



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

Media Release

8 December 2005

MIGRANTS TO NEWCASTLE LET DOWN BY GOVERNMENT

The Federal Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs (DIMIA) must guarantee that they will fix the appalling administration of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) in Newcastle and the Hunter, following the awarding of the new contract to a Sydney-based consortium on 1 October. That this is a "transition" period is no excuse for letting down the most vulnerable of new arrivals to our community.

Following my representations to the Minister since September, a Departmental officer visited Newcastle late in November to investigate the many reports of problems and neglect. As a result, some changes have been made by the IHSS provider, Australian Centre for Languages (ACL). But even these changes give a lesser service than previously existed and in my view still fall short of what is needed to bring about successful settlement outcomes and support meaningful integration into our community and our ways.

In November I outlined to Parliament some dreadful examples of inadequate support from ACL to African families arriving in Newcastle.

You cannot expect people arriving in our community to sleep on the floor or a family of eight to survive on a loaf of bread, a dozen eggs, a tub of butter and a \$50 food voucher for ten days. This is not a Newcastle welcome to our new humanitarian refugees fleeing trauma and suffering.

The migrant services provided in Newcastle have always been of an extremely high standard, and it is disappointing that this reputation and harmony is being undermined by the new Sydney-based arrangements for the delivery of IHSS services that has diminished local participation.

After meeting with several of these families, social and health workers, service providers, and leaders of the African Australian communities, I am concerned that the new contract arrangements aren't working in the best interests of these migrants - who have already faced great trauma before coming to our country.

DIMIA's initial intervention that found breaches in service delivery and gained an increase in staff must continue, with a guarantee that the IHSS contract will be delivered properly in our community or be revoked.

Contact: Sharon Grierson on 4926 1555

Canberra
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Ph: 02 6277 4221
Fax: 02 6277 8461



Newcastle
427 Hunter Street
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300
Ph: 02 4926 1555
Fax: 02 4926 1895
www.sharongrierson.com