

Research

- 7.1 The Committee heard from a number of sources about the challenge of accessing useful data across a whole range of issues. There was concern about the decline in research capacity, especially qualitative research relating to immigration, cultural diversity, and settlement participation in employment outcomes:

I am always a little surprised at the lack of evidence and data there is in this particular area of public policy. To try and find hard information about how migrants of whatever category are actually faring in our communities and also the impact they are having on our communities is really difficult to do.¹

- 7.2 Professor Graeme Hugo stated: 'one of the enormous strengths that Australia has in the migration context is that much of its policy has been evidence based in the past'.² He maintains this provided flexibility in policy as a result of global as well as Australian events:

Maintaining the best quality information to base that changing policy on is absolutely crucial. I would argue that since the closure of the Bureau of Immigration Research we have seen gradually, over time, a reduction in the amount and breadth of research. There is still some very good quality work done, but I would like to stress ... the need for an independent research capacity which does research itself but also encourages, coordinates and leads research which is directly policy relevant and translates that

1 Mr Nick Evans, Director, Community Development Division, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 9 March 2012, pp. 6-7.

2 Professor Hugo, Director of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, 2 April 2012, p. 1.

research not just for policymakers but to inform the public discourse.³

7.3 The Committee received evidence about the lack of current data available and some of the impacts on policy, planning and delivery of services.

7.4 A National Ethnic Disability Council (NEDC) representative argued that in the absence of data on the multicultural disability community, government service planning and development does not effectively incorporate or address the needs of the multicultural disability community.

There is that whole issue of what kinds of life outcomes people from a non-English speaking background with a disability will have. In fact we do not have much data on that either.⁴

7.5 What the NEDC has put to governments is that unless there are dedicated strategies, measures and targets for people with a non-English speaking background, mainstream service delivery does not reach out to those cohorts of people.⁵

7.6 The Committee heard that proper processes of access and equity would assist with the social inclusion of CALD communities but, before that, there needs to be auditing, benchmarking and establishing some form of compliance to meet basic human rights standards:

It is not possible to get a clear picture about our society if Australia does not regularly analyse the current situation, set clear and realistic standards, and then ensure there are basic accountability systems to meet national social inclusion and productivity goals.⁶

7.7 The Committee recognises the importance of informed policy, and an independent research body that is responsive to a wide range of issues relating to settlement, integration and participation of all communities. The research needs to be integrated into policy development processes and there must be a feedback loop from the research, through practice, monitoring and evaluation.

3 *Committee Hansard*, 2 April 2012 p. 1.

4 Ms Sibylle Kaczorek, Executive Officer, National Ethnic Disability Council (NEDC), *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2011, p. 83.

5 Ms Kaczorek, NEDC, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2011, p. 83.

6 Conrad Gershevitch, Amareswar Galla and Maria Dimopolous,, *Submission 455*, p. 3.

Bureau of Immigration Research

- 7.8 The Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR) ⁷ was established in 1989 and became known as the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research in 1993, and then the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR) in 1994.⁸
- 7.9 The Bureau provided an independent, professional research body within the Department of Immigration which reported to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.⁹ It was the main body responsible for immigration and multicultural research with an explicit aim to undertake 'objective and professional analysis of immigration issues, providing a sound basis for future policies'.¹⁰ In 1993 its charter was broadened to include population issues.¹¹
- 7.10 The Bureau closed in 1996 and responsibility for research was absorbed by 'Sub-program 1.1: Research and Statistics' in the Department. According to the Minister in 1996, the functions of the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research were restructured to meet budget savings targets.¹²

Current immigration research

- 7.11 In 2004 it was asserted that major immigration research was conducted only by academic institutions after the demise of the Bureau:

Research into immigration and its effects on society is carried out and funded by a small number of agencies. Universities are the major source of research since the demise of the Bureau of

7 The Committee is grateful for the research assistance provided by Janet Phillips and the Parliamentary Library in the provision of information on the BIR and the BIMPR.

8 Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA), *Review '89* (Annual Report 1989), p. 14.

9 E Kolet, *Multiculturalism: a Review of Australian Policy Statements and Recent Debates in Australia and Overseas*, Research Paper, Parliamentary Library, 2010.

10 M Kabala, 'Immigration as Public Policy', in J Jupp and M Kabala (eds), *The Politics of Australian Immigration*, Canberra, 1993, p. 13.

11 Minister for Immigration, the Hon Senator N Bolkus, 'Menadue Report Recommends New Directions for Bureau of Immigration and Population Research', *Media Release*, 28 October 1994.

12 Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon P Ruddock, 'Restructure of Immigration Research Activities', *Media Release*, 30 July 1996.

Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR) in 1996. There is little privately funded research in Australia.¹³

- 7.12 However, while there is no longer an independent, professional research body within the Department, research is still conducted or commissioned by DIAC.
- 7.13 Some of the statistical reports produced by the Bureau, such as *Settler Arrivals*, *Immigration Update* and *Population Flows*, continue to be published and, in 2011, DIAC also began to publish a larger range of detailed statistical reports with material not previously publicly available including: *The Outlook for Net Overseas Migration*, *Trends in Migration*, and *Asylum Trends*. DIAC's Annual Report identifies research projects commissioned by the Department.¹⁴
- 7.14 DIAC also supports the Australian Population, Multicultural and Immigration Research Program jointly with the states and territories. This program undertakes studies in the areas of migration settlement, multicultural affairs and population trends.¹⁵
- 7.15 Dr Wendy Southern from DIAC described the research capacity that currently exists within the Department through the Policy Innovation, Research and Evaluation Unit located in the Chief Economist's Group and funded by a modest research budget:

We do a combination of in-house research and commissioned research and research that we conduct in association with other departments. ... Each year, on a financial year basis, we set a research program for the coming year. We are in the process at the moment of setting our 2012-13 research and evaluation program. ... we have had our research around three priority themes and, while we review them each year, they will probably remain much the same.¹⁶

- 7.16 The three themes under which DIAC research projects are looked at are:
- migration outcomes, specifically understanding and assessing migration outcomes for Australia and for migrants;

13 C Hawksley *et al*, 'Migration Research and Migration Policy Making: A Study of Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand', *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 179, March 2004.

14 DIAC, *Annual Report 2011-12*, p. 17.

15 DIAC, *Annual Report 2011-12*, p. 65.

16 Dr Southern, Secretary, Policy and Program Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 21 March 2012, p. 1.

- changing mobility patterns, understanding drivers and trends in international and domestic human mobility; and
 - managing people movement, contributing to effective travel facilitation, border control compliance, status resolution and enforcement.¹⁷
- 7.17 The projects proceeded with are a combination of those that are internally driven in order to underpin policy development and those developed in response to advice provided by advisory committees.
- 7.18 Although the Department publishes a lot of research data, a consistent theme in evidence to the Committee has been the lack of research on a wide range of issues. There is concern about the decline in research capacity, especially qualitative research, relating to immigration, cultural diversity, settlement and participation.¹⁸
- 7.19 PM&C also acknowledged that there is little data available for national measurement of community tolerance of diversity.¹⁹
- 7.20 The Committee recognises the need for accurate disaggregated data to identify trends. Such disaggregation is a necessary prerequisite to identifying and measuring disadvantage.
- 7.21 DIAC's Mr Garry Fleming noted that since 2008, the Department has been modestly rebuilding some capacity and that the appointment of a chief economist had provide improved understanding and analysis capability.
- One of the things that it is allowing us to do is to get people who know how to do this stuff get different data sets joined up and talking to each other. So we are doing work, for example, with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to get their jobs data talking to our settlement data so that that can be analysed.²⁰
- 7.22 The Department is also working with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to get their data sets and to be able to marry the settlement database with census outcomes when they are published later in 2012.
- 7.23 The Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre told the Committee it had recently made an investment in a research unit to look at what is happening in the

17 Dr Southern, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 21 March 2012, p. 1.

18 Prof Andrew Jakubowicz, *Committee Hansard*, 23 February 2012, p. 38, Dr James Jupp AM, *Committee Hansard*, 14 September 2012, p. 2.

19 *Submission 82*, p. 3.

20 Mr Fleming, First Assistant Secretary, Citizenship, Settlement and Multicultural Affairs Division, *Committee Hansard*, 21 March 2012, p. 2.

local area as they had found it extremely hard to get data on where the migration patterns were going. The centre collected data from both local councils and the ABS but noted that the ABS data was very old:²¹

... the department of immigration does not collect data on secondary migration, so it is very hard to be able to formulate opinions to see how we should drive the service of the organisation to go to where the need is rather than to stay where you are and expect the clients to come to you.²²

7.24 DIAC representatives informed the Committee that the report of the Access and Equity Inquiry would include prioritised recommendations for improvements to the access and equity framework, which would in turn provide an opportunity at the Commonwealth level to set standards and a framework for data collection and publishing.²³

7.25 The report of the inquiry subsequently recommended (Recommendation 19):

That the Australian Government consider adequacy of current provision for research, including national research priorities, on the practical outcomes of the migration program. This assessment should particularly include research on interactions between the Australian Government and Access and Equity target groups and interactions with temporary entrants.²⁴

7.26 The Committee supports this recommendation.

7.27 The Committee heard that 'collection, monitoring and reporting on indicators would be an appropriate role for the agency responsible for the oversight of the access and equity strategy'.²⁵

7.28 The Committee is therefore pleased that the Access and Equity report also recommended (Recommendation 13):

That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship retain responsibility for coordination of Access and Equity policy, monitoring of implementation and consolidated performance

21 Ms Rosemary Kelada, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2011, p. 19.

22 Ms Kelada, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2011, p. 19.

23 Mr Fleming and Dr Southern, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 21 March 2012, p. 2.

24 Access and Equity Inquiry Panel, *Access and Equity for a Multicultural Australia: Inquiry into the Responsiveness of Australian Government Services to Australia's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Population*, June 2012.

25 C Gershevitch, A Galla and M Dimopolous, *Submission 455*, p. 4.

reporting across all Australian government agencies, subject to review and oversight by the Australian Multicultural Council.²⁶

7.29 Mr Fleming from DIAC explained to the Committee that the Select Council on Immigration and Settlement (SCIS) was to develop a national settlement framework which would, among other things, provide an opportunity to improve the collection, linkage and availability of data. He recognised that whilst this would not provide a research program, the gaps in data and lack of linkages for data is a significant issue.²⁷

7.30 Mr Evans from the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Tasmania also reported from the SCIS that a proposal to support a study into the economic impact of diversity was supported by the ministers:

I think that if this area of public policy is going to be taken forward, growing the evidence base around it so we are not just relying on anecdotes and our own observations of what is happening or, even worse, the media reporting on what is happening is the really important piece of work that remains to be done.²⁸

Recommendation 14

7.31 **The Committee recommends increased collection, by the Australian Government, of accurate and up-to-date disaggregated data in order to identify trends in migration and multiculturalism, and to measure and address CALD related disadvantage.**

26 Access and Equity Inquiry Panel, *Access and Equity for a Multicultural Australia: Inquiry into the Responsiveness of Australian Government Services to Australia's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Population*, June 2012.

27 *Committee Hansard*, 21 March 2012, p. 2.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 9 March 2012. pp. 6-7.

Recommendation 15

7.32 The Committee recommends the establishment of a government funded, independent collaborative institute for excellence in research into multicultural affairs with functions similar to that of the former Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research.

The institute should have a statutory framework articulating key principles of multiculturalism, functions in research and advice to government, and a cross sectoral independent board.

This institute should actively engage with local communities, private business and non-government organisations and provide data for better informed policy.

The qualitative and quantitative research capabilities of the institute must enable up-to-date and easily accessible data and research analysis on social and multicultural trends.

More dedicated research into long-term migration trends occurring within Australia and the social effects of migration – such as the local impacts of migration on cultural diversity and social inclusion within Australian society – should be supported.

The Committee particularly recommends an increased emphasis on qualitative data collection.

Recommendation 16

7.33 The Committee recommends the Department of Immigration and Citizenship collect data to support research to collect data on secondary migration in order to better drive services to where needs exist.