

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Building positive refugee-police relations

Strategies for improving refugee-police relations in regional Australia are outlined in a Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies report, which will be released at a Hobart forum today.

The report, *A Conversation on Trust: Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia*, analysed the settlement of African refugees in Tasmania from the perspective of both refugees and police.

Report co-author, Danielle Campbell, says many African refugees had been victims of state-sanctioned violence in their countries of origin and, as a result of this trauma, they mistrust government officials, police, uniformed officials and soldiers.

“All refugees have had a long history of mistrust. Refugees mistrust as a matter of survival and it was necessary for them to mistrust government officials, police, uniformed officials, soldiers, border guards and informers in order to survive.”

Ms Campbell said mistrust was a significant barrier to social inclusion for refugee individuals, families and communities.

“The establishment of institutional trust should be considered a fundamental key to long-term successful settlement,” Ms Campbell said.

The report recommends strategies to encourage and enhance positive relationships between refugees and police in regional Australia through better communication and education; forming positive partnerships; and promoting positive images of newly arrived communities.

The report, which was funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Project, also recommends increasing police awareness of the refugee experience and how it may impact on police contact such as refugee fear of police due to their experiences of war including state sanctioned violence.

“An expansion of community involvement in a range of safety and crime prevention initiatives is needed and can be done by increasing the flow of information between the refugee communities and police,” Ms Campbell said.

Tasmania Police multicultural liaison officer, Inspector Craig Waterhouse said Tasmania Police had worked with the report authors and areas where police could work with other service providers to assist humanitarian refugees had been identified.

“Police will also look at education in relation to the difficulties experienced by refugees settling in Australia,” he said.

The report will be launched today by Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson MP, at the forum “Connecting and Engaging: Facilitating Positive Police-Refugee Interactions in Regional Australia.”

Report co-author Danielle Campbell, Tasmania Police multicultural liaison officer, Inspector Craig Waterhouse and UTAS Masters graduate and African-Australian Refugee Kiros Hiruy will be available for interview at:

*Time: 12.30pm
Date: Friday, 17 July, 2009
Venue: Mercure Hotel, 156 Bathurst Street, Hobart.*

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**TASMANIAN
INSTITUTE OF LAW
ENFORCEMENT
STUDIES**





Connecting and Engaging: Facilitating Positive Police-Refugee Interactions in Regional Australia

Selected Abstracts of papers being presented at forum

African-Australians in Hobart: Displacement and Emplacement: Kiros Hiruy

The refugee situation that forced the majority of African humanitarian entrants in Hobart to flee from their “homes” is complex. In such a complex situation it is often difficult to single out one cause. Nonetheless, armed conflict seems to be central in their forced displacement out of their homes to refugee camps and cities and to resettlement in Australia. This background has significant impact on the resettlement experiences of African humanitarian entrants in Hobart. Refugees are part of the situation that led them to be “refugees”; they actively configure and are reconfigured by the situation. This complexity influences their attachment to places, how they identify and how they might belong.

Forced displacement is a key phenomenon in the life of a refugee. It is shaped by social and political changes around refugees and often shapes these changes. Caught in such complexity some African Australians in Hobart were displaced several times due to complex situations. Their displacement can be seen both as multidimensional and multidirectional. The common understanding among members of the host community is however simplistic and unidirectional. The attitude of and attributes of humanitarian entrants and their interaction with the host community is defined by their attachment to the country of origin. This simplistic frame of understanding affects the settlement experience of the humanitarian entrants. It defines refugees as victims of displacement, as an outcome of humanitarian crisis and part of the crisis. The notion that refugees are uprooted hence will not settle affects their settlement experience. On the contrary a broader understanding of displacement as a multidimensional and multidirectional phenomenon greatly improves the understanding of both negative and positive attachment to places, identity, place making and belonging among African humanitarian entrants.

Agencies, advocates and officers: the social surrounds of Australian-African communities in Victoria: Melissa Bull (Griffith University) and Denise Meredyth (Swinburne University of Technology)

This paper introduces new research exploring ways in which Victoria Police can work with other agencies to build relations of trust and security with migrant and refugee communities, especially Australian-Africans. The research will be focused on Flemington initially, though its scope may extend across three Melbourne regions (inner west, outer south-east and fringe northern suburbs) and three regional Victorian centres. The aim of the broader project is to investigate how police have adapted themselves professionally to the new demands associated with community policing and partnership-building, exploring the differences between police perspectives and those associated with other roles – of the social services, of advocates and of community representatives and stakeholders.

Sudanese refugees experiences with the Queensland criminal justice system: Dr Garry Coventry, Dr Glenn Dawes, Dr Stephen Moston and Dr Darren Palmer, (James Cook University)

This study examines the under-researched topic of Sudanese refugee perceptions and experiences of Queensland’s criminal justice system; particularly their interactions with police. Further, the study will provide a content analysis of media reporting of Sudanese peoples as both victims and perpetrators of crime. The main methodological dimensions are: analysis of police databases; focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders; a survey of Sudanese refugees; and media analysis. Data analysis will provide the basis for evidence-based policy and program development related specifically to Sudanese, police, other key agencies/service providers, and also have implications for such developments related to other minority groups.