

# ASHRAM

## INTO THE FUTURE WITH THE CONSOLIDATED CALL TO ACTION

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**ASHRAM NETWORK MEMBERS:**

- Acacia Ridge TAASQ Brisbane Outer Southern Suburbs
- ACCESS
- Bilingual Community Assistance
- BRIC Housing
- Communify
- ECCQ
- 4Walls
- Harmony Place
- Housing Workers For Refugees
- Inala Community House, Community Settlement Officer
- IWSS
- MDA
- Mercy Family Services,
- Multicultural Community Centre
- Multilink
- QCOSS
- QPAST
- Romero Centre,
- Refugee Claimants Support Centre
- Southside Community Care
- State-wide Multicultural settlement workers.
- Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network
- Tenants Union Queensland
- Toowoomba Red Cross

## **PREAMBLE:**

In October 2005, the ASHRAM (Agencies Supporting the Housing of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants) Network, a branch of Queensland Shelter, comprising a network of housing providers, tenancy groups and support agencies released a paper entitled “ASHRAM’s Call to Action”. The paper outlined the many challenges faced by refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants when they arrived in Australia, in particular their right to secure affordable and accessible housing. It acknowledged that housing was not the only issue facing newly arrived people, and that other areas also impacted upon their lives and their quest for safe and suitable shelter.

The paper was divided into two parts. The first part focused on the issues faced by people arriving in Australia, and was essentially derived from academic research and writing at that point in time, as well as face to face interviews conducted with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The second part of the paper listed seven strategies with accompanying action plans which the ASHRAM network has used as a basis to work with government departments and agencies (government and non-government) in order to secure and improve housing options for newly arrived people.

The seven strategies were:

- Better Research, Policy Development and Evaluation
- Stronger Advocacy
- Improved Information Sharing and Coordination
- Improved Access to and Supply of Housing
- Better Tenancy Support
- Improved Education and Training and Workers
- Better Language Services

Underneath these strategies were a number of actions which were graded as High, Medium or Low Priority and these were assigned to a range of agencies, Government Departments and the network to action.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for a full table of Strategies and Actions.

December 2008 members of the network met to revisit and refine the Call to Action document by reducing the number of Strategies from seven to four and thus decrease the number of actions. Their goals were partially achieved but it was realised that the amount of time needed to fully revisit the document was far greater than anyone on the Network could realistically give. Queensland Shelter was successfully petitioned for a grant to employ a project person to review and refine the Call to Action document for the network. This document is the result of that project and has been prepared in consultation with a working party formed from Network members. Those members were:

- Andrew Bartlett, ECCQ
- Lorraine Bakon, Acacia Ridge Community House
- Peter Mengede, Queensland Shelter; Later replaced by Kate Langdon
- Wendy Hermann, Tenant Union Queensland

## **VISION, AIMS AND GOALS FOR ASHRAM 2010 – 2012:**

### **The ASHRAM Vision:**

For a culturally sensitive housing sector where people from CALD backgrounds can access all housing services and be treated fairly and with respect.

### **The AIMS of ASHRAM:**

1. Have an active network made up of diverse organisations.
2. Promote collaboration within the Network organisations.
3. Identify issues within the sector.
4. Plan and implement advocacy strategies to address these issues.
5. Empower and support individuals and agencies to advocate for improved and responsive services.

### **The GOALS of ASHRAM:**

#### **1. Improve information sharing between services:**

- I. Update the current ASHRAM directory of services for use by agencies – **Short Term**
- II. Promote the use of the Directory to all Network Members – **Long Term**
- III. List the Directory on the Queensland Shelter Web page with links from ASHRAM members pages – **Medium Term**
- IV. Share information and news of services at each Network Meeting – **Short Term**

#### **2. Identify and Respond to emerging and long standing issues:**

- I. Actively seek or initiate a review of the One Social Housing System, particularly the culturally appropriate housing needs of people from CALD backgrounds when assessed for inclusion on the Housing Register– **Medium Term**
- II. Broaden the delivery of CALD tenancy education to include educational institutions such as High Schools, TAFE and Universities – **Long Term**



- II. Work with Government and Community Agencies to ensure that accurate tenancy and housing support information is supplied to recently arrived people – **Long Term**
- III. Ensure that services who work with higher populations of CALD communities are adequately resourced and trained to do so – **Long Term**

## **CURRENT CALD HOUSING CONTEXT:**

Although this paper has not been researched in the same way as the ‘Call to Action’, the author has consulted with the ASHRAM network members and has spoken directly with Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in the community, as well as people who work closely with them. Reading and analysis of past and current material has also been undertaken to ensure a balanced viewpoint is given.

This section of the paper highlights some of the changes that have occurred since the original was written, some of which can be attributed to the actions contained within the document.

In the last two years there have been some sweeping changes at Federal and State Government level which have impacted upon not only the wider community but also upon refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Some will hopefully, have an effect on housing issues, and others should lead to all people being treated with the dignity and respect which they deserve.

### **a. Abolition of Temporary Protection Visas (TPV’s) and Temporary Humanitarian Visas (THV’s) and Resolution of Status (Subclass 851) Visa:**

On 9 August 2008, TPV’s and a certain number of THV’s granted to people outside Australia were abolished. All people who are now found to engage Australia’s protection obligations receive a permanent protection visa (PPV).<sup>2</sup> TPV and THV holders residing in Australia on 9 August 2008 could apply for a PPV. Former TPV holders were not eligible for access to housing or income support, or State or Federal funded settlement services. The benefit that has flowed from the abolition of TPV’s and THV’s is that PPV holders have full access to housing and income assistance, education and other support services.

### **b. Multicultural Action Plans for all Government Departments:**

Government departments and statutory authorities (such as the Residential Tenancies Authority) are required to have multicultural action plans (MAP’s) to identify key priorities and outcomes. Progress on the

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<sup>2</sup> Fact Sheet 68, Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Available at [http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/68tpv\\_further.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/68tpv_further.htm).

outcomes is to be reported annually, and Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ) is responsible for developing, assisting and overseeing the implementation of these plans. However, whilst this role of monitoring exists and lies with MAQ, the ultimate responsibility for the outcomes presently lies with each individual department. It is important that the MAP's are actively implemented, and routinely scrutinised and monitored by MAQ. A pro-active approach should be taken by MAQ in challenging departments to ensure that solid outcomes are achieved and that the needs of individuals in the CALD community are met.

**c. One Social Housing System:**

The introduction of the "One Social Housing System" last year, by the (then) Department of Housing, has had a significant impact on the housing sector in general. The emphasis on housing those with the greatest needs is one to be commended, however, there have been some negative effects. Many newly arrived people are reporting that their applications are not being accepted, or if they are, they are not considered to be high need. As a result their applications are pushed further down the ladder, resulting in long waiting periods before they receive housing support. The documentation required by the Department is often difficult for people to obtain, and has resulted in increased strain on already overtaxed services. There are often cultural reasons preventing a family from sharing information necessary for their application to be adequately assessed, and this can have a very real impact upon whether their situation is classed as high need or not. There is a need for more proactive support from agencies to assist their clients through this process.

**d. Increased Government Funding for Housing and Homelessness:**

In the last eighteen months the Federal Government has committed many millions of dollars to help combat homelessness and the lack of affordable housing. In Queensland, 4,000 units of social housing and up to 13,000 units of national rental affordable housing scheme stock are to be built. However, it remains to be seen whether CALD Communities will be able to navigate the housing system and access these new initiatives. At this point in time there have been no new initiatives that have identified CALD Communities as a priority for housing.

**e. Funded Projects:**

There have been several excellent funded projects which have focused on educating tenants on how to maintain their tenancies, and build partnerships with the community and service providers.<sup>3</sup> These are all to be commended however they have mostly been short term, for duration of up to six months. What is needed is continued funding that encompasses more than a small section of the community, or comprises more than a series of isolated pilot projects.

**UPDATE OF ISSUES RAISED IN 2005 CALL TO ACTION PAPER:**

· **Affordability**

This continues to be a problem that is unlikely to go away in the short term. Rents have risen sharply in the last two years. Extreme housing shortages as a result of limited housing supply compromised by construction shortfalls, coupled with increases in the population due to birth rate increases and migration, have contributed to the lack of affordable housing available.

· **Sponsors/ proposers overwhelmed with responsibility**

Sponsors retain primary responsibility for supporting the people who they sponsor, which often leads to financial stress and overcrowding, compounding the risk of homelessness for a larger group, while compromising relations with realtors. Furthermore, it is often more difficult for these people to access the same information and support services from housing and support agencies.

· **Unsuitable women's refuges**

Applications to have secondary visa holders escaping domestic violence residency status reviewed often take longer than the 13 weeks of tenure available in SAAP properties. Service providers face difficulties in housing clients with indeterminate residency, and no income or access to social housing. Anecdotal evidence showed some legal services had referred CALD women to domestic violence shelters in South East Queensland to

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2 for a list of the 2009 Projects.

provide better access to local legal aid offices. As a result beds are being taken up by women from CALD communities resulting in limited space for women escaping domestic violence. Furthermore, women from CALD communities are more likely to bring with them a greater number of children, and restrictions on male children over certain ages being allowed in some shelters poses a problem for women with older sons.

- **Short term and long term housing providers cannot meet the need**

In 2008 Department of Housing (as it was then known) introduced the One Social Housing System (OSHS) and Central Intake A Process (CIAP) which resulted in the waiting lists being changed to give priority for housing to those most in need. Since the introduction of CIAP there has been some changes take place, including the abolition of forms, and all intakes to the register being done via an interview process. The majority of housing providers are not accepting clients who are not on the housing register and many have had their head lease properties reduced due to the rise in the costs of rents.

- **No access to existing emergency housing services**

The lack of adequate emergency housing existing within some suburbs is a major problem for many people. In suburbs where there exists no or extremely limited emergency housing people are being forced away from their communities and support services. The concern which stems from this is that this makes it increasingly difficult for CALD clients to have their needs adequately met. It is unlikely that there will be new crisis accommodation built, as housing and homelessness services have indicated a preference for programs which develop clients' independence, rather than funding more crisis or short term accommodation responses. Therefore, applicants and support workers need to be better equipped in order to navigate the social housing system and private rental sector.

- **Inadequate housing for large families**

This is an ongoing issue with larger homes being in short supply in both social housing and the private market. Families are still being asked to split up and live in separate dwellings. This shows a lack of understanding of the housing needs within a cultural context by the OSHS. In many CALD communities young men and women remain at home until marriage. Allocations to large houses built through the economic stimulus

package national building jobs plan could ease these problems, as could changes in societal attitudes towards overcrowding in CALD communities accommodation. However, there is a concern that many of the properties will be built away from support services and the strong cultural ties which families and individuals have managed to make with the community may be lost. Education is vital in CALD communities to ensure they are aware of new subsidised rental products, and be given adequate assistance in accessing them when required.

- **Decreasing pool of public housing and increasing need**

Changes to the intake system have resulted in some changes to the waiting times with those classified as high need being housed much sooner. Housing and Homelessness services no longer operate a system based on wait turn applications. The client intake and assessment process (CIAP) prioritises applications based on five categories of client need; very high, high, moderate, low, and applicants eligible for other rental products such as the National Affordable Rental Scheme, bond loans, and Rent Connect. People with lower needs are still subject to significant wait periods (exact times remain to be seen). It also remains to be seen what affect the 4,000 units of social housing and up to 13,000 units of National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties for lower needs tenants will have. Anecdotal evidence suggests that clients with skilled support workers and networks are better able to successfully negotiate the housing system. There is a lack of culturally appropriate support, education, and advocacy workers for CALD communities. As stated earlier, the Department has reduced the number of head-leased properties as rental costs increase, which in turn, has reduced housing options for CALD communities.

- **No government response to homelessness**

There has been a response to this issue at both the Federal and State levels. The Australian Government's "The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness" (the White Paper) sets a new strategic approach to combating homelessness. It identifies a number of key strategies such as prevention, improved and expanded services to achieve sustainable and affordable housing, and ensuring that people who experience homelessness are moved quickly into stable housing with full access to the support services they require. The initiative "A Place to Call Home" addresses the issue of homelessness through funding the cost of

building new accommodation, renovating existing houses, ensuring that long term and affordable housing options are available, all coupled with an aim to break the cycle of homelessness. However, the concern remains that CALD communities have not been identified as a high priority risk group in the White Paper. Their differing housing and support service needs have unfortunately not been identified in any of the initiatives on homelessness.

- **Inadequate settlement support and access to paid advocates**

This is an ongoing issue for many people and it does seem to vary from service to service. There is a need for settlement services to be working closer with generalist housing and support services to ensure that their clients do not exit their six month settlement period into homelessness.

A secondary issue is the belief that a house would be provided for them by the Government with many CALD clients stating that they were told this whilst in refugee camps overseas. This misconception is further reinforced when at first instance they receive six months housing through the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS).

- **New Arrivals don't understand tenancy rights and responsibilities**

Lack of understanding of tenancy rights and responsibilities is an ongoing issue in CALD communities. A number of recent projects have sought to address this issue although they are often short term, and usually area specific. Community members have reported that often excessive general information is given along with tenancy advice soon after arrival. As a result they are often unable to retain all the information they are given and separate the essential advice from the more general information. Tenancy education should be delivered at intervals across the settlement period. There is scope for the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service Queensland (TAASQ) to play a role in tenancy education at all points of the continuum.

- **Difficulties in meeting requirements of private rental system**

Most CALD communities have to rely on the private rental system and face huge barriers, both culturally and linguistically, in accessing the system. When filling out applications for private housing, difficulties immediately arise as these forms require them to list the contact details of two referees who have known them for at least two years. These difficulties coupled with language, cultural and access barriers are a

hindrance for CALD communities seeking affordable and accessible accommodation which adequately meets their individual needs. There is a lack of knowledge and understanding by both clients and some settlement services about how to overcome these barriers. Discrimination is another hindrance to access to housing. There is a need for ongoing tenancy advice and support to be extended beyond the initial six month period of housing provision. Whilst this is in some cases happening, it is yet to be extensively implemented.

- **Language and cultural barriers to reading and understanding income support, housing options and family/parent support**

The introduction of Multicultural Action Plans in each government department has resulted in a marginal improvement for CALD communities in accessing housing in the private sector. However, there remains an ongoing resistance to using interpreters as it extends the length of time of the interview process. Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services (TAAS) workers now have access to a free interpreting service, however disappointingly, it seems to be underutilised and not widely known about.

#### **NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES FROM THE ASHRAM CONSULTATION 2009:**

- **Accurate Information for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants**

Many workers and clients expressed a need for this. Information must be accurate and up to date. A number of refugees and asylum seekers were advised that they would be given a house by the Government on arrival in Australia. When given housing for a period of six months through the IHSS, the perception that they will continue to be given housing is further reinforced. At the conclusion of this six month period, it is not uncommon for these clients to still be searching for secure employment. As a result, most face numerous barriers and disadvantages when forced to negotiate the private rental market. Even in situations where CALD communities are given accurate and important information, it is often delivered all at once on arrival making it difficult for people to remember everything.

- **Information and Networking for Agencies and Workers**

At the ECCQ/TUQ forum people raised the issue of a referral system and the need to know who and where to refer clients to. The ASHRAM

directory has been updated and will be of assistance in regards to this issue. A closer connection with Darling Downs and Sunshine Coast networks and regional multicultural workers would assist in widening the scope.

- **Cultural Awareness Competency**

There continues to be a significant rise in the number of people from different cultures that are entering Australia, and a large number of people do not know what is appropriate when dealing with CALD clients. There are not enough cultural partners available, people who have been trained to assist members from their own cultures to navigate the system, and to work alongside support agencies and housing services. There is also a need for assistance and education services regarding the Australian culture for newly arrived people, as many CALD clients have reported struggling with adjusting in our society where they face cultural barriers.

- **Clients Who Fall Outside the Criteria for Tenancy Advice**

This issue was raised at the forum by agencies and case workers that a need exists for community education for men, young people (aged 15 – 25) and overseas students (who number in the thousands).

There also seems to be a lack of understanding in this group that even though may not eligible for support, or access to the housing register they are, in fact, eligible for Tenancy Advice and support through the TAAS system. The only criteria to access that service is the need to be a tenant.

**Lack of support and services to some clients**

Secondary visa holders escaping domestic violence, Pacific Islanders, 457 visa holders, New Zealand residents, and refugees who enter with a New Zealand passport, along with skilled entry visa holders affected by the economic downturn, all face difficulties in accessing services. The majority are not entitled to State or Federal assistance, and receive no income support except family support (if they have one). This means that they have no access to Social housing, or the right to apply for inclusion on the housing register. This issue was raised at the forum by agencies and case workers that a need exists for community education for men, young people (aged 15 – 25) and overseas students (who number in the thousands).

- **Access and Equity to TAAS Workers as well as Wider Advertising of their Services**

At the recent ECCQ/TUQ forum it was reported that a newly arrived person was informed by their case worker that they were not allowed to seek assistance from a TAAS worker. In many cases CALD clients do not seek assistance as they are either under the impression that TAAS is not for migrants, or they do not know of the existence of these workers. In actual fact, many TAAS workers have a large proportion of CALD community members as clients. There is a need for wider advertising of the services available to CALD clients by the TAAS.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Although there have been some significant improvements in access to housing for the CALD community, it is apparent that much remains to be achieved. The 2005 “Call to Action” paper contained seven strategies and numerous actions, and some of the recent changes which have occurred can be attributed to these. However, there were too many for the Network to realistically achieve. This document has sought to highlight the remaining issues and shortfalls and to then suggest a simpler method for achieving change that will allow the Network to achieve success over a continuing period.

In the section “Vision, Aims and Goals”, the Network has defined its vision and replacing actions, are short, medium and long term goals. These goals should be reviewed every two years, with those successfully achieved removed from the table, and others rearranged and new ones inserted. The aim of this is to revitalise the Network and move it forward in an energised and organic way so that it can continue to advocate for change and resolve housing issues faced by Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants.

There is no doubt that the ASHRAM Network is made up of highly committed people and agencies who are passionate about the rights of newly arrived people access to suitable, affordable and sustainable housing and the need for there to be change within the Government and private housing markets. However, there is sometimes a lack of consensus as to how change will be achieved, the larger Call to Action document with its many strategies and actions made it difficult to reach agreement. It is to be hoped that this smaller, tighter document with the Vision and Aims stated clearly and the reduction in goals will assist the network to move forward and advocate for change on behalf of the many newly arrived people who have no voice of their own.

Housing is a human right



Housing is a human right



**TABLE OF GOALS:**

<b>GOAL:</b>	<b>SHORT TERM</b>	<b>MEDIUM TERM</b>	<b>LONGTERM</b>
<b>Improve information sharing between services:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. Update the current ASHRAM directory of services for use by agencies</li><li>. Share information and news of services at each Network Meeting</li></ul>	List the Directory on the Queensland Shelter Web page with links from ASHRAM members pages	Promote the use of the Directory to all Network Members

Housing is a human right



<b>Identify and Respond to emerging and long standing issues:</b>	Hold a special interest meeting over a lunch twice a year with a guest speaker	Actively seek or initiate a review of the One Social Housing System particularly the culturally appropriate housing needs of people from CALD backgrounds when assessed for inclusion on the Housing Register	. Broaden the delivery of CALD tenancy education to include educational institutions –High Schools, TAFE’s and Universities . Lobby Government for long-term funding for Queensland wide programs to address the particular housing needs of the CALD Community
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<p><b>Ensure people from CALD backgrounds have access to timely, accurate and up to date information:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. Invite a representative from DIAC to attend ASHRAM Meetings regularly</li><li>. Invite participation of a representative from MAQ to attend Network meetings</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. Recognise and promote best practice tenancy support and information services</li><li>. Work with DIAC (Department of Immigration and Citizenship) to ensure information provided to people prior to and upon entering the Country is accurate</li><li>. Work with Government and Community Agencies to ensure that accurate tenancy and housing support information is supplied to recently arrived people</li></ul>
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Housing is a human right



<p><b>Promote Culturally responsive Services:</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. Initiate the use of cultural competency training for newly arrived peoples to enable them to understand Australian culture</li><li>. Develop and conduct innovative ways to encourage the Real Estate Institute to become more culturally responsive</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. Encourage MAQ to monitor Government Department Multicultural Action Plans to ensure that they remain Culturally responsive</li><li>.Support and encourage regular Cross Cultural Competency training for all housing services</li></ul>
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Housing is a human right



<p><b>Encourage and support systemic and individual advocacy:</b></p>		<p>Actively promote pooling of funding to employ full-time cross cultural partners for the Housing Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. Work with Government and Community Agencies to ensure that accurate tenancy and housing support information is supplied to recently arrived people</li><li>. Ensure that services who work with higher populations of CALD communities are adequately resourced and trained to do so</li></ul>
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**APPENDIX ONE:**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>By</b>	
<p><b>1 Policy, Research and Evaluation</b></p>			
<p>1.1 Change a range of policies that will allow fairer housing options for refugees on temporary protection visas, asylum seekers on bridging visas, and migrants on low income to proactively access government services.</p> <p><b><u>Issues being Addressed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited or no access to public and community housing.</li> </ul>	<p>a) Seek flexibility in government policy so that asylum seekers (refugees claimants on bridging visas) have improved rights to access Department of Housing products, especially on public housing waiting lists, but also products like bond loans and rental grants. <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	<p>DoH</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Culturally insensitive practices</li> </ul>	<p>a) Review government and Social Housing Providers (SHP's) procedures so they are culturally appropriate for applicants who apply for social housing. This could include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitivity to gender roles;</li> <li>• Appropriate language and use of interpreters</li> <li>• Concept of time; and</li> <li>• comfort in closed offices.</li> </ul> <p><b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	DoH & SHP's	
	<p>a) Seek relaxation of regulations to allow social housing providers to purchase their own stock and therefore respond more flexibly to the needs of no income or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.</p> <p>b) <b>(High Priority)</b></p>	DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Identify and assist those who are most marginalised, in particular asylum seekers and refugees who have no income to access SAAP support through SHPs.</p> <p>b) <b>(High Priority)</b></p>	DoC	
	<p>a) Develop a cultural protocols project targeting front line housing workers, specifically DoH area office staff, DoH general staff and staff of social housing providers and new and emerging communities.</p> <p>b) <b>(High Priority)</b></p>	DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Increase flexibility in relation to a broad range of policies and service products to fit more harmoniously with specific cultural preferences and needs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger size accommodation including high numbers of bedrooms for large families;</li> <li>• Dwellings close to support infrastructure that will offer security and comfort; and</li> <li>• Preference for dwellings built in a particular style or planning, for example some cultures prefer brick to wooden dwellings.</li> </ul> <p><b>(Medium Priority)</b></p>	DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Introduce a policy that service agreements between government agencies and SHP's include a range of strategies with performance indicators reflecting appropriate cross-cultural competencies.</p> <p>b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b></p>	DoH & DoC	
<p>1.2 Improve research and data collection in relation to no or low income refugee, asylum seeker and new migrant communities.</p>	<p>a) Improve data collection on the demand for, and access to social housing assistance for people who are no or low income refugees, asylum seekers or migrants.</p> <p>b) <b>(High Priority)</b></p>	DoH & BCC	
	<p>a) Improve data collection on CALD requests and clients of DoH. (If "New Directions" includes targeting priority groups of refugees and migrants, we will know that they are being effectively serviced.)</p> <p>b) <b>(High Priority)</b></p>	DoH	



Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Undertake meaningful consultation for the development and review of yearly multicultural action plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Consultation should be well resourced and cover interpreters and child care.</li> <li>· Consultation should have a realistic time frame and include focus groups, meetings and input into draft plans.</li> </ul> <p><b>(High priority)</b></p>	<p>DoH, DoC, ASHRAM &amp; ethnic communities (linked to a large range of actions and strategies)</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Improve research relating to basic tenancy rights for people who are no or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties in successfully applying for rental properties;</li> <li>• Difficulties encountered in bond retrieval processes;</li> <li>• The lack of housing to accommodate families of eight or more people;</li> <li>• Insecurity of tenure in relation to occupation of a rental home; and</li> <li>• Lessees' rights to privacy in relation to their occupation of a rental home.</li> </ul> <p><b>(High Priority)</b></p>	DoH & RTA	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Research and develop vacant property register including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surplus government properties; and</li> <li>• Medium and long term unused private residential properties</li> </ul> <b>(High Priority)</b>	DoH, BCC & Qld local gov.	
	a) Identify new areas for research in consultation with the multicultural sector. b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b>	DoH	
1.3 Evaluate outcomes of new strategies to determine appropriate program improvements.	a) Evaluate how effectiveness of housing supports and services, including settlement services, state agencies, community housing providers and volunteers meet the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. <b>(Very High Priority)</b>	DIMIA & DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Provide funding and a specific budget to resource the evaluation of outcomes of all new strategies and actions related to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. b) <b>(High Priority)</b>	DoH, DoC, BCC (linked to all strategies and actions)	
<b>2. Advocacy</b>			
2.1 Develop effective mechanisms for the ongoing advocacy of housing and support services for refugees, asylum seekers and low income migrants.  <u>Issues being Addressed</u>	a) Advocate on behalf of refugee claimants to ensure they have access to essential social services and the right to work throughout the protection visa application process. b) <b>(Very High Priority)</b>	State Gov. & BCC, QCOSS	

Strategy	Actions	By	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited or no access to public and community housing.</li> <li>• Culturally insensitive practices</li> <li>• Perceived discrimination in community housing sector</li> </ul>	<p>a) Fund a peak body to employ a full-time dedicated Multicultural Housing Coordinator position within ASHRAM to have a broad coordination and advocacy role. Initially the position could assist the DoH and DoC to coordinate inclusion in and implementation of these strategies in their department's multicultural action plans</p> <p>b) <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	<p>DoH, MAQ</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Support ASHRAM members to coordinate and advocate to all supported accommodation program agencies in Brisbane regarding the needs of no income and low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. (This could be part of the Multicultural Housing Coordinator's role) <b>(High Priority)</b></p> <p><i>(There is a precedent set by Kyabra, Gateway community group and Anglican Women's Hostel who provide accommodation to no-income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants under a policy to keep some part of stock aside for the most disenfranchised community.)</i></p>	DoH & DoC	



Strategy	Actions	By	
<p>1.2 Address discrimination against the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants when accessing the private rental market.</p> <p><b><u>Issues being Addressed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination in private rental market</li> <li>• Lack of affordable, suitable accommodation in private rental market</li> </ul>	<p>a) Bring together in meetings or forums, stakeholders including RTA, DoH, ASHRAM and the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ) to determine how best to address discrimination of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the private rental market.</p> <p><b>b) (Very High Priority)</b></p>	<p>RTA, DoH, MAQ REIQ</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
<p>1.1 Individual migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities to be engaged with directly and in a sensitive way by government agencies and given a meaningful role in exploring more culturally appropriate ways in which their housing and support needs can be meet.</p>	<p>(This strategy is viewed as a <b>Very High Priority</b>, there are no specific actions at this stage, a dialogue needs to be established between ASHRAM, community leaders and government agencies to determine appropriate actions. This could be coordinated by the proposed Multicultural Housing Coordinator.)</p>	<p>DoH, DoC, RTA, MAQ, BCC &amp; ASHRAM</p>	
<p><b>3. Information and Coordination</b></p>			
<p>1.1 Improve service coordination, networking and information sharing between all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p><b><u>Issues being Addressed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited or no access to public and community housing.</li> <li>• Lower satisfaction rates with social housing – client servicing, maintenance / repairs</li> </ul>	<p>a) DoH area offices' staff to communicate effectively with all settlement support services and groups including volunteers, proposers, church groups, Romero Centre as well as MDA, Multilink etc to ensure they know how and when people can put their names on waiting lists.</p> <p><b>b) (High Priority)</b></p> <p>c)</p>	<p>ASHRAM &amp; DoH</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Lack of affordable, suitable accommodation in private rental market</li> <li>· Lack of awareness of housing assistance service / products</li> </ul>	<p>a) Ensure DoH staff and wider sector are aware that TPV holders are eligible for public housing (they have been since 2000).</p> <p><b>b) (High Priority)</b></p>	DoH	
	<p>a) Coordinate with services, such as MDA and MATCH, who are offering settlement information to provide relevant housing information as new refugee, asylum seeker and migrant families arrive. (This could be assisted by the Multicultural Housing Coordinator's position)</p> <p><b>b) (High priority)</b></p>	ASHRAM & DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Assist relevant DoH area managers to develop refugee, asylum seeker and migrant based local housing networks with a focus on identifying and responding to their housing needs. (This could be assisted by the Multicultural Housing Coordinator's position) b) <b>(High priority)</b>	DoH and DoC	
	a) Work with the sector, particularly ECCQ, ASHRAM network, Centrelink and DIMIA, to promote departmental housing assistance services and products across sector. b) <b>(Medium priority)</b>	DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Promote ASHRAM activities relating to settlement, housing and welfare services across the government. A specific action could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising a joint workshop including DoH , DoC and community housing providers focused on better understanding their needs, and improving service delivery to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.</li> <li>• <b>(Medium priority)</b></li> </ul>	ASHRAM	
	<p>a) Sponsor state-wide focus groups to discuss strategies in <i>Call to Action</i> document and identify opportunities for collaboratively implementing strategies and actions. (This could be assisted by the Multicultural Housing Coordinator position)</p> <p>b) <b>(Medium priority)</b></p>	DoC, DoH & SHP's	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Ensure multicultural information on the RTA website can be easily accessed from the homepage. b) <b>(Medium priority)</b>	DoH	
	a) Redesign tenancy forms to include information on obtaining interpreter assistance and on where to get assistance in completing the forms. b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b>	RTA	
	a) Re-examine the structure of the community education grants scheme to make it more accessible by people who are no or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants . b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b>	RTA	
<b>4</b>	<b>Access and Supply</b>		

Strategy	Actions	By	
4.1 Improve access to community and public sector housing for no income or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.	a) Facilitate better and increased access to public housing and public housing waiting lists. b) <b>(High priority)</b>	DoH	
<p><b><u>Issues being Addressed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited or no access to public and community housing.</li> <li>• Insufficient suitable social housing dwellings</li> <li>• Perceived discrimination in community housing sector</li> </ul>	a) Increase access to Community Rental Scheme housing for low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, especially with large families. b) <b>(High priority)</b>	DoH	
	a) Refugee support networks and their partners to have fair access to surplus government owned properties for use by refugees and asylum seekers and managed by community groups. b) <b>(High Priority)</b>	DoH, ASHRAM & Q Gov.	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Increase supply of Brisbane Housing Company housing for low income refugees asylum seekers and migrants especially for large families, or identify and appropriate action.</p> <p>b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b></p>	BHC, BCC & DoH	
	<p>a) Keep designated social housing providers stock, or guaranteed access, for no-income and low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.</p> <p>b) <b>(Medium priority)</b></p> <p>c) <i>(There is a precedent set by the Better Housing program that has designated a property in Cordelia street for single men who have been on or are still on Temporary protection visas)</i></p>	SHP's	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Improve access to accommodation in the boarding house program for no income or low income single adult refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. b) <b>(Low priority)</b>	DoH	
1.2 Improve access to accommodation in the private market, for no income or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants  <u><b>Issues being Addressed</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination in private rental market</li> <li>• Lack of affordable, suitable accommodation in private rental market</li> </ul>	a) Community project leaders and RTA to review and coordinate area specific projects that promote better access to the private rental market by real estate agents by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cross cultural awareness raising</li> <li>• better promotion of tenancy rights and responsibilities.</li> </ul> <b>(High priority)</b>	RTA	

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Strategy	Actions	By	
1.1 Increase supply of accommodation in the private market, community and public sector for no or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.	a) Facilitate an increase in the supply of large dwellings, with a high number of bedrooms for large families who are no or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. <b>(High priority)</b>	DoH & SHP's	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) <b>“Opening Closed Doors” Project</b> This is a project application currently in development. It has two aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To expand the supply of housing by collaborating with local government, non-government organisations and the private sector to identify new accommodation options and increase the supply of affordable housing to this client group. This is an expansion of a successful project run by Redhill Community Centre.</li> <li>· To create a viable and sustainable property management and tenancy support process for the new accommodation options found by using refugee volunteer groups to support tenants and community housing</li> </ul>	<p>BCC, ASHRAM, SHP's &amp; DoH</p>	

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Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Develop and support refugee and migrant support volunteer groups to source various forms of accommodation in their local communities, including spare rooms, granny flats and houses or other accommodation not being used. <b>(High Priority)</b>	ASHRAM, refugee advocate groups, BCC and SE Qld local gov	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· a 'combined churches' response that leads to increased housing supply for refugees and asylum seekers (particularly refugee claimants).</li> <li>· a 'corporate citizenship' response that leads to increased housing supply for asylum seekers and refugees.</li> </ul> <p><b>For example:</b> Private sector properties could be brokered through council processes such as the Community Housing Partnerships Program. (This response be explored with industry groups such as the UDIA, REIQ and HIA) <b>(Medium Priority)</b></p>	<p>DoH, BCC &amp; local gov, UDIA, REIQ and HIA</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
<b>5. Support</b>			
<p>5.1 Improve support mechanisms for high need clients who are no or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, especially those that have mental or physical health issues related to torture and trauma.</p> <p><b><u>Issues being Addressed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand on support workers is too high</li> <li>• Lower satisfaction rates with social housing – client servicing, maintenance / repairs</li> <li>• Perceived discrimination in community housing sector</li> <li>• Culturally insensitive practices</li> </ul>	<p>a) Increase budget allocations to increase the number of TAASQ workers so they can spend sufficient time supporting no or low income refugee, asylum seeker and migrant tenants.</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c) Have bilingual TAAS workers outreach to venues that welcome refugees, for example Inala Community House or the Romero Centre.</p> <p>d) <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	DoH	
	<p>a) Ensure asylum seekers have income support throughout the Protection Visa process.</p> <p>b) <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	DIMIA, Australian Red Cross, Centrelink,	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Work with SHP's to improve service delivery and tenancy support arrangements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ develop and implement access and equity policies;</li> <li>▪ report against indicators on access;</li> <li>▪ report against improved service delivery; and</li> <li>▪ report against satisfaction levels</li> </ul> <p><b>(Medium Priority)</b></p>	DoH, DoC & SHP's	
<p>1.2 Develop sustainable long term property management, volunteer and tenant support mechanisms to new accommodation supplied by alternative procurement methods to the traditional public and community housing sectors.</p>	<p>a) Provide funding to support property management by community housing providers of new accommodation options. Eg the <i>“Opening Closed Doors”</i> project.</p> <p>b) <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	DoH	

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Strategy	Actions	By	
<p><b><u>Issues being Addressed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Demand on support workers is too high</li></ul>	<p>a) Provide targeted SAAP funding to community housing providers for no or low income refugees, asylum seekers and migrants being accommodating in new accommodation options. <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p>	<p>DoC</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Facilitate workshops with volunteers to provide resources and info regarding supporting refugees around tenancy rights and responsibilities. The <b>ASHRAM</b> Project funded by RTA for October-December 2005. The target group are refugee support group volunteers. <b>(Very High Priority)</b></p> <p><i>(This project is likely to have future implications for the DoH and DoC as it will present issues relating to property management, tenancy support and legal liabilities which are currently being handled by the volunteer groups, this is problematic and probably unsustainable without professional support. )</i></p>	<p>ASHRAM &amp; RTA DoH &amp; DoC</p>	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Support sustainable community placement options as essential components for responding to housing needs of refugee claimants. b) <b>(High Priority)</b>	BCC & other Local Gov	
<b>6.0 Education</b>			
1.01 Develop a framework for sustaining and continually improving housing workers' cross-cultural awareness.  <u>Issues being Addressed</u>	a) Support DoH cultural awareness activities with a specific budget and increased funding. b) <b>(Very High Priority)</b>	DoH	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Culturally insensitive practices</li> </ul>	a) Make sure DoH staff are aware of ASHRAM directory and provide training if required. b) <b>(Very High Priority)</b>	DoH	

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Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Provide or fund effective cross cultural awareness training for management and workers of funded agencies that provide services to emerging no or low income refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities.</p> <p><b>b) (High Priority)</b></p>	DoH & SHP's	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	<p>a) Increase informal and formal training opportunities for Department of Housing staff and leaders of new culturally and linguistically diverse communities, so that there is better understanding of the cultural practices of specific communities by DoH staff, and a better understanding by community leaders of DoH practices. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area and policy managers to provide regular invitation to relevant CALD community leaders to talk at staff meetings.</li> <li>• Area managers to invite CALD community leaders to be part of the new CALD based local housing networks.</li> <li>• Provide staff with specific training on cultural protocols of specific new refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>(Medium Priority)</b></p>	DoH	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Encourage participation in cross cultural awareness activities, for example participation in UN Day to Eliminate Racism, Harmony Day, and World Refugee Day. b) <b>(Low Priority)</b>	DoH & DoC	
<b>7.0 Language</b>			
7.1 Review and update language translation services and materials on an ongoing basis to ensure that being a English 2 <sup>nd</sup> language speaker is not a barrier to accessing appropriate affordable housing.  <u><b>Issues being Addressed</b></u>	a) Review usage of interpreting service (TIS) and promote procedures for using the interpreting service in area offices where demand is high. <b>(Very High Priority)</b>	DoH	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Interpreters by community housing organisation unknown and possible insufficient funds</li> <li>• Culturally insensitive practices</li> </ul>	a) Address withdrawal of TIS fee exemption for some services, for example Gold Coast TAASQ. This needs to be resolved between relevant agencies DIMIA, DoH and MAQ to establish who has responsibility for funding of interpreters. <b>(Very High Priority)</b>	DoH, MAQ, DIMIA & TAASQ	

Strategy	Actions	By	
	a) Review and update MLIS – are the 16 languages still most appropriate, quality of information, presentation, audience for fact sheets. Need to broaden language base to include emerging communities. b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b>	DoH	
	a) Ensure availability in hard copy of <i>Tenants Union Renting in Queensland</i> booklet at area offices where demand is high. Eg translation into Dari b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b>	DoH & RTA	
	a) Ensure RTA translates tenancy information into Pacific Islands and other key languages, and develops a strategy to disseminate this information b) <b>(Medium Priority)</b>	RTA	

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## **APPENDIX TWO:**

2009 Funded Projects that were Area Specific and Short Term:

1. ECCQ –Stronger Tenancies Project
2. Northern Suburbs – A key to good settlement-skills for renting
3. Australian Red Cross – Sustaining Tenancies in the Sudanese Community
4. MDA – Peer Tenancy Learning Project
5. Nambour Community Centre – Culturally Appropriate Tenancy Information on the Sunshine Coast (CATISC)
6. Tenants' Union – Community Partners Project
7. Acacia Ridge – Migrant and Refugee Tenancy Housing Information Project