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Gender Equity Yet?
Migrant and Refugee Women Speak Out

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Since the mid-1980s in Australia, female immigrants have outnumbered male. In theory, Australian intake and settlement policies are equitable and accessible to all but it is clear that the process of migration impacts upon men and women differently. How migrants enter Australia and how they are valued by our society influences their settlement patterns and experiences. While equal opportunity may be a policy objective, outcomes are often inequitable. Monica Boyd has argued that while there is no overt gender bias in migration policy, ‘indirect factors, notably sex stereotypes and sex stratification [in education and the labour force], are at work’ enhancing the ability of men and not of women to meet admission criteria based on economic considerations.

Following an Australian national conference on Women and Migration sponsored by the Bureau of Immigration Research and held at the University of Melbourne in 1992, Ruth Fincher, Lois Foster and Rosemary Wilmot called for continued scrutiny of Australia’s immigration and refugee policies to ensure gender equity and inclusiveness. A decade later, an oral history project conducted in NSW, the ACT and Victoria is indicating that Australian legislation and practices can still be inequitable in their outcomes for migrant and refugee women.

As a first step, a number of agencies were contacted in order to identify problems which migrant and refugee women typically face. These included Migrant and Multicultural Resource Centres (MRCs), community centres, working women’s centres, migrant network organisations, and women’s and ethnic organisations. Secondly, through these agencies and also by word of mouth, migrant and refugee women themselves are providing personal viewpoints from which to evaluate official policies. This paper is in three parts: an overview of issues raised through the oral history project, some illustrative excerpts from the interviews, and a discussion of some of the methodological problems of working with focus groups.

Australia’s permanent immigration program consists of two parts: firstly, the migration component for skilled and family entrants and secondly, the humanitarian component for refugees and others with humanitarian needs. Men still dominate the Skills Stream, which is partly the result of the gendered way in which ‘skills’ are identified and valued, while women dominate the Family and Special Humanitarian Programs. The very utilitarian attitude of the government, which values migrants more for their labour market skills or wealth than for their contribution to the social fabric of the society, tends, as in the past, to work against women. The Family Stream is predominantly female because women are more likely than men to be granted spouse, fiancé or parent visas.

Women entering under these categories are particularly disadvantaged on arrival owing to their status as dependants. Service providers have indicated that it is in relation to the immigration category of ‘spouse’ that the crosscutting impact of basic immigration status with gender is most keenly felt. Immigration status determines an immigrant’s rights on arrival and basic access to services. A spouse who has been recently married goes through a two-stage process, firstly applying for a two-year provisional visa, and secondly for a permanent visa. Subsequently, there is a two-year ban on settlement benefits. Thus it can be four years before such migrants are eligible for income support. Without income support they are ineligible for all but the basic level of job network services, specific TAFE courses, Austudy, travel concessions and other dispensations that come with unemployment benefits.

Since 1 May 1997, certain people applying to migrate permanently to Australia on the basis of a personal relationship have had to establish that their relationship is genuine and of at least twelve months’ duration. This includes de facto spouses (including those where the partner is applying under other migration categories) and anyone sponsored or nominated by an Australian partner. Interviewees have revealed that culturally insensitive questions have been asked...
of women by Immigration officials in order to prove that their relationships are genuine.

Female migrants and refugees often experience dislocation, abuse and a sense of powerlessness to a greater degree than their male counterparts. The major settlement issues for women appear to be isolation, language difficulties, intergenerational conflict, and a general lack of self-esteem. The problems of isolation are multi-layered, considerable if a woman does not speak English and compounded in rural areas. Women with children but without partners can suffer discrimination from both employers and real estate agents.

Women often lack information in their own languages and are unaware of their rights. While the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs provides language classes for all recently arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants through the Adult Migrant English Program, it is more difficult for women than for men to access them, owing to their domestic responsibilities. In addition, the classes are often held in the CBD with little outreach opportunity. Although the government provides a Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) in over 100 languages and dialects, it is often inadequate for new and emerging ethnic communities. As the administrative services are concentrated in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, migrants in rural areas are less well served. If the interpreters are male, women are sometimes reluctant to speak to them. Women suffer from cultural stereotyping and prejudice in the workplace, particularly if they wear non-western clothing. Family responsibilities and childcare mostly fall to women, many of whom lack family support networks in Australia and are unfamiliar with the system.

Some state-based employment programs, such as the NSW Specialist Migrant Placement Program, deal only with migrants who have entered Australia within the last five years and have used their workplace skills for at least a year during that time. This discriminates against women, who are trying to return to work after child bearing and rearing or looking after elderly parents. Other programs focus on recently arrived migrants and ignore long-term migrants, such as elderly women of non-English speaking background (NESB) who may remain disadvantaged. Such inflexible service eligibility criteria together with physical isolation can inhibit migrant women from seeking necessary resettlement support.

Women are more likely than men to suffer from domestic violence and abuse, sometimes from within the family where traditional gender roles are reinforced. This also applies to elderly parents, especially women, brought to Australia to care for grandchildren while their recently arrived sons and daughters work long hours to establish themselves.

These elderly women are often on ten-year waiting periods for income support and are thoroughly dependent and vulnerable, losing the familial and community respect they enjoyed in their homelands. If women are subject to domestic violence and are within the two-year waiting period or on bridging or temporary visas, they feel unable to complain for fear of jeopardising a relationship upon which their transition to permanent status depends. If there are children in the relationship, women often fear for their safety or, if they leave, that their partners will have the right to keep them. Thus, they stay and remain silent.

Domestic violence is essentially an abuse of power of one person over another, either verbal or physical, actual or threatened. Men can also suffer from domestic violence but in statistical terms, it is more often the case that the person in power, the sponsor, is male and the person coming to Australia as the dependent (spouse or fiance) is female. It is in this context that the intersection of Immigration and Social Security rules, together with traditional gender and cross-cultural dynamics, can have serious implications. There is a Domestic Violence Provision within Australia's Migration Program to cover this but many NESB women are unaware of it or for a variety of reasons, including difficulty of providing proof, shame of giving the required evidence or fear of ostracism within their communities, are unable or unwilling to speak out. Women who enter Australia as fiances who become victims of domestic violence can only benefit from the Provision if they have already married their sponsor.

While some domestic violence problems amongst newly arrived migrant couples are referred to women's refuges, there are eligibility and demand constraints. More often than not, the refuges are ill-equipped to deal with NESB women and have limited facilities for children. In addition, many of these women do not have income support to pay for accommodation or to support themselves outside the home. There is a direct link, especially for women, between income support and independence and power. The Immigrant Women's Speakout Group in Western Sydney, managed and run by migrant and refugee women for migrant and refugee women, provides a specialist domestic violence service that has no interstate equivalent.

To add to the burden of relocation and associated adjustment, which all new arrivals face, refugees suffer additional hardship and varying degrees of trauma. For women, this is frequently the result of rape and other forms of physical and mental abuse. Between 1994 and 1999 all refugees in Australia, including those categorised by the government as 'unauthorised', had access to permanent protection visas and comprehensive settlement support services. With the increase in boat arrivals from 920 on 42 boats in 1998-99 to 4,174 on 75 boats in 1999-2000, the government
introduced a system of Temporary Protection Visas on 20 October 1999. This removed any benefits to 'unauthorised' arrivals over and above those required by Australia's international obligations. The intention was to send a clear message to the outside world that such arrivals were unwelcome.\(^{19}\)

This policy has had serious implications for boat people found to be refugees. After release from detention, they only have access to a three-year temporary visa in the first instance and are ineligible for the range of settlement services, some of which are gender specific, provided by Migrant Resource Centres and other government-funded agencies to which other migrants and refugees are entitled. This includes English language classes. As for other entrants on temporary visas, the only assistance that MRCs and other government agencies can provide is referral. Since the majority of those in detention centres are male, interviewees have suggested that better and separate provision for women and children needs to be made.

In 1989 an Australian Woman at Risk program (with the acronym WAR) was introduced to protect refugee women vulnerable to serious abuse, sexual assault, victimisation or harassment in situations where traditional support and protection have broken down. This includes female heads of households, single mothers, widows, and abandoned and single women. In order to qualify, however, women need to have been registered as refugees through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or an equivalent authority in the country of first refuge.\(^{11}\) The program is tiny and obviously excludes women in Australia who are asylum seekers or 'unauthorised' arrivals.

This project is concerned with how contemporary intake and settlement policies impact upon individual migrant and refugee women in Australia. Oral history here is an important mechanism for feedback to government departments and community service providers who deal directly with recently arrived migrants and refugees. As indicated at the outset, the study so far suggests that policies, which purport to be gender neutral, can still be discriminatory in practice. The following section provides excerpts from the interview material in order to illustrate the issues raised above. They are presented thematically but inevitably there is some overlap. It is important to recognise the variety of women's experiences and both the positive and negative responses to the process of migration.\(^{12}\) They may not always reflect the intent of particular policies and practices, but they are the perceptions and lived experiences of women who are the main recipients of gender bias.

### Migration decisions

**Q** And why did you migrate to Australia?

A (1st Vietnamese woman) I have to follow my husband.

A (2nd Vietnamese woman) Because I married my husband so I have to follow him.

A (3rd Vietnamese woman) Because I have marriage with my husband and I follow him. That's my life.

**Q** What influenced your choice of destination?

A (Nepalese woman) I wanted to get away from a culture of what I saw as suppress women, women's position in Nepalese is second citizens. What we say doesn't really matter and I've always been a very strong-headed person. I've always thought equality was good and why do women have to be different to men in terms of privileges so I wanted to run away, just to leave the country and come to a different country. I wanted an escape. I wanted to find something else and I found that in Australia. I found my own freedom and my own life.

### Intake policies

**Q** Do you think that the intake categories are adequate for women?

A (Nepalese woman) It is disadvantageous for women that when they come now, usually they come as a dependant of the man because he's the one who's skilled or whatever, then she has to wait two years. When they separate in the meantime or if she wants to work, she can't do anything about it.

A (Vietnamese woman) Yes, very, very hard for women especially when they get married and come to Australia. They have nowhere to go for help although there are some women's refuges to help them a lot. Some women, like they are controlled by the husbands. They are not allowed to go out, they are not allowed to have friends.

A (Service Provider) Immigration applications still have phrases like 'head of the household', 'head of the family'. Very often they would assume that is the man; the man does, and so does the family. The whole thinking of it is relatively conservative anyway, because you have family reunion which means a husband, wife and kids.

### Methods used by immigration officers to prove genuine partner relationships

**Q** Are there situations where you think women are discriminated against in the migration process?

A (Vietnamese Service Provider) Sometimes people come here to tell me that when they go through the interview, some questions are very difficult, maybe ask what your husband's underpants colour.
Q What's the colour of your husband's underpants?
A Yeah and some people told me that very funny question, you know, the women are so embarrassed because usually we don't talk like that. And even they ask so many questions like what did you eat yesterday and the husband separately to the wife so if they answer the question different they can't get genuine [partner relationship] papers.
Q Was it [your acceptance] based at all on your skills or just getting married?
A (Vietnamese woman) Only marriage.
Q Was it difficult to prove your relationship?
A From letters. Yes, they had to have the letters to prove but the best thing is my husband was ringing everyday so that way there is a telephone bill that proves that.

Settlement Services

Q You've been here for twenty years. Can you explain some of the differences between the immigration policy from when you arrived and now?
A (Vietnamese woman) When I first came to Australia if you want to sponsor your parents, spouse, visa is very easy and even your brothers. You don't have to pay a lot of money for the application fee and you don't have to go through many complex processes like now. And when you arrive here you receive support for resettling and you can go for English class, want to study, whatever. Used to receive Austudy full-time and any other services like health.
Q You had access to all services?
A (Vietnamese woman) Everything free.
Q And in terms of post-arrival migrant services, are there other things that would help women?
A (Nepalese woman) I think that MRCs could have an assessment officer who would look at women's issues, not just as a family but for women because there are a lot of women I think in that category who fall through the net. They can't access childcare, they can't access English classes because they're waiting and especially if they're escaping domestic violence, there is nowhere they can go. So I think that MRCs could have or Department of Immigration could have a special [women's] officer for support.
A (Vietnamese woman) Some people like me would like to have money support from the government so I can study but when I contact the Austudy they say I have to wait for two years.
A (NESB Service Provider) The thing that I would like to have addressed is the two-year waiting period. Coming up to ten-year waiting period for parents. And what it means to their health status. We publish things and we publish things, but I just went to a conference where we talked to other workers and we have clients ourselves who have a two-year waiting period. When women present to the hospital that they are pregnant, ready to, what it is called, to give birth. They don't present anywhere before because they are not entitled to and they only go there when they ready to give birth. Which means that they don't have any support, they could be quite unhealthy.

Powerlessness or empowerment?

Q And, as a woman, how have you found the total migration experience?
A (Nepalese woman) For me, it was a very positive experience. For me, for my own personal journey I had to leave my country, otherwise I wouldn't have found my inner core. So Australia for me is a very freeing country and as a woman, I feel very empowered to have made that choice and to come here. I can only say it was very, very positive.
Q Is there a problem with the power balance between people sponsoring others, for example, with men sponsoring fiances or whatever to come to Australia?
A (Service Provider) Oh yeah, with the spouse visas there's quite a lot of domestic violence issues and, as the Minister said, 'We seem to have become a very violent society'. And I just said, 'Well if you put people in exploitative situations with sponsoring...' So the reality is that people can be sent back immediately if they leave that relationship and so they're under enormous pressure to stay in that relationship.

Dependency

Q What do you think are the main implications for women regarding the policies?
A (Service Provider) I think they are treated like dependents and so they are never treated as adult citizens, grown ups in their own right, they are always attached to someone else. An appendix of the main person who is coming. So they just don't get treated properly.
Q Did you feel very dependent on this Australian man whom you didn't know for that long?
A (1st Filipina) I don't know what feelings I had. We went shopping because I have two kids and I'm not working at the moment. My husband just says, 'Gee she can spend money'. It's just a joke from him but I feel bad about it and I said, 'I have to find a job soon', and he said, 'You have to because we are four eating now and you are a big eater.' He always joke but it makes me feel bad because I'm not used to it.
Q And you came on a fiance's visa?
A (2nd Filipina) A spouse visa because I got married.
here in Australia and went back to the Philippines to file my permanent residency but after I left
my husband I wrote to Immigration here, I said, ‘I am already separated from my husband and
have a restraining order and support from other government organisations and if you think that
I don’t deserve to stay here in Australia you can send me back.’ Because one thing, I don’t know the
law here before, my brother-in-law was confusing me. He is an Australian, he knows what is going
on here and I am just a migrant, being controlled by a husband so I don’t know where to go.

Isolation

Q Are there any other problems that spring to mind for women, in a regional sense?
A (Service Provider) One of the problems living in an area like this, there’s quite a large rural hinterland
to the main city centres. You’ve got tracts of bush and farms and it’s been our experience that this is
where some of the women get into particular problems. They’re sponsored by somebody who
lives in this fairly isolated way and as a result there are a number of factors which don’t make for the
happyest settlement process. Some of the women that we’ve come across have come from urban centres
themselves with large family networks and all sorts of things at their fingertips, friends and a family
and so on and they find themselves sitting in an isolated farm house with nobody to talk to except
the chooks.
Q And no English to even understand the TV or radio?
A (Service Provider) Well yes exactly, those things can be there as well. So the isolation factor is really,
really debilitating for many women and on top of that of course you often get degrees of domestic
violence frankly. You get some horrendous stories coming out. I’m not going to say it’s standard
practice but...

Domestic violence

Q Do you know of any people within the community for whom this has been a big problem with domestic
violence or dependency?
A (Vietnamese Service Provider) Many.
A (Vietnamese woman) Especially when the man controlling you all the time.
Q And do they come to see you?
A (Vietnamese Service Provider) Yeah, sometimes, you know, they are the victim of domestic violence.
They don’t know where to go and they come here to ask for help and we give them referral to some
women’s refuge.
Q Do they normally not have a special women’s officer who might talk to them about particularly
women’s issues?
A (Nepalese woman) I’m not sure what they should call it because there is a domestic violence section,
but women very often I think would be scared to go and talk to them just in case it jeopardises
their papers.
Q Is it a bigger issue amongst newly arrived migrant families than perhaps it should be?
A (Service Provider) Yeah, yeah. Some may come more in terms of emotional abuse not so much
physical abuse but there’s certainly the pressures that make a lot of people crack. It’s also on children
too. The load that’s sometimes carried by those children is just incredible.
Q Because they’re acting as interpreters between their parents and the outside world?
A (Service Provider) That as well. And the parents often pretend that nothing has happened but the
child is really suffering... to face it, the children might have suffered also. It’s just too much for them
to bear. It’s a big problem because it’s gotta be left up to the woman. We don’t report them. We don’t
have to at this point. With children we often say, ‘Look, we should report this so how do you want
to do this?’ With domestic violence it’s a little bit more difficult because we know what it can mean.
Of course, if the police get wind of it, then it’s now mandatory for them to pursue it, but the thing is, it’s
often a lot more than just the marriage, it’s cultural, it’s so much to ask of some women. They’d rather
still go home and it’s gotta be their decision. So at times we can’t even refer them on. We always tell
them all the options and quite often they choose not to take it up. And because we’re the only one that
speaks their language in the region then it’s often like losing the person as a whole or trying to deal
with it as best as you can because they’re not going to go [to the authorities] which means that you lose
them completely because if they don’t even have you to talk to then you’re probably going to do them
an even bigger disservice. So, it is a difficult issue and certainly with children it becomes very difficult.
Q And fiancés aren’t eligible? [for the Domestic Violence Provisions]
A (Service Provider) Well, no. There are various ways that men bring women to Australia telling them that
they are going to marry them. The best way is on a fiance visa but other ways are as visitors and often
women do not know about their actual rights or, they don’t know the difference between one visa or
another. Most human beings in Australia don’t know the difference between one visa and another. It is
hugely complicated. But if you are coming from another country and you can’t speak English very
well, I mean, you know, you are going to basically believe what this man who is going to marry you,
says. So women come out on all sorts of visas
which basically often entitle them to nothing.
Q And they can be packed off at any time?
A Yes. And they're on bridging visas and all sorts
of things and they're told that they can be packed
off at any time and often it's true but at other times
it's not true but they don't know it's not true. So this
is a problem. this really is a problem about
immigration rules. They just make the power
dynamics even worse than usual.

Older women/Parent category
Q What are the problems for older women who come
over here?
A (Vietnamese Service Provider) Very isolated because
they don't speak English. They stay home all the
time and then sometimes they have to financially
depend on the family member. So very difficult.
Q Are they often left at home to baby-sit the children
while the parents work?
A (Vietnamese Service Provider) Yeah, many conflicts
within the families. I mean, some old women they
like to stay home to look after the grandchildren
because they want to help their children but some
feel very isolated, very depressed. Older Vietnamese
women have particular problems with isolation
and depression.

Women's health
Q Are there specific health issues for migrant women
in this area?
A (Service Provider) Yeah, not just in this area but
generally women suffer a harder sort of deal in
terms of migration because they have to take care
of a lot of the issues in the family, particularly
migrant women. There are also a lot of taboos in
terms of sexual health, reproductive health, all that
sort of thing. We try to teach women to, you know,
take care a bit more of themselves.

Female genital mutilation
Q Are there programs to educate people about it?
A (Service Provider) Yeah, there's the female genital
mutilation project and there's a coordinator that runs
it. And there's a whole lot of community educators
who are trying to run groups and all that. They
usually run them as part of a cultural women's
health course that goes for ten weeks and in about
week six or seven they sort of broach the issue after
the women are comfortable talking about cultural
mores, sexual health and things like that.

English classes/childcare
Q But how can the people come if they've got their
kids with them?
A (Service Provider) Childcare is an issue just to have
English classes. We've lost the childcare centre
we used to have specific for English classes. But
childcare centres are also a fairly foreign concept
for some of the migrants, the new migrants. They
find it hard to just put them in childcare centres.
Others, like professional people, don't find it quite
as hard because they had some form of childcare
in their old country too. Then there is the home
tutoring scheme where the teachers go into the
homes. That helps a little bit too but childcare
is always an issue because it's always hard to get
them [the children] in and you have to get them
in before you get a job and it costs so much.
Q And it's really left to women to deal with that?
A (Service Provider) Yeah.

Intergenerational conflict
Q It must be an issue for women too when their kids
become very Australian and they don't even speak
English. The cultural divide there?
A (Service Provider) Some parents have said children
have too many rights. Society takes the rights away
from parents to bring up children.

The overall migration experience
Q Are you happy in Australia, do you like it?
A (1st Vietnamese woman) At the beginning always
unhappy but in the future I hope that is better.
A (2nd Vietnamese woman) When I come in here
I see that Australia is a free country and the culture
here is the best culture in the world because it
is multicultural and I hope that my children will
study well in this country.
A (Filipina) I'm working at the moment. I'm very
happy but before I have this job there is always
discrimination, still discrimination in the
workplace which should be addressed.

Value of the project
Q Is this a worthwhile project to be pursuing?
Is it useful for you?
A (Greek female Service Provider) Extremely useful.
There is not much research on these issues.
A (Male NESB Service Provider) Why it's really
important is that it validates the concerns we've
been raising for years and years. We are in a
situation where the government listens to us but
whether they're going to do something about it is
a different question. We write an awful lot of reports
and submissions and policy and consultations and
we've had a lot of meetings with ministers but,
you know, they always see us as one of those lobby
groups. Obviously we are specialised services
so obviously we're always going to say that
we don't have enough funding, and people are
disadvantaged and cuts in services affect women
and migrants and whatever. But when someone who
carries out research from an independent, objective
point of view validates that, then obviously it's
going to be of help to us.

The last section of the paper explores some of the
methodological issues associated with the use of focus
groups. Focus groups allow people to be interviewed
in a group setting. Women, especially NESB women,
often feel more willing to contribute and are more
comfortable as part of a group. They are less
intimidated and shy. If interpreters are necessary,
group interviews can be less expensive for the
researcher than individual interviews. This is an
important consideration in unfunded projects or
projects with small budgets.

When it was necessary to employ an interpreter for
this project, the focus groups were chosen on the basis
of common language and ethnicity. In other cases,
the groups were composed of people with common
experiences, such as a refugee background or shared
culture. As with individual interviews, the choice of
venue can be significant: it could be the home of the
interviewer or one of the participants, perhaps the
coordinator of the group, or a more neutral or public
place, such as a Migrant Resource Centre or ethnic
clubroom. The venue and seating arrangements can
facilitate or alienate and power relationships need to
be considered. Even the refreshments and timing of
the breaks can be significant factors in the successful
running of focus group interviews and cultural
protocols need to be observed.

In this project, group numbers were kept small, no
more than five people. The larger the group, the more
likelihood of discord or conflict. Some of the problems
included domination by the more articulate and vocal
participants or those with a better command of the
language being used, while others were silenced or
marginalised. For example:

Q And what about you, do you think there are services
that are not provided?
A (from someone else) Oh, she's so shy she can't
answer.

Thus there can be a loss of input from the more
introvert participants. If the interviewees already know
one another, there can be pre-existing group dynamics
and cliques. Interviewers need to watch for potential
conflict through body language, to guard against
disengagement and disempowerment, to be inclusive
and step in if participants look as if they are being
ignored or where certain views are being overruled
by others. It is often a much more demanding exercise
than one-to-one interviewing.

There is also the phenomenon of 'group think', of
people changing their ideas or modifying what they
remember to fit in with a consensus view. Group
sessions can also be seen by some as an opportunity
to voice criticisms. The situation as a whole requires
more careful monitoring than individual interviews.
The discussion can more easily become bogged down
in a particular issue, and an astute interviewer needs
to move the questioning along and keep the discussion
on track.

More time was needed for preparation, particularly
in terms of the structure of the interviews. The issues
have to be limited to allow for multiple voices and
discussion and resolution of differences, partly because
it is often more difficult to arrange follow up
interviews owing to the logistics of getting people
together again. In addition, the problems of transcribing
group interviews are immense. Simply identifying the
speakers can be difficult: people talk simultaneously
and interrupt each other. Voices, and consequently
stories, become confused.

It is important to be aware of the strengths and
weaknesses of the group approach well in advance.

Despite the shortcomings outlined above, there are
advantages that are particularly relevant for the
interviewees. Most enjoyed getting together with others
with similar backgrounds and experiences. At the time
it provided them with support and empathy and, in the
longer term, has led to the building up of important
social and community networks. The gathering
of collective information also meant that members
of the group had immediate feedback. Thus the sharing
of information through focus groups was not only
beneficial to the researcher but also to the participants
themselves.

NOTES
1 Collaborative research on gender and different aspects of
migration policy is currently being undertaken with Dr Jan Ryan
of Edith Cowan University.
2 Graeme Hugo, 'Demographic and Spacial Aspects of
Immigration' in Australian Immigration: A Survey of the Issues,
M. Wooden, R. Holton, G. Hugo & J. Shun, AGPS, Canberra,
1994, p.65; R. Madden and S. Young, Women and Men
Immigrating to Australia: Their Characteristics and Immigration
Decisions, AGPS, Canberra, 1993 and BIR [Bureau of
3 Monica Boyd, 'International Migration Policies and the Status
of Female Migrants', Proceedings of the UN Expert Group
Meeting on International Migration Policies and the Status
4 Ruth Fincher, Lois Foster and Rosemary Wilmot, Gender Equity
and Australian Immigration Policy, Canberra, 1993. See also
R. Fincher, L. Foster, W. Giles and V. Preston, 'Gender and
Migration Policy' in Immigration and Refugee Policy Australia


12 All the women quoted were interviewed in NSW, the ACT or Victoria in 2000 and 2001. The tapes and transcripts are in the possession of Michele Langfield. For reasons of confidentiality, names, dates and locations are not supplied. The research assistance of Jane Yule and the support of Deakin University in funding this research through a Faculty of Arts Research Priority Area Grant, 2000, are gratefully acknowledged.

13 Some of the issues discussed here in relation to focus groups were raised at a workshop entitled ‘Working with Focus Groups’, conducted by Jude Walker, Training Operations Manager, Baytec Institute for Learning and Development, Ltd. held for Deakin University staff on 13 December 2000. Others are discussed in Yolanda Wadsworth, Do it Yourself Research, Allen & Unwin, 1997, pp.42-43.