

Settling Well? An Examination of the Settlement Experiences of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors in Australia

*Carmel Guerra, Soo-Lin Quek and Mary Anne Kenny*¹

1 Introduction and overview

This chapter examines the settlement experiences of a particularly vulnerable group of refugee children and young people: those arriving in Australia primarily by boat and who have been classified by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) as unaccompanied humanitarian minors (UHMs). Despite their shared experiences, refugee children and young people are not a homogenous group. There is considerable diversity among them, reflecting differences in the refugee flight and journey, the help or harm they experience during their journey, and the forms of welcome and resettlement support they receive upon arrival (Coventry et al, 2002).

UHMs are young people with diverse and complex needs who face the expected challenges of settling into a new country, with all of its attendant issues and stresses, but without the support infrastructure and care of a family unit. According to the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), UHMs are particularly isolated:

dealing with feelings of loss and grief, insecure housing, lack of access to adequate sport or recreation opportunities, while also

¹ The authors are grateful for the comments of Nadine Liddy, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, and from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on earlier drafts of this chapter. The authors have made every attempt to capture the current law and policy. However, readers should note that this an area subject to rapid and ongoing changes.

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