

WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY CONECTIONS INC.

(Formerly Community Information Whittlesea Inc.)

MACEDONIAN COMMUNITY

A SETTLEMENT NEEDS

STUDY

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Introduction:

The Macedonian community is one of the larger communities in Australia with a significant history of migration starting in the 1950s. However, despite its long history of migration as well as particularly high concentration within the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne, the Macedonian community has not enjoyed “high profile” (Craw & Gilchrist, 1998). Aside from several small senior citizen and arts and crafts groups, there is no well established community support network, no business or major community organizations (Bivell, 1995).

In addition, the Macedonian community is affected by poor settlement outcomes that limit the development of appropriate infrastructures within the broader community. According to a report by the Macedonian Welfare Workers Network of Victoria (MWWNV), the community “has no identifiable welfare infrastructure” that will assist with the specific settlement needs, while based on anecdotal information, there is little to no appropriate service provision within the mainstream community to meet their needs. This has further contributed to poor settlement of the Macedonian community relative to other communities.

Service providers have consistently reported difficulties in engaging the Macedonian community to access mainstream services. Factors such as low English proficiency and limited employment opportunities have significantly impacted upon levels of income and education, and may be contributing to poor mainstream service use. However, there is little information/ research into the specific difficulties and needs of the community, which has hampered the development of appropriate services to improve the settlement outcomes and enable positive growth and independence of the community and its supports.

The following report will present some background on the community, the migration patterns and changing needs as well as the results from an exploration into the specific difficulties and needs of Macedonian migrants in the Northern and Western regions of Melbourne.

Macedonian community profile in brief

According to the ABS 2001 Census within the State of Victoria there are 32,682 Macedonian speakers with the most significant population living in the northern and western metropolitan region. The largest number of Macedonians reside in Melbourne’s northern suburbs with the

greatest number found in the City of Whittlesea 11,346 or 10% of the total Whittlesea's population. The City of Brimbank is the second, with 6,622 or 4.1% Macedonian born population who speak Macedonian at home. There is also significant number of Macedonians in the Springvale/Dandenong area, Werribee, Geelong and Shepparton (ABS Census, 2001).

According census information, 29.9% of Macedonian born residents aged 5years and over spoke English not well or not at all. (ABS Census, 2001). Having low English skills impacts upon other social and economic participation opportunities. For example, the unemployment rate of Macedonian born residents in City of Whittlesea for instance is 7.7% comparing to 6.6% for the Australian born population (ABS Census, 2001).

Regarding religion, the Macedonian community is predominantly of the Orthodox faith. The family and extended family is central to the community and a strong emphasis is placed on maintaining family, Macedonian culture and the language. In Australia, Macedonian families predominantly live as nuclear families but also exist as extended families. There is a great respect for older people in the family and children are expected to look after their parents when they are too old to live by themselves.

Migration Patterns

The migration of Macedonians to Australia started in the 50's from the Balkan region in South East Europe encompassing Greece, Former Yougoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria, following the partitioning of Ancient Macedonia in 1913. The community in Victoria has migrated in a number of waves from the 1950's, 60's and 70's via chain migration, to smaller numbers in the 80's and 90's. The majority of earlier settlers in the 50's and 60's were from Northern Greece, whilst the majority of the Macedonian migrants arriving post 60's, and recent arrivals from 90's originate from the republic of Macedonia. (Radin & Popov, 1989).

Statistical data on new arrivals from DIMIA identifies Macedonians as a major new arrival community in Whittlesea. In the last 5 years (1999-2004), 9.9% of the newly arrived in Whittlesea were Macedonian born, representing the second largest country of origin for newly arrived persons in Whittlesea and the first at those arriving under the family migration stream. Whittlesea is followed by City of Brimbank with 66.7% of newly arrived Macedonians coming under the family stream migration. (DIMIA settlement data 2004).

Initially, it was unskilled labourers and rural workers who migrated to Australia. However, since Macedonia became independent in 1991, after the break up of Yugoslavia, the economic difficulties and political instability in the Balkan Region, have caused Macedonians to continue leaving the country. Today, more skilled and professional people are migrating to Australia.

It is clear from this data that the different patterns of migration have contributed to distinct groups, each with differing settlement experiences and pre-arrival experiences, and therefore differing settlement needs that demand to be addressed. Some of the key settlement issues are discussed below.

Settlement issues

Several key settlement issues that the Macedonian community in Victoria continues to experience, have been identified from secondary research and anecdotal data from settlement casework experience.

Language difficulties

The low level of English proficiency within the community has had an implication on the community's social and economic participation in Australia, and has limited and continues to limit their employment opportunities.

The greatest barrier for the Macedonian community in accessing mainstream services is low English proficiency and limited ethno-specific supports. Reduced access to translating and interpreting services have further reduced potential access to services. According to DIMIA statistics 99% of newly arrived Macedonians for the last 5 years were of EP3, that is the second lowest level of English proficiency (DIMIA 2004).

According to a report by Stevens (1998) proficiency in English among the Macedonian community tends to decline with age. The lowest level of proficiency is among people aged 65 and over, as 70% of this group of Macedonians speak English not well or not at all. In addition, there is a high level Macedonian language maintenance within the community with only 3%

speaking only English at home. This has further implications for effectively learning English and communicating with the wider community (Stevens 1998).

The lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate support workers able to provide a range of referrals and linkages with specialist and mainstream services and inability of the established Macedonian community to assist the newly arrived, because of their own continuing unmet settlement needs, prevents many new arrived Macedonians from seeking and receiving appropriate assistance.

Employment

One of the major difficulties for newly arrived Macedonians is the two-year waiting period for financial support. Newly arrived are unable to find employment due to language barriers. For others, finding employment becomes a priority and in many cases despite their skills and English proficiency newly arrived Macedonians are forced to work in unskilled and low paid positions, often because of employers reluctance to recognise their overseas work experience and skills.

Access to services/Service utilization

Awareness of and accessing mainstream services is also of major concern for both recently arrived and established members of the community. Anecdotal evidence from service providers and literature review overwhelmingly indicates to a very poor mainstream service use by the Macedonian community, mainly due to cultural and language barriers (Lintz, 1998; Craw & Gilchrist, 1998).

Casework and anecdotal evidence indicates that Macedonians tend to depend on their immediate and extended family for resolving difficulties and for support. This is especially the case in substance abuse, disability and mental illness. Due to the stigma attached to such problems and a lack of a clear understanding of the service systems, generally, many Macedonian migrants would avoid accessing these services, often until the point of crisis. The inability to communicate their difficulties more clearly and effectively, may further deter Macedonians from accessing services or continuing to access them.

Social Support / Isolation

Given the importance of family and family roles within Macedonian culture, tighter migration regulations over the last decade have disadvantaged many Macedonians wanting to reunite with their family. This has had an adverse impact on the development of family and social networks for the existing community. This has also significantly disadvantaged the community's ability to develop an appropriate support infrastructure within the community leading to poor settlement outcomes (MWWNV 2000).

Housing

The shortage of affordable and appropriate housing continues to be a major issue for newly arrived Macedonians. Newly arrived face difficulties finding rental accommodation because of real estate agencies' reluctance to provide properties to those on social benefits and without having references. Private rental property is also becoming increasingly less affordable, particularly for new arrivals who are ineligible for financial support for two years. Inadequate stocks of public housing mean people often have to wait several years for such housing, and is unable to meet immediate housing needs of new arrivals.

In sum, many Macedonian migrants are facing a range of issues upon their arrival in Australia. However, despite this, there has been little direct research into the settlement experiences of Macedonian migrants, their difficulties and needs, particularly for those more recently arrived Macedonians. Such research is long overdue, as such issues would have a great impact on the settlement of the migrant and the community. As Bowen (1977) suggested:

“The human cost of the migrant and migrant family in terms of personal trauma, economic equilibrium and mental health, and the problems of displacement in social status, job, and other key life areas are common factors of the settlement process.”
(p.249)

Therefore an investigation into these factors is crucial for planning and providing services to improve the settlement outcomes, particularly for the Macedonian recent and new arrivals.

Aim of this survey

The aim of this survey was to explore issues related to the settlement of Macedonian migrants. The specific issues investigated included years spent in Australia, main issues faced by migrants, difficulties encountered, subjective level of English proficiency, years of study of English prior to arrival and community service utilization. It is hoped that the results will assist local service providers in planning and implementing strategies to provide adequate, and linguistically and culturally appropriate services to improve settlement outcomes for Macedonian community.

Method:

Participants:

A total of 122 Macedonian migrants took part in the survey. Survey participants were recruited through contact with Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC), and by distributing questionnaires at various groups, such as women's and cultural groups, NMIT students, meetings and seminars. A "snowball" technique, where each participant was given several questionnaires to distribute to other migrants they came in contact with, was also used to distribute some of the questionnaires.

The survey:

The survey was designed by the Macedonian Settlement Support Worker, based on anecdotal/casework data as well as an extensive literature review. The survey included demographic information on the participants including: age, gender, occupation, marital status and year of arrival, as well as exploring specific issues such as years of study of English before and after arrival to Australia, service utilization, needs of migrants upon arrival and difficulties faced by migrants currently. These issues were addressed using a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions. In addition, a Self Report English Proficiency Rating (SREPR) was included, where participants were required to rate their proficiency in English on a 5-point scale ranging from "very poor" to "excellent". A General Functional Difficulties Scale (GFDS) was also developed and included in the survey. The GFDS is a 16-item scale that assesses a range of difficulties in day-to-day problems and issues encountered by migrants including employment, communication and social integration. The difficulties experienced in the areas covered by the specific items were rated on a 3-point scale with 1 = "not at all", 2 = "a little" and 3 = "a lot".

The survey was available in English and in Macedonian and all participants remained anonymous. Copies of the survey (both English and Macedonian versions) are included in Appendix A & B. While the responses to most of the questions were used in the analyses, some of the open-ended questions were included to explore additional issues that will be investigated in more depth in future investigations. The responses to the open ended questions were collated and coded to include categories that incorporated the 5 most frequently given answers.

Results

Of the initial 122 participants, the results of three participants were excluded from the analyses, due to insufficient information provided (each had 10 or more instances of missing data). Therefore, a total of n=119 participants were included in the overall sample analysed. Initially the main characteristics of the overall sample with respect to the variables are presented, followed by initial analyses of the relationship between particular variables in the group as a whole. Subsequently, the overall sample was divided into 3 groups based on the number of years since their arrival in Australia (less than 5 years; 6-10 years and more than 10 years). Characteristics of and analyses within each group are then presented. Finally, comparisons were then made between groups with respect to the main variables investigated.

Characteristics of the sample

The overall sample of 119 participants included 77 females and 42 males. Their age ranged from 20 to 79 years with a mean age of 40. A significant proportion of the sample (82%) were married with only small proportions distributed across the other categories. Approximately a third of the participants were employed as labourers (30%), followed by the professionals (25%), and a considerable proportion of those that were unemployed 17%. The rest of the group included students, trades people and those who were retired. The number of years since their arrival in Australia ranged from 1 to 43 years, although the distribution (Figure 1) was quite skewed in favour of those more recently arrived with 50% of participants arriving 5 years ago or less (median = 5 years).

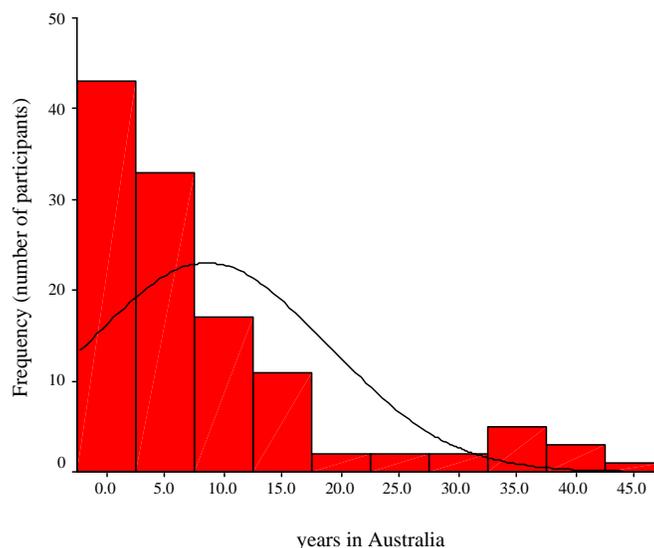


Figure 1. The distribution of participants according to years since their arrival in Australia

A greater proportion of participants, 70% had completed less than 1 year of study of English before arrival, although 71% attended some classes of English after arriving in Australia, and 27% of all participants undertook some form of mainstream study in Australia (e.g. short courses, high school, TAFE, university). In terms of their subjective assessment of proficiency in the English language, a large proportion rated their proficiency as very little (35%), with 23% as satisfactory, 25% as good, 17% as very good or excellent (Figure 2).

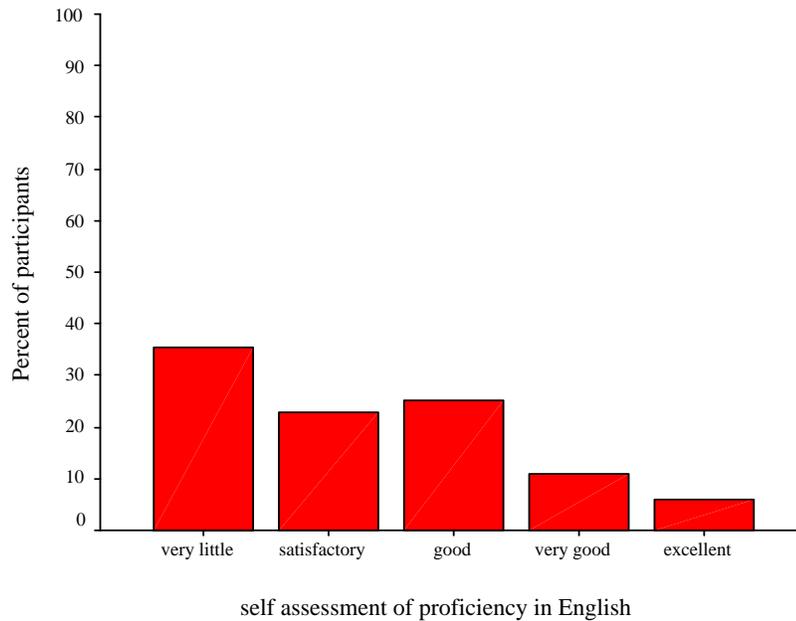


Figure 2. Percentage of participants within each category of SREPR

The most important issues faced by participants upon their arrival in Australia were finding work, language difficulties and being part of a community. These issues rated as most significant by 39%, 29% and 15% of participants respectively, as is evident in Figure 3 below.

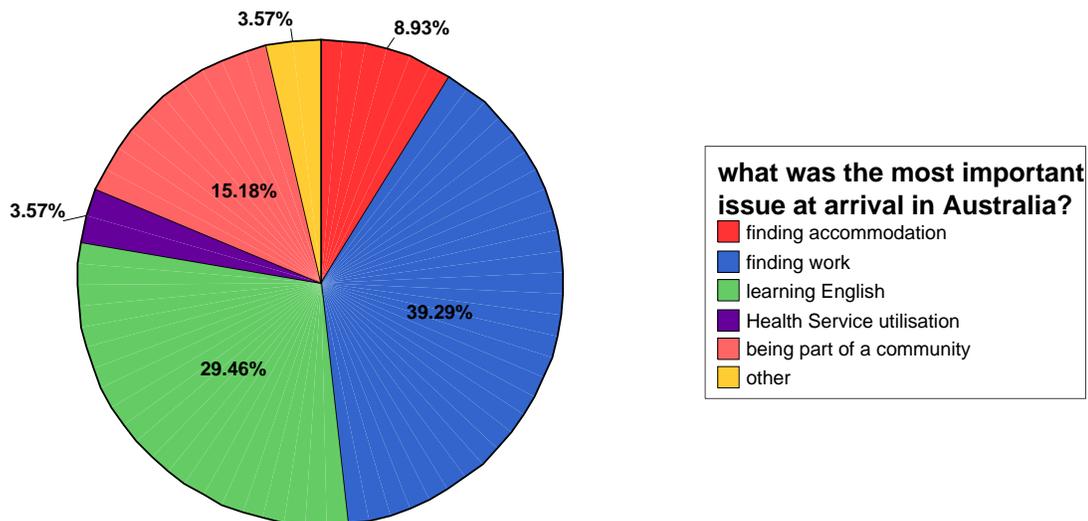


Figure 3. The most important issues upon arrival in Australia and percentage of participants endorsing each.

Currently the most significant problem noted by about 27.5% of responses, were language difficulties, followed by feelings of isolation 16% and financial difficulties 13%. Importantly 29% of responses recorded no significant difficulties at this time (Figure 3).

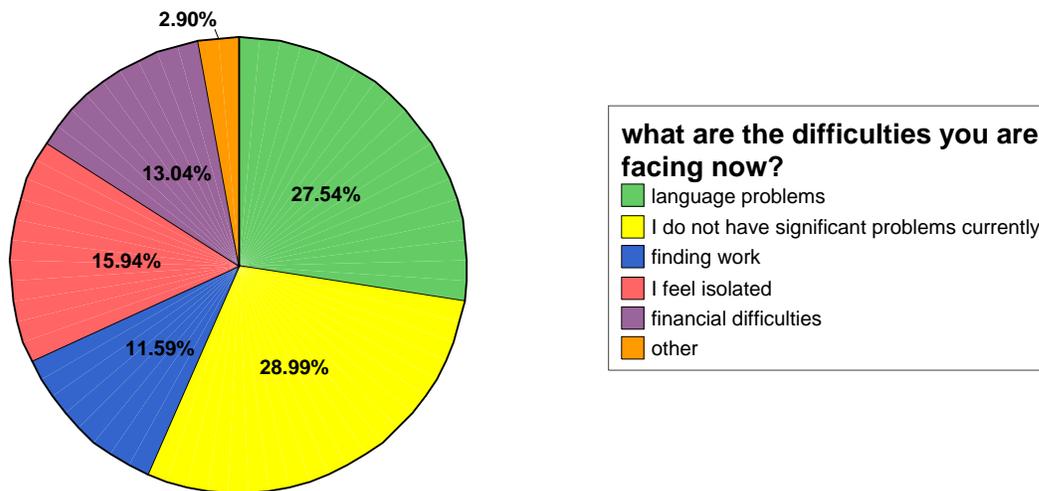


Figure 4. The main difficulties faced by the participants at the moment (% of participants endorsing each difficulty)

Finally, with respect to the utilization of community services a large proportion 58% reported no consistent utilization of such services. Of those reporting no utilization of services, 60% stated not knowing about services as the main reason for under utilization. Out of those that reported some utilization of services, 61% described Centrelink as helpful, 29% reported being helped by WCC, while 10% reported educational services such as AMES/NMIT as helpful.

Analyses for the overall sample

As is evident from Figure 5, there was a significant association between SREPR and study of English before arrival, with higher ratings on SREPR associated with more English study before arrival. Specifically, those rating their proficiency as “excellent” reported more years of English study prior to arrival (M= 7.14), than those rating their proficiency as “very little” (M= 0.76), or “satisfactory” (M=2.07).

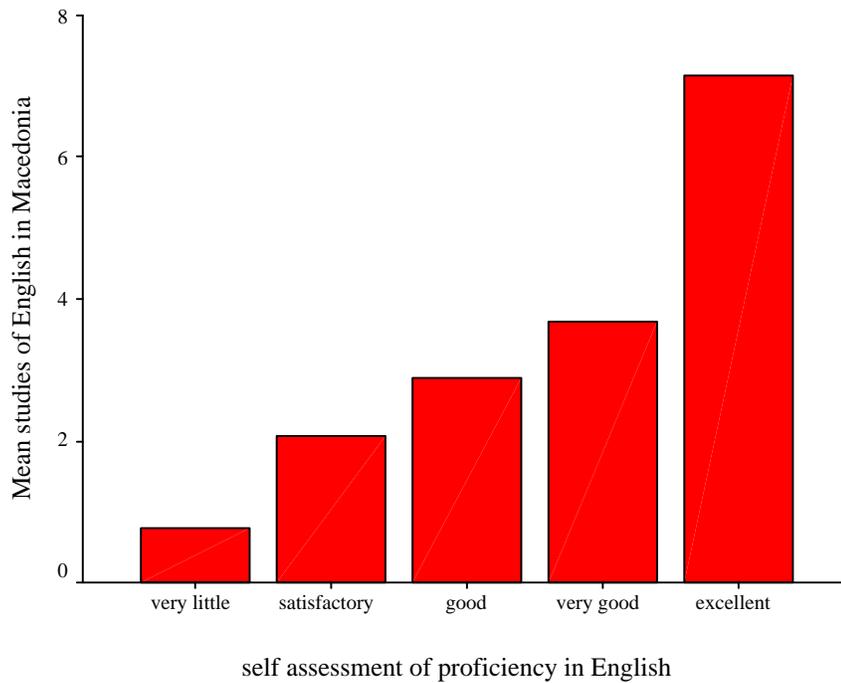


Figure 5. The mean years of study of English prior to arrival and SREPR

Overall difficulties experienced by the participants, as measured by the General Functional Difficulties Scale (GFDS) score, were also significantly related to the SREPRs, with those rating their proficiency as “excellent” recording lower mean scores ($M=21$) than those rating their proficiency as “very little”, “satisfactory” or “very good”, all of whom indicated greater levels of difficulty ($M = 34$, $M = 33$ and $M = 33$, respectively). In addition, those assessing their English proficiency as “excellent”, were less likely than the other groups to utilize community services. There was no association between recency of arrival and SREPRs.

The tendency to undertake classes upon arrival was significantly associated with the number of years since arrival in Australia. Namely, participants who have taken the AMEP 510 hours of English study after arriving in Australia were more recent arrivals, i.e. their mean number of years since arrival ($M=8.26$ years), was smaller than that of those who had not undertaken any English classes ($M= 14.29$ years). There was also a negative, although statistically non-significant relationship between years spent in Australia and the amount of years English was studied before arrival, with those arriving more recently completing more years of study of English prior to arrival. Overall GFDS scores did not correlate with the years since arrival in Australia, although more detailed examination of the relationship between ratings on individual questions and number of years since arrival indicated that that difficulties in finding work (Q4)

and particularly work appropriate to the qualifications (Q3) were associated with more recent arrival to Australia.

Analyses within the “5 years or less” group

This group constituted 58% of the total sample. The average time living in Australia for this group was 2.34 years, with a considerable proportion 42.5% living in Australia for 1 year or less. The age of the participants ranged between 20 and 66 years with a mean age of 34 years. Sixty-four percent of the participants in this group were female and 36% were male. A great majority (83%) were married. Approximately a third of the group (33%) described their current occupation as labourer, 21% as professionals, 17% as unemployed, 13% as students, with smaller proportions across the other categories (5% trades people, 4% retired). Fifty-eight percent had not undertaken any English studies in Macedonia, although a great proportion (81%) have taken some English classes upon arrival. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion, 42%, assessed their proficiency in English as very poor (20% satisfactory; 29% good; and only 6% very good and 3% as excellent) (Figure 6).

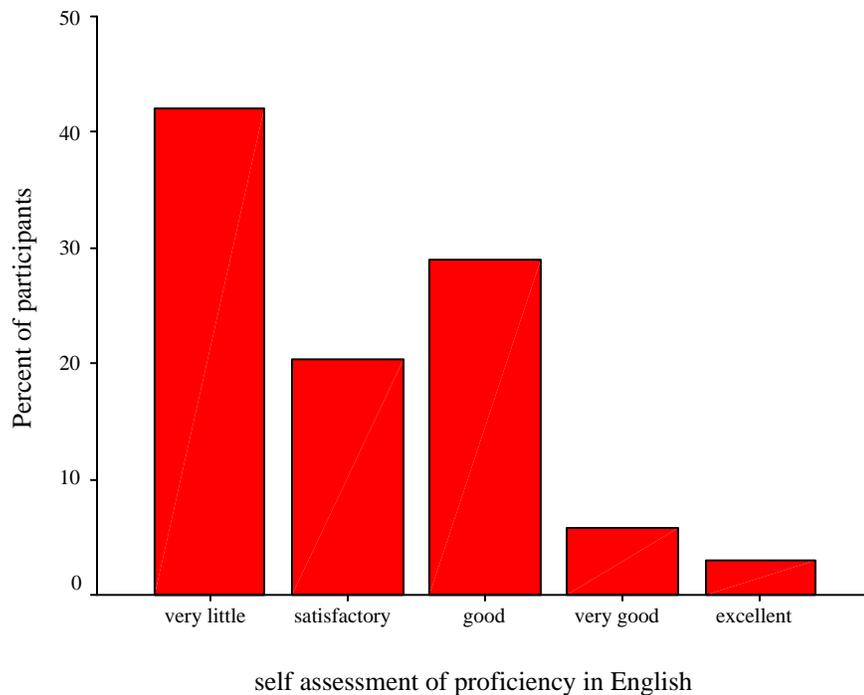


Figure 6. Percentage of participants within each category of SREPR in the 5 years/less group.

Eighty-five percent stated that they were helped to some degree by their sponsor upon arrival.

Fifty-eight percent of this group reported no utilization of the community services, with 60% of them stating lack of knowledge of services as the main reason. Out of those that reported utilization of the services, 71% noted Centrelink as helpful, 23% CIW services as helpful and 6% reported utilizing educational services (AMES, NMIT) as helpful.

Regarding the most important issue that this group faced upon arrival, 41% reported this was finding work; 33% learning English and 10% being part of the community (6% health, and finding accommodation and other at 4.5% each). This can be seen on Figure 7 below.

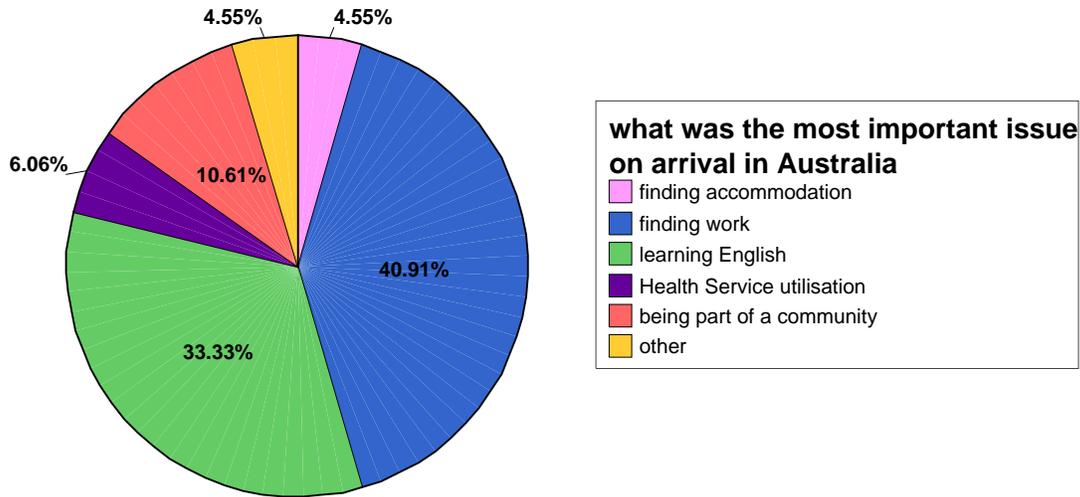


Figure 7. The most important issues upon arrival in Australia and percentage of participants endorsing each.

However, when asked about the most important issue they were facing at the moment, language difficulties were noted most frequently (40% of participants), followed by feelings of isolation (16%) and financial difficulties (11%), with only 8% of participants in this group reporting finding work as the most important issue currently. Interestingly, 24% of participants reported no current significant difficulties currently (see Figure 8).

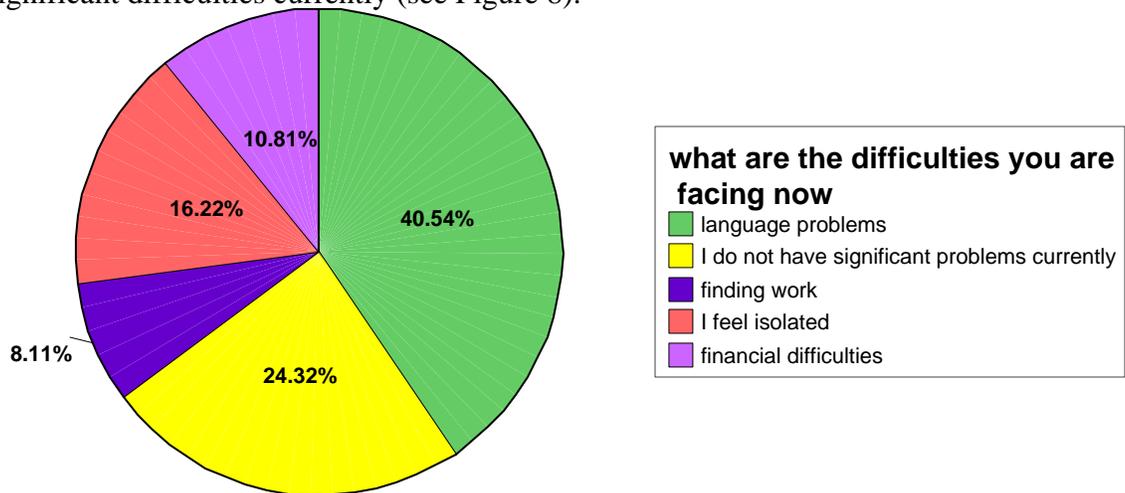


Figure 8. The main difficulties faced by the participants at the moment (% of participants endorsing each difficulty)

Further analysis demonstrated that of those rating finding work as the most important issue upon arrival, only 6% described this as the main difficulty currently, while language problems and no significant problems were reported by 31% each, followed by feelings of isolation and financial difficulties. In contrast, out of those reporting learning English as most important issue upon arrival, 45.5% reported language problems as most significant problems currently. Moreover, 66% of those for whom being part of the community was the main issue upon arrival, reported language difficulties as the current most significant issue.

Analyses of the relationships between SREPRs and difficulties experienced by this group currently revealed several significant associations. Firstly, regarding the most important issue faced currently, those who rate their proficiency as “excellent” were more likely than other groups to rate finding work as the most pressing problem, while those with SREPR of “very good” were more likely than the rest of the group to report feelings of isolation as the most significant issue currently. Examination of relationship between specific difficulties faced as measured by ratings on items of the GFPS, found that those who assessed their proficiency in English as very poor were more likely to find it difficult to access services because of language barriers, while those assessing their proficiency as good were less likely to experience difficulties in this area. In addition, those with very poor proficiency also found it more difficult to manage everyday tasks such as going to the doctors, understanding letters and dealing with institutions (banks, Centrelink). Alternatively, all of those who assessed their proficiency as excellent do not experience any difficulties in the area. Moderate feelings of loneliness and isolation were also experienced by those with poor proficiency.

Analyses of the 6-10 years group

This group constituted 16 % of the total sample. Therefore, due to small number of participants in this group, the analyses are preliminary. A considerable proportion of the participants in this group were female (78%) and again majority of participants were married (68%). The age range for this group was 24 to 71 with a mean age of 37 years. A considerable proportion of this group 42% were professionals, while 23% were unemployed. Approximately 69% of participants within this group had undertaken some English studies in Macedonia and approximately 61% have also undertaken some English classes after arriving in Australia. The ratings on the SREPR were more evenly endorsed among the participants. Interestingly, up to 68% of participants in

this group utilized community services at some point., with 50% of them finding Centrelink helpful, 30% CIW and 20% the educational services (AMES/NMIT).

“Being part of the community” was most frequently endorsed response by this group (39%), as the most important issue upon arrival, with finding work (22%), language difficulties (22%) and finding accommodation (17%) following closely (Figure 9).

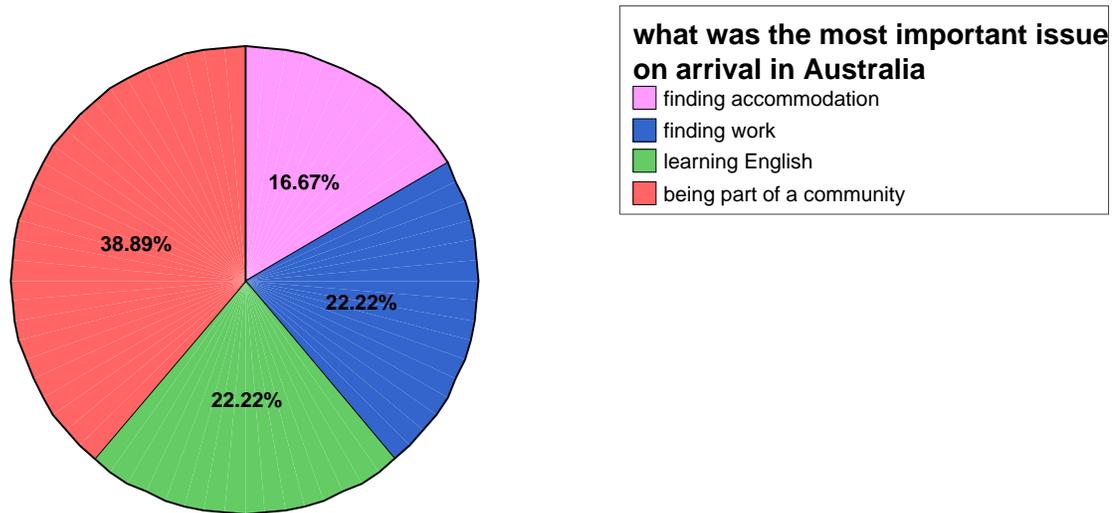


Figure 9. The most important issues upon arrival in Australia and percentage of participants endorsing each.

In terms of the main difficulty participants in this group experienced, feelings of isolation were most frequently endorsed, followed by language problems, finding work and financial difficulties. Approximately 23% of participants here reported no significant problems currently (Figure 10).

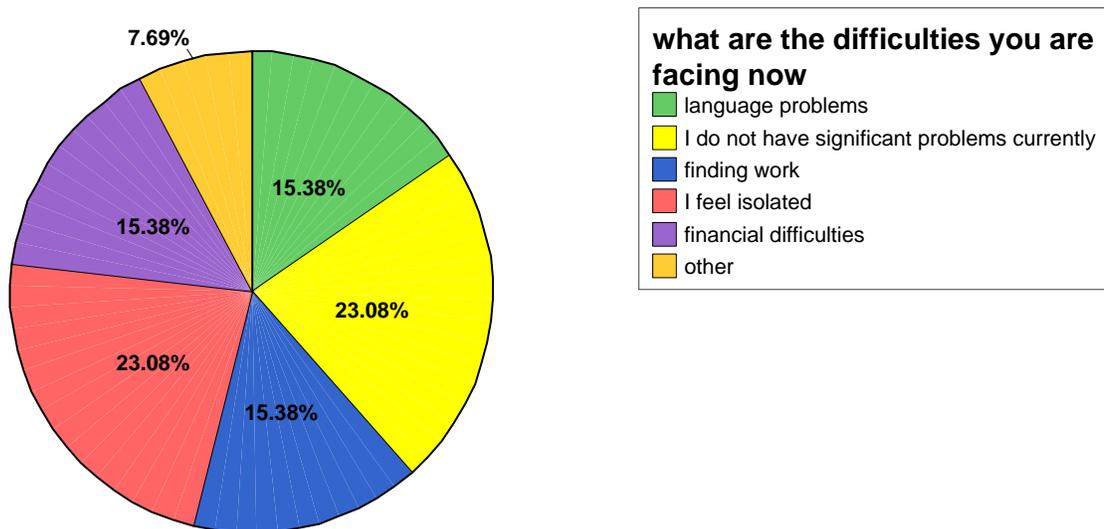


Figure 10. The main difficulties faced by the participants at the moment (% of participants endorsing each difficulty).

Answers on the SREPR were related to the overall score on the GFDS, with those rating their proficiency as “very poor” experiencing significantly more difficulties than those rating their proficiency as “excellent”. Those with poor proficiency specifically experienced more difficulties communicating with colleagues, doctors, institutions (banks, Centerlink), understanding letters and filling out forms.

Characteristics of the more than 10 years group

This group had 31 participants (18 female), comprising 26% of the total sample. It was the slightly older group with an age range from 33 to 70 years and a mean age of 53. Most of them were married, and a large proportion 41% reported their current occupation as a labourer, while 26% were professionals, 18% retired and 15% as unemployed. Seventy-seven percent had not taken any English classes prior to arrival, while 55% had taken some form of English classes after arrival. With respect to the SREPR scores, 29% rated their proficiency as very little, 26% as “satisfactory”, 19% as “good” and “very good” and 7% as “excellent”. Only 20% of this group reported some utilization of community services, with majority (64%) of those not utilizing the services listing “did not know they were there” as the main reason for lack of access. Regarding the most important issue upon arrival, finding work was endorsed most frequently (by 46%), followed by language difficulties (25%), finding accommodation (14%) and being part of the community (11%).

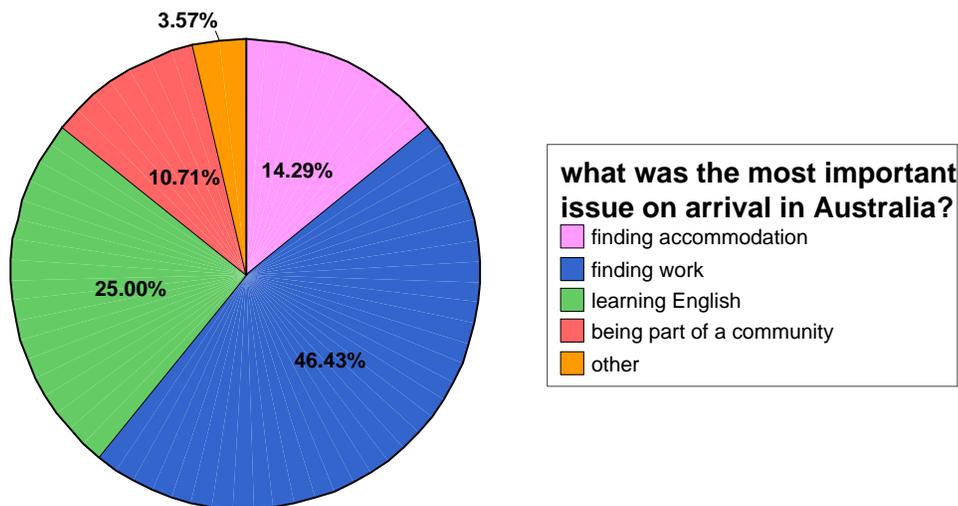


Figure 11. The most important issues upon arrival in Australia and percentage of participant endorsing each (for group “more than 10 years”).

A significant proportion of this group (42%) reported no significant difficulties currently, while finding work and financial difficulties as the two most frequently reported current problems by 16% of participants each. Language difficulties and feelings of isolation were also reported by 11% of participants, each.

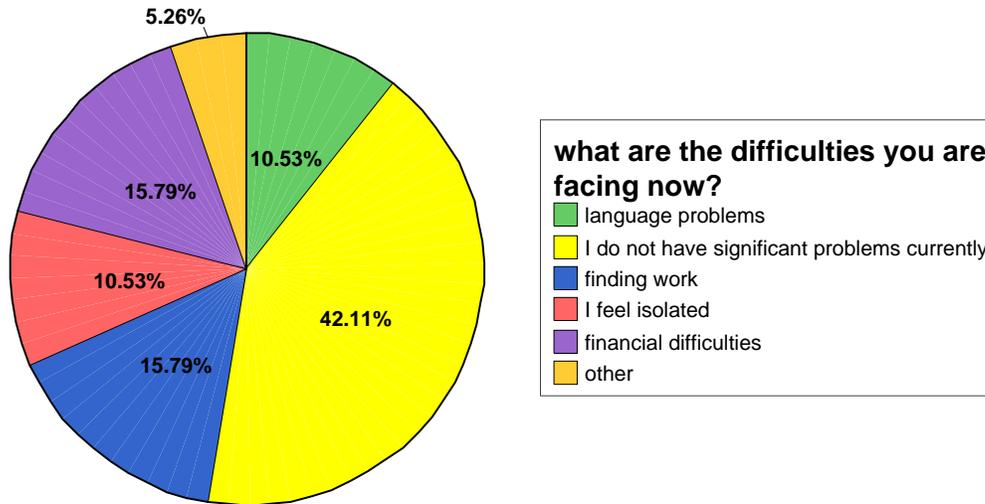


Figure 12. The main difficulties faced by the participants at the moment (% of participants endorsing each difficulty)

In terms of the specific difficulties experienced by the group now, those with “excellent” SREPR were more likely to report finding work as the main issue currently. Also moderate difficulties in managing one’s social life (making friends, establishing contacts) were noted more frequently by those with “good” SPEPRs.

Comparisons between groups

In terms of the main difficulties faced by each of the migrant groups, the results indicate that more recent arrivals (5 years or less since arrival) reported language difficulties more frequently than other groups, as the most significant problem currently. This group also reported more difficulties in finding accommodation than the other two groups. A significant difference between the groups was also noted regarding difficulties with establishing a social network (e.g. friends, social activities etc.), with those in the intermediate group, more likely to experience difficulties in this area than the other two groups.

Exploration of group differences in service utilization, revealed that the earlier arrivals are less likely to utilize the services in the community than the other groups, while those in the intermediate group were more likely than the other groups to utilize the services.

Discussion:

Before discussing the main findings of this study, some important limitations need to be noted. Firstly, the study was an initial and relatively small-scale investigation into the needs and difficulties encountered by Macedonian community through the settlement process. Due to financial and time limitations the sample was relatively small including only 119 participants. This limited the range of analyses that could be undertaken as well as some of the conclusions to be drawn. This was particularly the case with the within groups analyses, where for some of the groups, particularly the intermediate group (6-10years) the analyses were limited due to small sample sizes.

Second, there are also some issues with the sampling procedures employed. Namely, a large proportion of participants were recruited through their contact with CIW, which would have inevitably biased the sample towards those migrants accessing this service. Therefore the results could reflect the patterns of difficulties and service utilisation by a specific subsection and may have not included migrants who have not accessed the services.

Finally, there was also a poor response to some of the questions, in particular, the open ended questions, which limits the strengths of the conclusions to be drawn. Nevertheless, the results do provide initial insights into some of the main issues faced by migrants, and therefore provide a valuable indication in the areas that require further exploration. Importantly, they also provide some initial recommendations for planning and implementation strategies to address some of the issues highlighted by the current findings.

According to the results, a considerable percentage of the participants were unemployed, which is consistent with expectations and previous data suggesting that Macedonian migrants experience significant difficulties in finding employment or being successful in the competitive labour market. However, contrary to expectation and previous results (City of Whittlesea Statistical Bulletin, 1998), only 30% noted their profession as labourer, with a higher than anticipated proportion of professionals. This could reflect the change in migration patterns, with higher levels of skilled / highly educated migrants among the more recently arrived migrants, which has contributed to change in the profile. This is particularly the case as most of the participants were more recent arrivals (< 15 years since arrival). This is mainly due to sampling

issues as most of the participants were clients who have attended the CIW services which target newly arrived migrants.

In terms of the needs expressed by the Macedonian migrants upon arrival in Australia, finding work seems to have been the predominant concern. This may reflect the current migration policies that have a two-year waiting period for government entitlements, which places significant pressure on migrants to enter the workforce from arrival in order to be financially secure/viable. This would also mean that for many skilled migrants, who need additional training/education in order to upgrade their skills or accommodate their skills to the Australian system, the opportunity to gain employment within their skills/ qualifications would be limited. This was further supported by other results, which demonstrated that the more recently arrived migrants had more difficulties finding work and particularly work within their qualifications. Additional barriers may have also contributed, in particular language difficulties. In fact, when asked about the current difficulties participants experience, language difficulties were consistently endorsed by the overall group as well as within the three arrival groups.

As Stevens (1998) has pointed out:

“Proficiency in English has become a fundamental requirement for full participation in Australian society as it is the mechanism through which understanding and entry is gained into its economic, educational, social and political domains.” (p107)

Consistent with this, the results showed that self reported English language proficiency was related with overall general difficulties that migrants experience, as well as specific difficulties in day-to-day activities and communication (communication with doctors, filling out forms, banking etc). This is of great concern as a large proportion of participants, as shown by the results, rate their proficiency as poor, which is also consistent with previous data as reported by Stevens (1998). In addition, despite the current changes in migration policy, which include stricter requirements of English proficiency from migrants, high proportion of even the most recently arrived migrants, still rate their proficiency as very poor. This is in contrast with current conceptions that language problems are not as significant in the newer arrivals.

Interestingly, according to the current results, low English proficiency was associated with difficulties in the most recently arrived and intermediate groups. These groups also rate language difficulties as the most significant difficulty they are currently facing. This is likely to indicate

that significant difficulties in the areas of communication around accessing essential services (e.g. medical, banking) will be on-going in those with poor proficiency in English for up to 10 years after arrival in Australia. However, these relationships were not significant for the earlier migrants. Unlike the two other groups, the proficiency in English in this group was not associated with greater difficulties in managing daily errands, which may indicate that this group has developed strategies to overcome these difficulties.

Alternatively, those who rate their proficiency as “very good” or “excellent”, across the three groups, do not seem to experience any difficulties in managing day-to-day activities or accessing essential services, further supporting the importance of proficiency in English for better settlement outcomes. Further, it was clear from the results that, as expected, those that rate their proficiency as “very good” or “excellent” are more likely to have undertaken classes before arrival and after arrival. This was particularly evident in the more recently arrived and intermediate groups. It also underscores the importance of provision of opportunities for improving language skills to facilitate better settlement outcomes.

In terms of other significant difficulties experienced by the participants currently, feelings of isolation was reported consistently across the three groups. This is probably due to the lack of well developed community networks and support organizations or groups within the community. In addition, culturally, the family is considered as the first resource for support and main access to social networks. With the tighter migration laws many Macedonians have not been able to reunite with their families in Australia, which has significantly limited their social and support networks, leading to isolation and longing for the homeland.

In addition, other difficulties, such as financial and accommodation difficulties, were also noted by the participants in smaller proportions. It is also important to note that reasonable proportion of participants reported no significant current difficulties, particularly the earlier arrivals. However, these need to be interpreted with caution as there was a high proportion of participants who did not provide an answer to this question.

Therefore, it is clear that there are several significant problems/difficulties that migrants are experiencing during their settlement, with language problems, as the most frequent and persisting difficulties that impact on overall settlement outcomes.

However, despite significant difficulties the study showed very poor utilization of services. More importantly, considering the bias of the sample towards those who have already contacted some of the services where recruitment was conducted, this proportion may even be an underestimation of the poor service utilization by Macedonian migrants. The most frequent reason stated by those who reported no utilization was lack of knowledge of the services, indicating a need for more information regarding the essential services before arrival or immediately upon arrival. Also, culturally, a greater reliance on the family as the first point for solving problems, may also contribute to poor service utilization, particularly considering that a large proportion of the more recently arrived migrants have arrived on family stream migration. In addition, poor service utilization, may be a direct consequence of language difficulties which will limit the migrants' abilities to gain information about and access to the services. There is indirect support for this in the study, with the most utilized services were those of Centrelink and CIW, both of which have access to interpreters and bilingual workers.

Finally, on the basis of the current findings as well as previous findings, there are several recommendations that can be made.

Recommendations:

- Considering the language barriers that Macedonian migrants face, there is a need for DIMIA to provide newly arrived migrants with linguistically appropriate information regarding essential settlement services when granting visas.
- Mainstream services need to explore alternative sources of funding that will deliver health, aged and community services to the Macedonian client group that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.
- Need of re-instatement of the Macedonian CSSS position for the Western Region as valuable referral point for Macedonian target group requiring assistance with settlement issues, community capacity building and for consultancy and support to mainstream service providers.
- Greater allocation of funds for translating and interpreting services.

- DIMIA needs to give funding priority to programs that will help migrants gain knowledge and experience in the Australian system and work culture and in that way increases their social and economic participation in Australia.
- Encourage volunteering within Macedonian community to reduce social isolation and gain work experience in Australian work context.
- There is a need of provision of cross-cultural training and consultancy to the mainstream service providers aimed at increasing understanding of Macedonian culture and community needs, including assistance to develop effective access and equity strategies targeting Macedonian community, especially those recently arrived.
- Responsibility of mainstream services to provide access to newly arrived migrants when promoting their services,
- All government services and particularly local government and health services, should have more face-to face contact with the client group especially with the elderly supplementing written information.
- Need of community education on health issues such as: mental health, substance abuse, disability in order to raise awareness and remove the stigma attached to these illnesses and increase access to mainstream services.

Finally, this study highlights the need for further research to be undertaken with regards to the settlement needs of the Macedonian community. In particular, following the findings of this study, further in-depth analysis into specific factors such as language proficiency, employment issues, social isolation and service utilization is needed to further elucidate their impact on the settlement process. This is crucial for future planning and development of strategies to address these issues.

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Appendix A: Sample Survey form-English

Dear participants,

With this survey we want to find out about the difficulties you experience after the arrival in Australia, how much the knowledge of the English language has an influence on your adaptation in the new environment, what are the effectiveness and the adequacy of the services in the region. The results from the questionnaire will help us to find out what are the needs of the Macedonians after arrival in Australia and in what way to improve the services to help in settlement.

Participation in the survey it is not compulsory and it is confidential.

If you have any enquiries or would like further details please call Grozda on telephone: 9401- 6666.

After arrival what sort of help did you need the most but could not access ?

What services would you like to see included for future migrants that are not available to you at the moment?

What services in the region that you live in helped you the most?

Which services were hardest to access and why?

What was the most important thing after arrival in Australia?

To find accommodation

To find work

To learn English

Health services

To adapt in the Community

Other _____

On the page below are included some of the hardships newly arrived migrants are facing. Please tick the number that best describes what you experienced after the arrival in Australia.

	Not at all	Little	Very much
1. It was hard for me to find accommodation	1	2	3
2. I had/have problems with the recognition of my qualifications	1	2	3
3. It was/is hard for me to find a job appropriate to my qualifications	1	2	3
4. It was/is hard to find any kind of job	1	2	3
5. It was hard for me to find information about the services in the region	1	2	3
6. It was/ is hard for me to access the services because of insufficient knowledge of the language	1	2	3

7. It was/is hard to communicate at work with the colleagues and the supervisors	1	2	3
8. It was/is hard to communicate with doctors in the Hospitals	1	2	3
9. It was/is hard to communicate in other places like the Bank or Centrelink	1	2	3
10. It was/is hard for me to understand the letters I received from the above places	1	2	3
11. It was/is hard to fill out forms when its necessary (at doctors, bank and Centrelink)	1	2	3
12. It was/is hard for me to manage in the new environment in my private life (to make new friends and neighbors)	1	2	3
13. I feel isolated	1	2	3
14. I often feel lonely and depressed	1	2	3
15. Often I wish to go back to Macedonia	1	2	3
16. It was/is hard to manage to find school, childcare centers for my kids	1	2	3

Are you facing other difficulties that we haven't listed above?

What sort of problems you are facing at the moment?

Appendix B: Sample Survey form-Macedonian

Dragi u~esnici,

So ovaa anketa sakame da ispitame so koi te{kotii se soo~uvate po doseluvaweto vo Avstralija, kolku znaeweto na angliskiot jazik vlijae vo prilagoduvaweto vo novata sredina, te{kotiite so koi se soo~uvate po doseluvaweto kako i efektivnosta i adekvatnosta na slu`bite vo regionot. Rezultatite od anketata ke ni pomognat da doznaeme koi se potrebite na Makedoncite po pristignuvaweto vo Avstralija i kako da gi podobrine slu`bite za pomo{ pri doseluvaweto.

U~estvoto vo anketata ne e zadol`itelno i zagarantirana vi e anonimnost.

Za popodrobni informacii i dokolku imate nekoi pra{awa javete se kaj Grozda na telefon: 94016666.

Ve molam odgovorite na prava i kade {to treba zaokru`ete go
va{iot odgovor

Pol:

- @ M

Vozrast (kolku godini imate): _____

Bra~na sestojba:

- neo`enet/nema`ena vonbra~na
zaednica(vo razveden/a
 veren/a brak
neven~ani), vdovec/vdovica
 o`enet/oma`ena

Zanimawe (profesija): _____

Koja godina dojdovte vo Avstralija: _____

Dali imavte u~eno angliski jazik vo Makedonija (privatni ~asovi,
kurs, redovna nastava):

- Ne
 Da, kolku godini: _____

Dali posetuvate (posetuvavte) ~asovi po Angliski jazik po
pristignuvaweto vo Avstralija:

- Ne
 Da
 510 ~asovi Pomalku od 510 ~asovi

Dali posetuvate druga nastava ({kola) vo Avstralija:

- Ne
 Da -
 Kratok sredno vi{a fakultet
kurs (TAFE)

Kako go ocenuvate va{eto znaewe na Angliskiot jazik:

- Mnogu malku dovoln mnogu odli~no
o dobro dobro

Kolku vi pomogna va{iot sponzor (rodnina) po pristignuvaweto:

- Nikakva pomo{
 Mi pomogna dosta
 Mnogu mi pomogna

Dali pobaravte pomo{ od slu`bite vo zaednicata

Da -Koi najmnogu vi pomognaa?

Ne zo{to?

Po pristignuvaweto kakva pomo{ ti be{e najmnogu potrebna
a ne mo`e{e da ja dobie{?

Koi servisi bi sakal da se vovedat za idnite doselenici
{to sega ne se na raspolagawe?

Koja slu`ba vo regionot najmnogu ti pomogna?

Od koja slu`ba te be{e najte{ko da dobie{ pomo{ i zo{to?

[to ti be{e najva`no po pristignuvaweto vo Avstralija?

Da najde{ smestuvawe

Da najde{ rabota

Da u~i{ angliski jazik

Zdravjeto - Zdrastvenite uslugi

Da se vklopi{ vo zaednicata

Drugo _____

Na stranata podolu se navedeni nekolku te{kotii so kou
obi~no se soo~uvaat novodojdenite. Ve molime zaokru`ete
go brojot {to najmnogu odgovara na ona {to vie go
iskusivte po doseluvaweto vo Avstralija.

	Voop{to ne	Maluku	Mnogu
1. Te{ko mi be{e da najdam stan	1	2	3
2. Imav (imam) problemi so priznavaweto na mojata kvalifikacija	1	2	3
3. Te{ko mi e ((be{e) da najdam rabota soodvetna na mojata kvalifikacija	1	2	3

4. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da najdam bilo kakva rabota	1	2	3
5. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da najdam informacii za slu`bite vo regionot	1	2	3
6. Te{ko mi e ((be{e) da gi koristam slu`bite zaradi nedovolno znaewe na jazikot	1	2	3
7. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da se snajdam na rabota vo komunikacijata so kolegite i {efovite	1	2	3
8. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da se razberam so doktorite vo bolnica	1	2	3
9. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da se razberam na drugi mesta (banka, vo socijalno)	1	2	3
10. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da gi razberam pismata {to gi dobivam od ovie mesta	1	2	3
11. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da popolnam formi koga treba (kaj doktor, vo banka, vo socijalno)	1	2	3
12. Te{ko mi e (be{e) da se snajdam vo novata sredina vo privatniot `ivot (da steknam prijатели, vo odnosot so sosedite).	1	2	3
13. Se ~uvstvuvam izolirano	1	2	3
14. ^esto se ~uvstvuvam osameno i depresivno	1	2	3

15. ^esto mi se javuva `elba da se vratam vo Makedonija 1 2 3
16. Te{ko mi be{e da se snajdam vo zgri`uvaweto na decata (gradinki, {koli). 1 2 3

Dali se soo~uvate so nekoi te{kotii koi ne se navedeni pogore

So koi problemi se soo~uvate sega?
