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cc. David Borger
Minister for Housing
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Dear Ms Benedicic,

Response to Draft Housing NSW Multicultural Framework

The creation of a Multicultural Framework for Housing NSW is intended to improve the organisation to provide equitable access to its services. This objective is consistent with the intent of the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda. The creation of the framework is welcomed by the Fairfield Housing Taskforce.

The following comments and observations are offered in the spirit of collaboration, and to raise issues and perspectives on the draft document which may have been overlooked during initial drafting stage.

Purpose of the Framework
It is important to present the Framework at the beginning of the document – as is the case in the current draft on page 1. It would further improve the positioning of the Framework to show the relation of this intent to the broader Social Inclusion Agenda of the Australian Government. This relation is quite straightforward: multicultural policy is a subset of the set of interventions facilitating Social Inclusion.

Use of terms
The explanation of the components of the plan (section 1.2) helps interpretation of the Framework. The introduction of the term `key directions' is not followed up by its further use. Where are the `key directions' in the document?

Definition of processes implementing review of plan
The Government context of the Framework (section 3) could form 1.3 as the purpose of the Framework is to implement the will of Govt. The current section 1.3 could follow, to show how the purpose of the plan is also to articulate an ongoing process of review.

<u>The use of the terms 'new arrivals to NSW through the Humanitarian Program or members of new and emerging communities'</u>
This term might exclude certain groups such as refugees who arrived as asylum seekers and have since been recognised as refugees. To be inclusive, we propose a change to *'new arrivals to NSW who are refugees or have refugee-like experiences and/or members of new and emerging communities'*.

<u>The use of the term 'complex needs'</u>
We seek clearer definition of this term, as in section 2 it appears to be defining all humanitarian entrants as having complex needs, but later on in section 4, it seems to mean something more specific. This **needs to be clarified**, as recognition of complex needs is important for criteria for obtaining priority and targeted housing services.

<u>2.1 NSW POPULATIONS AND TRENDS</u>

Under <u>Diverse</u>: 'in 2005 people born in African countries ...'. We propose that it should specify names of the countries eg including Ethiopia...etc)

A section to be added: <u>Family size and household composition of refugee households</u>

Refugee households are often smaller (ie, lone householders) or larger (6+ members) than the mainstream. According to the census -

Lone person households comprised 25% of Australian households in 2006-07
In the past five years, 28.1% of refugee settlers arrived on their own. 3.1% were in households of 5 or more people (up to 14 members). NSW migrants and refugees were 73.1% lone householders. See attached table backing this information.

A section to be added: <u>Youth and children</u>
The refugees and migrants are much younger than the mainstream. 65.5% of refugees arriving in the past 5 years were under 30, 21% were under 10.

Under <u>Aging</u>:
Individuals from refugee like backgrounds are aging like any other, and do require particular housing to address this. Also due to environmental factors, many individuals from refugee like backgrounds will "age" at a younger age than others. (In Sudan, the healthy life expectancy at birth m/f (years, 2003): 47/50 (World Health Organisation). Migration to Australia is likely to lengthen life expectancy, but not to the extent that the paper assumes).

Under <u>Complex Needs</u>
We propose that one aspect that could be added that the group could be understood in the broader *sense* to be "long-term homeless" as many have been living in refugee camps or left their homes upwards of ten years prior, during which time they have not had stable housing, and this impacts their new tenancies.

<u>Outcome 1 Access to culturally appropriate housing information and assistance</u>

For **strategy 1.3**, (Review the accessibility of Housing NSW <u>written communication</u>, including use of **plain English** in key forms and correspondence to clients) we want to emphasise a good example to follow and so propose for this to be added: *following the **Compact example**.*

For **Strategy 1.4** (Expand types of <u>communication strategies</u> used to assist new arrivals, plus members of new and emerging communities), we want to name **some specific strategy examples** and propose this to be added: *Strategies to include: **forums** for community members, and use of **CDs, DVDs,** and community **radio**.*

We propose an added strategy related to providing housing information in response to a problem caseworkers have voiced (it is unclear what Housing NSW takes into account when determining if an applicant for priority housing can resolve the situation themselves):
Strategy 1.5 Improve <u>publicly available information about the criteria</u> and processes in assessing **eligibility** for Housing NSW services to assist with applications and appeals, and **educate service providers** about these criteria. 2009-2011.

<u>Outcome 2 Housing Assistance is Fair and Responsive to Culturally Diverse clients and communities especially those most in need:</u>

Under What we know (our suggestions and comments for this section):

We feel it is important to **add** in this section a **recognition** that part of the problem of why housing assistance is not adequately responsive to culturally diverse clients and communities in need is there is **not enough assistance/social/affordable housing available** to provide for everybody in need. This means both an **overall increase in supply and better targeting** is needed.

It has also been noted through consultations by Fairfield Housing taskforce that **complex administrative systems** make the application process for services **inaccessible** especially for individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds.

In relation to 'Some individuals....can also suffer the **effects of discrimination**, for example in gaining access to private rental properties or other economic opportunities', the inclusion of this consideration is very good, and this needs **to be included as a factor informing allocation of priority housing** in relation to their ability to resolve their housing situation themselves.

For **Strategy 2.1**, we suggest the following text be **added** to recognise the needs of these groups: '***extending these considerations also to large families (especially in small end emerging communities), young people, people with mental illness and/or disabilities, people released from prison, single parents, and survivors of domestic violence needing long term housing.***'

For **Strategy 2.2** we propose the following text to be **added** for the bullet point 'the application process' to ensure that the recognition of the hardship and difficulties is translated into practice: (***criteria for priority housing to be reviewed to recognise barriers, discrimination*** *and situation the individual/family/community face)*

Further we wish to **commend on 'the use of information to influence the application process, development of housing design guidelines and allocation of housing and tenancy management services**.' We would like to see this elaborated on with **some concrete examples**. Clearer outlines may lead to more certain results beneficial to outcomes for marginalised persons and groups.

Please note the text on **Strategy 2.6 is equal to/less than 2.3**, was there **something** that was going in it extra that was **missing?**

We propose an **additional strategy** in relation to the reality that refugees populations face: **Explore and continue to uptake opportunities to expand appropriate social housing available** to meet the needs and demand of marginalised culturally diverse communities.

Outcome 3 – Clients will be socially and culturally included in housing initiatives and able to participate in community life

Under what we know:

We propose that something be included about how **wider inclusion and participation depends on having housing needs met first**, and through access to needed facilities eg their communities, transport, services, schools, hospitals, etc. We also propose a recognition of the **trend towards high density public housing** as something that **needs to be examined** in relation to this target group and the wider public housing population.

In the Strategies part:

The Fairfield Housing Taskforce notes **public tenants** of the culturally and linguistically diverse community – particularly some of those **of migrant background are reluctant to raise issues** with government agencies. This reluctance, may affect the capacity of members of those groups from putting their case forward. We propose an added strategy to: **encourage the building of given communities capacities to engage in consultations**.

We also propose an **additional strategy**, about consulting communities about the higher density public housing trends: *Consult tenants and **community** members about the trends towards higher density housing, its impacts, and the considerations needed.*

Outcome 4 – Culturally diverse clients with complex needs will be assisted through partnerships with other providers
We propose that an additional strategy to also include the strengthening of Housing NSW's own support services: *Ensure Housing NSW's own support services are accessible (eg HASI); if the criteria is too strict/hard, revise criteria, or if the waiting list is too long, employ additional support staff.*

Outcome 5 – Housing NSW's capacity as a responsive, evidence based organisation will be strengthened
Under What we know:
We propose that to ensure the information collection extends beyond language groups, to add that: *As well as collecting information about the linguistic and cultural background, Housing NSW understands that it is also important to gather other data and research to assist with planning and policy and the meeting of needs. Examples of needs for further research in relation to culturally diverse communities include: larger families, smaller refugee households, single parents, people released from prison,*

appropriateness of high density housing and share accommodation, and the impact of renewable tenancies.

6. Framework implementation:

The Framework puts in place a process providing ongoing (annual) review of the Framework through the creation of annual Multicultural Action Plans. Clarifying these steps further can ensure its effectiveness and the use of active participation of stakeholders in shaping this plan. We propose that Housing NSW actively seeks input and participation from internal and external stakeholders in planning, monitoring and reviewing. This includes direct invitation and public advertisements, through the Housing NSW Multicultural Forum, to include representatives of government, non-government and the communities. Information from the reviews should be publicly available.

We hope you have found these comments useful and we would like to see them debated, implemented and included in the Housing NSW Multicultural Framework. We are available for further consultation and look forward to a strong final framework to guide this important work towards housing security for the multicultural population with emphasis on those individuals and families who are more marginalised and at risk or in situations of housing insecurity or inappropriate housing.

We look forward to your response to our comments, and to working collaboratively,

Yours Sincerely,

Rosie Wong
(for) The Fairfield Housing Taskforce
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Contributors:
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Other organisations supporting Fairfield Housing Taskforce include:
SLASA, St George Community Housing, Hume Community Housing, Bonnyrigg Partnerships, Housing NSW, Vietnamese Women's Association of NSW, Cambodian-Australia Welfare Council of NSW Inc, Timorese Australian Council and Resolve FM. Housing NSW representative abstained from being a party to this report as tabled in the last taskforce meeting.

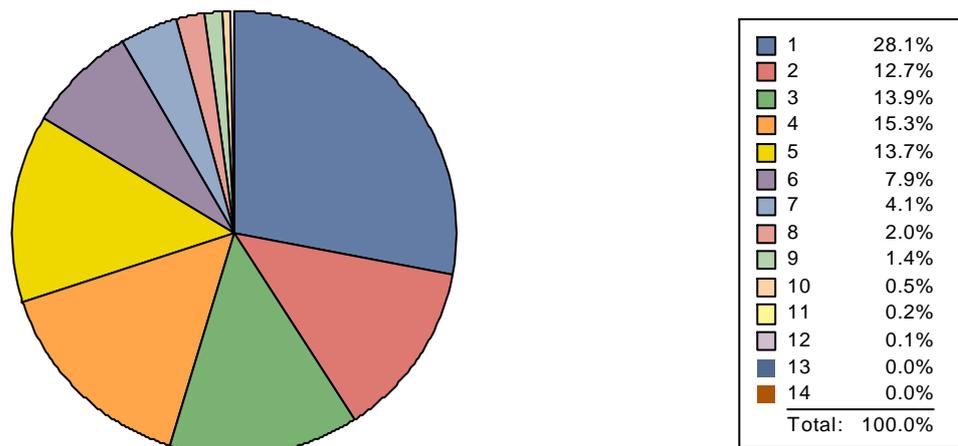# Family Size Distribution for

Migration Stream : Humanitarian - Refugee; Humanitarian - Special Assistance; Humanitarian -
Special Hum Program; Onshore: Humanitarian;
Ethnicity: All Settlers
State / Territory: New South Wales;
Sex : All Settlers
Settlers Arriving from 1 Jul 2004 to 30 Jun 2009

1	28.1%
2	12.7%
3	13.9%
4	15.3%
5	13.7%
6	7.9%
7	4.1%
8	2.0%
9	1.4%
10	0.5%
11	0.2%
12	0.1%
13	0.0%
14	0.0%
Total:	100.0%

Family Size	No. of Families
1	1,400
2	631
3	691
4	764
5	681
6	394
7	206
8	102

9	68
10	25
11	11
12	5
13	2
14	1
Total family size known	4,981
Unknown	0
Total	0