group (0 – 6%) for whom the decision to emigrate ends in disappointment, if not disaster. Expectations may not have been met. The support may not have been enough. Opportunities may not have been available. The spectre of the defeated immigrant haunts all migration movements. They may not have had the psychological resources or the key adaptability attributes to cope such as personal autonomy, observational acuity, flexibility and emotional resilience to cope. The risk is of extreme loneliness, extreme marginalization and loss of control over their own lives as well as the mental health consequences of trauma. And the full consequences of any migration movement can never be fully foreseen no matter how well engineered by governments.

2. **Australia has an enormous capacity for a systematic and well-ordered immigrant and refugee settlement managed locally and nationally and which is admired by the rest of the world:** Emigration to Australia, because of the distance involved, has generally been the result of a careful decision with appropriate preparation even if the immigrant knew, as is often the case, very little about Australia. Despite such aberrations as the White Australian Policy and the mistakes made in the early stages of the Business Migration Program in the early 1980s, Australia has always had the great

capacity to absorb and integrate immigrants and refugees. It has had the capacity to defuse and heal ancient and less ancient hatreds that immigrant groups have brought to this land. It has had the capacity to unite ethnic groups divided by tribal and religious differences though this is never easy. We should thus be optimistic about regional settlement but there will always be disappointments of some moving to the cities. We should also pay tribute to the long experience and commitment of the Department of Immigration (and its various title reiterations) over many decades. In recent years, they have received a bad press – and deservedly so – but we should not underestimating the difficulty of their business of settling people.

3. **Provincial, rural and remote area settlement ought to be framed and strategized within successful regional and local development and be focussed on provincial cities and rural towns where there are skills shortages and appropriate accommodation and services.** During the 1990s after several decades of economic argumentation, it became clear that emigration to Australia has had positive economic benefits for Australia, essentially because emigration creates demand. According to Wooden (1994), we can be confident in asserting (1) immigration does not lead to overall increases in aggregate unemployment (2) immigration has relatively little effect on prices and wages (3) immigration gives rise to increased government revenue which significantly outweigh government expenditure on settlement services (Wooden 1994). It is interesting to note that in the post-War period in Victoria those provincial cities with higher immigrant settlement rates, namely, Geelong, Shepparton, Mildura and, to a lesser extent, Wodonga have grown more in economic and population terms that Ballarat and Bendigo with lower immigrant intakes though for several reasons the LaTrobe Valley is probably an exception. Accordingly, the various recent studies have emphasized that overseas migration should only be considered as part of strategized regional development that is on the way to success and where the possibility for job opportunities is realistic. But Kirsty Madden has suggested, using Tasmania as an example, more carrots will have to be dangled to attract migrants to some regional and rural areas (Madden 2004).

4. **The key issues in regional migration in provincial, rural and remote areas are jobs, accommodation, English language proficiency, appropriate services and community support.** The key to settlement success is, firstly, obtaining a job whose critical factors are length of residence in Australia and English language proficiency with a higher educational level helpful in the process though many well-educated immigrants operate in job positions well below their educational capacity and are forced, in many cases, into setting up a small business such as a fast-food shop. Second is the issue of housing and accommodation, particularly at a time when there is a housing crisis in terms of availability and affordability and when public housing has become less available. The Refugee Council of Australia in its most recent submission to the government has highlighted this issue though it is less of an issue in some regional than urban areas. "When refugees arrive in Australia, it is the responsibility of the IHSS (Integrated Humanitarian Support Service) to find suitable private rental accommodation. The task of finding accommodation for new arrivals is becoming increasingly difficult, occupying a greater proportion of case workers' time" (RCOA 2006: 8). RCOA reports the issues as (i) refugees paying a large proportion of their income on rent with many lacking budgeting skills and some not used to paying rent (ii) refugees signing up to six and 12 month tenancy leases and not appreciating what they are signing (iii) refugees being placed in inappropriate and sometimes sub-standard housing, including in motels and caravan parks and families being split across

different properties (iv) difficulties in filling out application forms, especially for illiterate refugees (v) overcrowding leading to family conflict and, very importantly, (vi) discrimination by landlords and real estate agents, especially if they are Centrelink recipients. In her more recent evaluation of the Congolese settlement in Shepparton, Margaret Piper has interestingly observed, "Most of the Congolese families have been settled in more affluent parts of town, close enough to be able to walk to the others' houses but not immediate proximity. While this happened more by accident than design, it has had advantages. Neighbours have generally been welcoming and raised no significant opposition. Had the entrants been settled in less comfortable areas, their neighbours might have resented the attention and support they received and been less welcoming. Also, had they been located closer together, some in the community might have feared the creation of a ghetto." (Piper & Associates, 2007: 21). Particularly in rural areas, accommodation may be located a long way from the main service infrastructure area without accessible or reliable public transport, increasing the isolation of the refugee household.

5. **English language learning opportunities for both adults and children are essential, to be delivered by teachers skilled in ESL methodology and with volunteer support.** Another key factor is English language learning and its local availability. My maxim is "the sooner the better, full-time rather than part-time" - the quicker English language classes begin after the day of arrival, the better and full-time classes rather than part-time classes. Australia has always had illiterate or lowly schooled immigrants but at a time when higher skills levels in a technologically advanced society are required, unschooled and partly schooled adults and child refugees need the benefit of superior ESL teaching. To its credit, AMES has established centres in 37 cities and towns in regional Victoria though the Refugee Council of Australia in its recent submission for the government based on extensive consultation would suggest that the very specific needs of some refugees, especially the illiterate, are not being addressed. And that childcare needs were sometimes not appropriately addressed in regional settings. In many cases, their AMEP entitlements (510 or 610 teaching hours) were insufficient. The various research studies have been saying the same things for the last 25 years. For regional immigration to be a success, the issues must be addressed with more generous funding. Now that we are receiving refugees from agrarian pastoral backgrounds whose whole lives have been affected by war (e.g. the Sudan has been at war with itself since the late 1950s except for a break in the 1970s), more intense education has to be provided. Refugee children in regional settings do not have access to intensive English centres as their counterparts in the city do. It is an unfortunate fact that since the 1950s the variously named departments of immigration have not cared to properly consider the schooling implications of emigration – they have left it to the state education departments (Cahill 1996). There has not been a thorough nation-wide review of immigrant, refugee and multicultural education since the mid-1990s. Obtaining professionally trained ESL teachers for regional and rural areas is not easy but, working in tandem with the universities, the problem can be overcome. As well, the schools receiving these children need to have good student well-being officers to deal with the psychological issues pertaining to past traumatic experiences, identity issues and experiences of racism which are almost inevitable together with professional back-up support for the more seriously traumatized students and their families. It has also become clear that many of these incoming students will need home tutoring support provided by volunteers. The schooling of immigrant and refugee children is a huge subject in itself but I want to

draw attention to the educational vulnerability of the immigrant and refugee adolescent who usually has not been part of the decision to leave the home country (Cahill 1979).

6. **Whilst refugees are a sub-category within the overall settler category, they have special needs because of the stresses of their refugee experience.** Refugees are, of course, the great nuisances of the world. And they are different to economic migrants such as the skilled because of the circumstances of their flight, the accumulation of stress, the lack of extended family support, their strong sense of the loss of their homeland and, most importantly, their guilt at leaving family (e.g. aging parents) and endangered colleagues behind to suffer their fate. They must undergo a grieving or bereavement process, accepting that their departure may be final and there can be no return. Their sense of irretrievable loss can easily trigger clinical symptoms of grief such as apathy, withdrawal, irritability, undersleeping and oversleeping, and all this is very much compounded if the war situation in their home country is ongoing without any closure. With the new technologies, they are in instant contact with those back home and for some village or town groups e.g. the Iraqis, websites have been established so that their global diasporas can have up-to-date information which usually conflicts with the rosy picture given by the Western media whose correspondents rarely leave Baghdad and who do not speak Arabic. As Farah (2007), a Somali refugee, has written, "Mentally they are in their country of origin". We now know that the longer refugees remain in refugee camps, the greater the likelihood of psychiatric illness then or later on, even in the settler country. The refugees now being accepted have most likely been in 'protracted displacement' situation, often in camps for over 15 years. Many have had no other life experience than in a refugee camp (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Eckert 2006). Hence, it is not surprising that their resettlement needs are more complex. Children and adolescents have grown up in these camps, imbued with a camp mentality that leads to the lack of a moral compass where survival of the fittest was the rule and one survived on one's wits.

7. **Refugee women and their children need to be allocated a special place in any comprehensive strategy.** Refugee camps are very vulnerable places for women as they are also vulnerable when fleeing. They may be raped or forced to provide sex for food, shelter or 'protection'. As was seen in Yugoslavia, rape is a core element of ethnic cleansing. In a camp usually women are in the majority, and 20 per cent may be pregnant, a large number unwanted, because of lack of contraception. In camp and subsequently in the settler country, there can be effects upon reproductive health with urinary tract infections and disturbance of menstruation and breast-feeding patterns, driven by chronic stress, poor food intake and reduced access to health services. Through its Women at Risk program, Australia can be proud of this initiative but some have asked whether such women are at equal risk here in Australia. In her research, Pittaway has shown that if these women can be joined by family members, their health and settlement prospects rose (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Eckert 2006).

8. **The pioneering refugee families play a critical role in laying the foundations for and establishing the growth of an ethnic community in a particular locality.** In all migration movements, especially of the chain immigration type (Price 1963), the role of the pioneers is to lay the community foundation for a continuing presence and growth. The success of the Italian and Greek movements to Australia was built on the presence of small, pre-WWII communities. In 2005 – 2006, this was recognized by the Steering Committee in Shepparton's pilot program to settle 10 Congolese families who

were subsequently given 'an extraordinarily warm and welcoming response" (Piper & Associates 2007). They made a firm stipulation to the immigration department. The Committee insisted that the initial families be (i) intact and not preoccupied with family reunion and tracing relatives (ii) have at least one member, educated, confident and speaking good English (iii) not have complex health or psychological needs (iv) have younger children attending school in order to provide a link into the community (iv) have characteristics that link them into the local community and (v) have relevant employment skills. It was also decided to have a staggered approach without all ten coming at the same time so as the earlier arrivals can also assist the later arrivals with several months between arrival times (Piper & Associates 2007: 13). As well, it would be very helpful for these pioneers to have mentors in the early stages of settlement.

9. **Cultural factors and the refugee experience need to be understood in implementing a strategy and delivering services to refugees and humanitarian entrants.** The heterogeneity of the incoming refugee groups, often from agrarian pastoral backgrounds with languages that were not written down until the 1960s, implies they do not like being referred to as 'African refugees' (Farah 2007). What is also different about the refugee from the different African countries is their British colonial experience, their agrarian pastoral background and only recently literate background and their protracted refugee camp experience. The cultural baggage in terms of values and behaviours towards issues such as time, attitudes to punctuality, the pace of life or in terms of attitudes to schooling or to the police need to be considered. Farah (2007) notes that Horn of Africa men have a fear of any civil authority which in their own countries takes the form of oppressive dictatorships. This authority can be linked to tribal or ethnic loyalties, and this phobia crosses attitudes to all levels of authority, and readiness to participate in consultations and research projects. They are uncertain in information sharing, and decision-making within the community may become problematic. Somali men often refer to "Qam", 16th January 1991 when the entire government system collapsed and families were separated in the chaos – many Somali men have still not recovered from these traumatic events (Farah 2007). They love sport, particularly soccer, but they also love discussing politics with recent events dividing the community. Somalis have a new phrase, *fadhi-ku-dirir*, which roughly means 'the one who fights while sitting' to describe those who sit for hours and hours heatedly discussing politics.

10. **As part of a strategy to create a positive community climate, racism and discrimination must be recognized as a reality in regional areas, especially against visible minorities.** A city or town has to do much preliminary work in order to be welcoming agencies. Community support from the very beginning to assist the refugee and to create a positive community climate is essential, especially in the support of a local settlement committee comprised of the relevant stakeholders, including business. And it has been fully recognized by the IHSS (Integrated Humanitarian Support Scheme) of the immigration department. Racism lies deep in the Australian psyche, and the present individual and institutional problems currently confronting the Sikh community are another reminder. The two key groups to be represented here are the local media and the police. It is impressive how local media have been giving support through good news stories, and the local settlement group needs to have regular publicity for the incoming groups. The Victoria Police through their multicultural liaison officers have been taking a strong set of initiatives and this needs extending to regional areas. Presently, the police are developing their Strategy Plan 2008 – 2013 built around the notions of intelligent policing, confident policing, community policing

and partnership policing. Partnering the police in the settlement task for immigrants and refugees is thus an important element of any overall strategy. And local police do have small amounts of money for worthwhile projects.

11. **In all settlement, given the current climate generated by religiously inspired terrorism, religion and the multifaith issue needs addressing, probably through the formation of a local interfaith council**. One of the good outcomes of 9/11 has been the coming together of the multicultural and interfaith lobbies at a time when there is a resurgence of religion across the world. This has led, especially in Melbourne, of the development of local inter-faith councils, involving religious leaders and other interested lay people. There is the maxim: there cannot be harmony and peace in a society unless there is peace and harmony between the faith communities. It is important to have increased understanding and contact between these communities. In the post 9/11 world, the thickening of interfaith relations is critical. As Osama bin Laden said in the aftermath of Australia's intervention in East Timor and military action in Afghanistan, "As you assassinate, so will you be assassinated; as you kill, so will you be killed". It is important that religious moderation is supported in the contest with religious extremism and the threat to Australia. These local links are necessary to ensure the cooperation of the Muslim and all other faith communities in identifying possible terrorist attacks, and if there were to be a provocative attack, we would need the strength of these links to withstand the inevitable backlash**.** In early December 2009, Melbourne will stage the Parliament of the World's Religions, the world's largest interfaith gathering, in which Melbourne will host 8 – 10,000 visitors who will bring $60 – 70 million into the Victorian economy after winning the bid from Delhi and Singapore. Melbourne won because of our multicultural and interfaith relations. In establishing a local multifaith council, a useful resource, available from the immigration department and from the website of the Australian Multicultural Foundation (www.amf.net.au) in the research folder is *Constructing a Local Multifaith Network* (Cahill & Leahy 2004).

12. **Educational and training opportunities for the immigrants and refugees themselves and for professional and volunteer workers are of paramount importance.** Education and training opportunities are essential because most immigrants and especially refugee adults use such opportunities to transition their skills into the new locality or perhaps even to begin new careers. Almost all migrants have high aspirations for their children, and hence it seems to me that they will not be permanent stayers unless a university campus is nearby. Universities and TAFE colleges will have to be more flexible and there are plenty of signs already. Schools also will have to be supported in dealing with unschooled, partly school and traumatised children. Also, both professionals and volunteers who are assisting the refugees and skilled immigrants will need either new skills or a new orientation to their skills and so there needs to be a strategy for delivering this type of training. Professional and volunteer boundaries need to be recognized. The Shepparton experience highlights the necessity of volunteers, but they need to be very well co-ordinated and well-monitored, and their lack of experience in working with refugees (e.g. asking insensitive questions) addressed. Conflicting advice given to the refugees was a problem and some initiative, though well-intentioned, were not properly planned (Piper and Associates 2007). We must not create "a culture of dependency" and it is not easy developing the balance with needed help (Taylor & Stanovic 2005; Piper & Associates 2007).

13. **The short- and long-term settlement of permanent and temporary needs to be supported by generous and focussed resources from public and private sources.** If this regional strategy is to be successful, the mobilization of personnel and resources is obvious. The two levels of government are committed, but the issue is whether they are committed enough. Funding for rural and regional CSSS grants in 2005 – 06 totally $4.76M, an increase of nearly 80 per cent over the previous year. Interpreting is one area chronically underfunded, and regional migrants usually have to rely on the telephone interpreting service when face-to-face interpreting would be much preferred in some circumstances. There are very difficult issues to be solved in delivering interpreting services to regional Australia, and my RMIT colleagues believe that the solutions may reside more and more in use of the sophisticated technologies such as videoconferencing.

14. **Family reunion and ethnic community consolidation will be part of any short- and medium-term settlement strategy.** The Australian immigration program across many decades has been successful because it has been focussed around family migration and correcting male/female imbalances. In the past two decades, there has been a stepping back from family reunion policy for the possible defendable reason not to allow unskilled migrants having to join the dole queues. For refugees, reunion is essential for very strong psychological reasons, most especially if the country is still at war. Part of this process is the tracing of relatives through the Red Cross. Yet extreme delicacy is required here because the outcome could be to discover the death of a loved one or that the loved one cannot be traced (Piper & Associates 2007).

15. **Strategies, programs and resource material, whether hard copy or e-copy, need to distinguish between internal and international immigrants.** The various Victorian regions are endeavouring to attract new settlers, whether internal migrants from other parts of Australia or international settlers. The published material needs to differentiate the two. It is noteworthy that DIAC has produced information packs on specific locations for overseas migrants. This is also raises the issue of communicating with migrant communities. The power of ethnic radio is to be noted here. Research is very clear that migrants in the early phases of settlement listen to their language program. Also avid listeners over the long term are those who have lowers levels of education and those with lower English proficiency skills. These are the most difficult to reach, and they are most easily reached via ethnic radio.

In conclusion of this overview, I wish to make two final observations:

Firstly, regional Australia is being asked to welcome, accept and integrate skilled migrants, refugees and family members. If this is a major challenge, it is also a major danger. The danger is the creation of a rural refugee underclass, perhaps black, perhaps Muslim (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Eckert 2006). It would be a worry if these refugees were to be a high source of unemployment or if they were employed only in unskilled, dirty work positions. This is why serious government resourcing together with strong business and entrepreneurship support together with community support. This brings up a connected point. The relationships between the local indigenous and ethnic communities needs to be carefully managed within a cultural diversity and interfaith framework. It would seem appropriate that the local Aboriginal elders are consulted when immigrants and refugees are being systematically settled Piper and Associates 2007).

Secondly, we should not underestimate the resilience of refugees nor the creativity of all types of migrants in creating or finding business opportunities. They come as catalysts for change in

which the global is being make local. The spirit should be one of genuine dialogue in the building of trust.

In all population movements, immigrants and refugees in the medium- to long-term have to find their occupational and identity niches. In Melbourne, the Horn-of-Africa men are finding a niche in the taxi industry. It may be working in a particular industry, whether primary or secondary. For the skilled migrant as well as the refugee settling in regional, rural and remote Australia, will their hopes be fulfilled or their dreams be shattered? It depends on them but it depends more on us as we broaden and deepen the great vision of a multicultural Australia.

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