

Living and Working in the Red Centre: Migrants in Alice Springs

Project Report

Migration Snapshot of the Centre: Planning for a Positive Future

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	8
1. Introduction	11
1.1. Background.....	11
1.2. Aims, objectives and implications	12
2. Alice Springs overview	13
2.1. Population in Alice Springs.....	13
2.2. Changes in migrant population in Alice Springs 2009-2016	15
3. Methodology.....	17
3.1. Documentation review.....	18
3.2. Migrant survey	18
3.3. Focus group discussions	19
3.4. Data analysis.....	20
4. Results.....	20
4.1. Respondent profile.....	21
4.1.1. Origins	21
4.1.2. Family structure	22
4.1.3. Years in Alice Springs	23
4.1.4. Age structure.....	25
4.2. Employment and income	27
4.3. Migration experiences—moving to Alice Springs	29
4.3.1. Motivations to move to Alice Springs.....	30
4.3.2. Seeking support for migration and settlement	31
4.3.3. Experience of moving to Alice Springs.....	32
4.4. Adaptation to changes	34
4.4.1. Changes and problems.....	34

4.4.2.	Opportunities and challenges	35
4.5.	Migrants' perceptions of successful settlement	37
4.6.	Migrants' overall satisfaction	39
4.6.1.	Understanding of Alice Springs.....	39
4.6.2.	Willingness to recommend Alice Springs as a migrant destination and reasons why.....	41
4.6.3.	Satisfaction ratings.....	41
5.	In-depth understanding of main concerns and issues.....	44
5.1.	Common issues shared by migrants and stakeholders.....	44
5.2.	General concerns of migrant support services	46
5.2.1.	Availability of services and supports for migrants.....	46
5.2.2.	Lack of access to services.....	48
5.2.3.	Connecting services and migrants	49
5.3.	Housing.....	50
5.3.1.	Housing problems	50
5.3.2.	Public housing for migrants	51
5.4.	Community safety and security	52
5.5.	Educational opportunities.....	53
5.5.1.	Access to proper educational opportunities	54
5.5.2.	Mismatch of employment and education/qualifications: An opportunity for further education	55
5.6.	Discrimination and exploitation	56
5.7.	Multicultural community integration	57
5.7.1.	Facilitating integration of migrant communities	57
5.7.2.	Engaging cultural inclusion with local community	58
5.7.3.	Lack of resources for multicultural activities.....	59
5.8.	Other issues.....	59

6.	Business ownership	60
7.	Discussion.....	61
7.1.	Current size of migrant population	61
7.2.	Family-focused migrant services.....	62
7.3.	Decent employment opportunities.....	63
7.4.	A better mutual understanding between migrants and stakeholders	65
7.5.	Holistic approach in attracting and retaining migrants	66
8.	Conclusions	67
8.1.	Recommendations	67
9.	References	70
10.	Appendices.....	72
	Appendix 1: Questionnaire	72
	Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion Outlines for Migrants	77
	Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion Outlines for Other stakeholders	78
	Appendix 4: Business owner questionnaire	80
	Appendix 5: Datasets.....	80
	Appendix 6: Migrant Services in Alice Springs, the NT and Australia	82
	Appendix 7: MCSCA's Services and Programs	86

Index of Tables

Table 1: Estimated Resident Population (ERP) in Alice Springs	14
Table 2: Employment by people aged 15 years and over.....	14
Table 3: Structure of full-time equivalent employment by industry sector	14
Table 4: Alice Springs, Overseas born: Birthplace, 2016 and 2011 Census.....	16
Table 5: Qualifications by people aged 15 years and over	17
Table 6: Profile of surveyed migrant households	22
Table 7: Profile of adult migrant members represented in the survey	22
Table 8: Other issues raised in the survey	44
Table 9: Statistics of MCSCA client contacts by ethnicity group*	47

Index of Figures

Figure 1: Origins of migrants in Alice Springs	21
Figure 2: Years when migrants migrated to Australia and Alice Springs.....	23
Figure 3: Years living in Alice Springs	24
Figure 4: Years living elsewhere in Australia before moving to Alice Springs.....	24
Figure 5: Trends of newly migrated people arriving or moving to Alice Springs	25
Figure 5: Current age of adult migrants	26
Figure 6: Age of adult migrants when they migrated to Australia	26
Figure 7: Perceived easiness to find a job.....	27
Figure 8: Industries employing migrants	28
Figure 9: Annual household income of migrant families.....	29
Figure 10: Main keywords about Alice Springs.....	29
Figure 11: Frequency of keywords about Alice Springs.....	30
Figure 12: Motivations to migrate to Australia	30
Figure 13: Motivations to move to Alice Springs.....	31

Figure 14: Information sources for migrants to learn about Alice Springs before arrival ..	31
Figure 15: Where to get settlement support?	32
Figure 16: Visualaised experiences of migrants in first moving to Alice Springs	33
Figure 17: Experience narratives in first moving to Alice Springs	34
Figure 18: Changes to adapt to a new lifestyle.....	34
Figure 19: Problems with migration	35
Figure 20: Migration as an opportunity or challenge	35
Figure 21: Perceived opportunities by migrants in Alice Springs	36
Figure 22: Perceived challenges by migrants in Alice Springs	37
Figure 23: perceived successful settlement	38
Figure 24: Frequency of participation in the Alice Springs community	38
Figure 25: Intention to return to home countries	39
Figure 26: Perceptions of narratives about Alice Springs	40
Figure 27: Things about Alice Springs to recommend	41
Figure 28: Migrant's satisfaction ratings	42
Figure 29: Years lived in Alice Springs of migrant business owners	41
Figure 30: Where migrant business owners have sought assistance/information.....	42
Figure 31: Issues to be addressed to make Alice Springs more welcoming.....	52

Index of Text Boxes

Box 1- Migrants' concerns:	46
Box 2- Service providers' understanding of issues faced by migrants:	46
Box 3- We support migrants	47
Box 4- Many services are available to migrants but not really accessible to them	49
Box 5- Migrants need holistic services.....	49
Box 6- Deliver tailor-made services to migrants.....	50

Box 7- We are here to provide services	50
Box 8- Migrants' perception on public housing	51
Box 9- Housing services	52
Box 10- Migrants' concern about crimes.....	53
Box 11- Lack of childcare services.....	54
Box 12- No higher education in the town.....	55
Box 13- Services for international students.....	55
Box 14- Mismatched employment and education/qualifications	56
Box 15- Discrimination cases	57
Box-16: Migrants are willing to communicate with communities	58
Box-17: Facilitating integration of migrant communities.....	58
Box 18- Conflict between migrants and local community.....	59
Box 19- Facilities for community integration	59

Executive Summary

Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia (MCSCA) undertook this project with funding from a Regional Economic Development Fund grant, administered by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (formerly Department of Trade, Business and Innovation). Research for the project was undertaken by Dr Benxiang Zeng, an independent consultant, between July 2020 and June 2021.

The need for this project has arisen from several factors:

- Increasing requests to MCSCA for information on the needs and aspirations of the migrant community from a range of service providers, government and other stakeholders.
- Lack of readily accessible and relevant data from alternative sources other than the 2016 Census, which provides more generic data.
- The need to be able to ensure that Alice Springs can continue to attract and retain migrants in order to boost our population and meet current and future employment needs.

Additionally, there was a clear need for a robust evidence base regarding service provision for migrants across a number of sectors including health, education and housing

The project collected data about migrants in Alice Springs to establish a strong evidence base regarding migrant issues in Alice Springs and Central Australia. It is expected that this data will allow service providers, policy makers and other stakeholders to better understand local migrant and migration issues behind the statistical data in regional Australia, and to inform policy makers and the community on ways to attract and retain migrants to regional areas and allow their smooth transition to the host society.

The project suggests that migrants are generally satisfied with their migration experiences in Alice Springs. All stakeholders consider Alice Springs as a welcoming destination for migrants, although some issues remain unresolved. It is clear from the data that job opportunities, family/friend ties and the local lifestyle are the main driving forces that bring people to Alice Springs. Perceived successful settlement determinants include: employment outcome and satisfaction with current job, accommodation, community safety, social inclusion and community acceptance.

Stakeholders generally understand migrant and migration issues, and appreciate migrants' contribution to the region. They acknowledge the importance of migration for the economic development and sustainability of Alice Springs and the need to retain migrants in the long term. Migrants contribute significantly to local labour forces, especially in some industry sectors such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Education and Training, Administrative and Support Services, Accommodation and Food Services, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Migrants have generally a positive perception of Alice Springs and would recommend Alice Springs to their families, friends, other migrants and migrants-to-be.

There are also several ongoing issues facing migrants. While some issues are common to regional migrants across Australia, such as inaccessibility to affordable housing,

unavailability of local tertiary education, a lack of English language services and inadequate tailor-made support services, some issues are of relatively greater concern in Alice Springs, such as mismatched employment with education/qualifications, deteriorated community safety, insufficient childcare services (associated with holding back migrants from workplace participation) and geographical and psychological isolation. Generally speaking, a wide range of services are available, but some gaps still exist. Migrants and stakeholders have also identified the need for more mutual understanding and better collaboration to address migrant and migration issues in Alice Springs.

This report proposes some general recommendations for future action:

- It is recommended that government agencies, service providers and MCSCA work collaboratively to establish a regular consultation mechanism between migrants, government agencies and other service providers.
- It is recommended that the Northern Territory Government (NTG) provides extra support to MCSCA to create a service coordination mechanism. This mechanism would include development of a migrant service strategy and annual working plans, as well as service delivery coordination.
- It is recommended that a housing assistance program for migrants is established by the NTG, as a special category of its 'Affordable Housing Scheme'. This program would specially target newly arrived migrants to provide short-term accommodation solutions.
- It is recommended that the NTG leads an initiative to work together with the Commonwealth Government to explore better pathways for qualification recognition.
- It is recommended that MSCSA seeks funding to run a series of workshops and information sessions to raise awareness of discrimination, racism and workplace bullying associated issues.
- It is recommended that the NTG and Alice Springs Town Council work collaboratively to secure resources to provide or build a permanent space for migrant communities to host various activities to celebrate cultural diversity.
- It is recommended that the government reviews its policies and programs in relation to the attraction and retention of migrants, fully consulting migrants and the broader communities in the review process and appreciating public perceptions and word-of-mouth.
- It is recommended that the Alice Springs Town Council, in conjunction with local migrant service organisations such as MCSCA and other stakeholders, develops a multicultural policy for Alice Springs. This policy is underpinned by the concept of Alice Springs as a 'Welcoming Town for Migrants'.

- It is recommended that the NTG supports regular studies on migrants in the NT and Alice Springs to track changes and trends to inform government decision making, industry development, service delivery and local community development.
- **It is recommended** that the NTG further engages with migrant business owners to support the sustainability of migrant businesses in Alice Springs/Central Australia, including support in finding and retaining skilled employment, providing accessible and targeted business management training, providing advice and support to grow existing migrant businesses, and supporting engagement with existing networking and information sources and opportunities.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In June 2020, there were over 7.6 million migrants living in Australia and 29.8% of Australia's population were born overseas (ABS, 2021). Interest in Australia as a location for migrant and refugee settlement has increased over the years, and settlement in rural, regional and remote Australia remains a priority for both Commonwealth and Territory governments. Immigration has been regarded as an important factor contributing to population growth and an important source of labour supply for Australia (Treasury, 2015).

International migrants to Australia, whatever their visa types, are generally highly urbanised, tending to settle in capital cities. There are, however, small but significant flows of migrants who move beyond the city to certain regional towns and districts. Although migrants follow various pathways to these locations, previous research has shown that most migrants are initially attracted to or are willing to move to regional areas for employment reasons (Feist et al., 2014). Others, particularly those with a refugee background, move to be with extended families and small communities of fellow nationals. A proportion stay on permanently for cheaper living conditions, a safe environment, quiet lifestyle and other aspects unique to regional living (Barrie et al., 2017).

As international migration has played an increasingly important role in regional population growth, economic development and sustainability for regional areas in Australia, regional migration has been receiving considerable attention from not just researchers and policy makers, but also from the stakeholders in these migrant destinations including industries, service providers and local communities. Previous research on regional migration issues has covered a broad range of topics, such as who is settling in regional Australia and why, what their experiences are, what benefits they offer regional communities, what issues and challenges they face settling in local communities, and how government, service providers and communities can help them (such as: Australian Migrant Resource Centre, 2019; Argent & Tonts, 2015; Wickramarachchi & Butt, 2014; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008).

Alice Springs has welcomed and assisted in the integration of people from a diversity of countries. Government agencies, community services and local employers have assisted migrants to settle and now call Alice Springs their home. According to the 2016 Census, approximately 23.4% of Alice Springs' population, or 5,779 people, were born overseas in more than 60 different countries.

As a community-based organisation that has been dedicated in serving local migrant communities for more than 30 years, MCSCA has received an increasing number of requests, for quantitative and qualitative data from schools, housing and emergency accommodation providers, funding bodies (NTG and Australian Government), and the health, childcare, aged care and disability services. However, because Alice Springs is not a port of entry for migration, it is difficult to gain an accurate assessment of new migrant arrivals to the area. Most arrivals have already been settled interstate but move to Alice Springs seeking employment and needing support services, especially accommodation. We are also aware that services are being increasingly stretched and that without access to reliable data, it is difficult for these services to plan for the future.

Additionally, given the role that migrants are expected to play in growing the Territory's population, as well as the specific roles they play in some industry sectors -- Health, Education and Training, Administrative and Support Services, Hospitality and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services -- is important for the broader community's economic and social wellbeing that there are the right conditions to retain these workers in Central Australia.

NTG has positioned migration as a key issue in the *2018-28 Northern Territory Population Growth Strategy* and stated that it will "strive to change outdated and poorly informed perceptions of the Northern Territory held by some target migration market segments and instead, highlight the boundless possibilities" (Northern Territory Government, 2018b, p. 8). The population policy will focus on 'attracting investment and creating jobs', 'attracting and retaining migrants', 'enhancing livability' and other areas (p. 4). Local government, such as Alice Springs Town Council, is also able to contribute to building Alice Springs into a more welcoming destination for migrants, for example by mobilising more community funding to support multicultural activities, engaging businesses and communities in creating better employment opportunities, facilitating cultural inclusion among communities, integrating various services to meet migrants' needs, and conducting multiculturalism-oriented destination promotion.

Given the significance of migrants to the Alice Springs economy, and lack of robust evidence in relation to migrant needs and issues in related service delivery, there is an urgent need to have more accurate information on the current status of the migrant population in Alice Springs, and more in-depth insights about migration issues to inform government, organisations and communities to create a more welcome environment to retain migrants, and further to attract more migrants, to Central Australia.

1.2. Aims, objectives and implications

In response to the need for accurate information about migrants in Alice Springs, this project aims to capture data regarding migrants' motivations to move and remain in the region, the capacity of the existing migrant cohort to fulfill skills gaps in the local workforce, and service and support needs. The project will provide hard evidence of migrant needs and current challenges and facilitate interconnection between migrants and government, organisations and communities. It also expects to provide recommendations for governments and other organisations in policy making and service improvement.

The specific objectives of the project include:

- 1) collecting a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information, such as a profile of migrants, their experiences coming to Alice Springs, expectations of migration, education and employment, difficulties and issues, their future plans, their perceived migration life, and overall satisfaction.
- 2) providing a preliminary analysis of migration experience, aspirations, challenges and issues for migrants living and working in Central Australia, especially in Alice Springs.

This project engages migrant communities to understand their current status and experiences of living and working in Alice Springs and their expectations on migration. It

also investigates government, organisations and local communities to understand the policy environment, service availability for migrants in Central Australia and the interconnection between migrants and local communities in Alice Springs. On one hand, this project will benefit migrants in Central Australia to pursue a better settlement. On the other hand, it will help inform the government's decision making and contribute to the social and economic engagement and cultural inclusion of migrants in Alice Springs. Moreover, the data collected will be used by MCSCA and other organisations for project planning to improve service delivery, grant applications, and in policy and program development.

This report summarises the information collected from the migrant survey and focus group discussions. It draws a big picture about migrants in Alice Springs, and their current status, experiences and expectations. It also reports the perceptions on migration and migrants from other key stakeholders, including government and service providers. Based on the survey and focus discussions, important issues associated with migration and migrants in Alice Springs are discussed and recommendations provided.

2. Alice Springs overview

This section provides an overview of Alice Springs to provide a background for this project. Most information summarised in this section is based on the 2016 Census and some previous studies. Although some of these studies are outdated, they still give a general picture of migration in Alice Springs in the absence of other data sources. The 2016 Census is the most complete source of information on the population, although the accuracy of Census data for remote and very remote areas such as Alice Springs is less than that for metropolitan areas. The data presented below provides context for interpreting and understanding the results of MCSCA's study.

2.1. Population in Alice Springs

This project's focus is on migrants in the Alice Springs Town Council Local Government Area (LGA) (referred to as 'Alice Springs' hereafter), which accommodates most migrants in the broader Central Australian region.

The town of Alice Springs (its Arrernte name is Mparntwe, pronounced m'barn-twa) has a long history as the traditional lands of the Central Arrernte people, and more recently as a service center for the pastoral and mining sectors and communities. Today, Alice Springs is the third largest settlement in the Northern Territory after Darwin and Palmerston, with a population of just over 26,000 (Estimated Resident Population, or ERP) in 2020 (refer to Table 1). Just under one in five residents (18%) was Indigenous in 2016 (ABS 2017a). Alice Springs is also a focus for tourism, as a base for visitors to experience Aboriginal cultures and amazing natural landscapes such as Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Watarrka National Park, and the Tjoritja/West MacDonnell National Park.

There are a number of different ways of measuring the population of an area. The Census counts people where they are on the night of the Census (enumerated population) and also by where they usually live (usual residence). According to the 2016 Census, the usual resident population of the Alice Springs Town Council LGA was 24,753. However, the most

accurate count of the total population is Estimated Resident Population (ERP), which factors in an estimate of those missed in the Census and those who were overseas on Census night. It is usually higher than the Census count. The ERP of the Alice Springs LGA was 26,518 in 2016 and 26,448 in 2020 (Table 1). Table 1 shows that since 2011 the Alice Springs' ERP has been slowly declining.

Table 1: Estimated Resident Population (ERP) in Alice Springs

Year (ending June 30)	Number	Change in number	Change in percent
2006	26,700	--	--
2007	26,961	+261	+0.98
2008	27,466	+505	+1.87
2009	28,068	+602	+2.19
2010	28,397	+329	+1.17
2011	28,489	+92	+0.32
2012	28,355	-134	-0.47
2013	28,124	-231	-0.81
2014	27,486	-638	-2.27
2015	26,843	-643	-2.34
2016	26,518	-325	-1.21
2017	26,554	+36	+0.14
2018	26,502	-52	-0.20
2019	26,420	-82	-0.31
2020	26,448	+28	+0.11

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Population Growth, Australia* (3218.0). (cited from: <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/reports?WebID=100>)

As per the 2016 Census, among those people who reported being in the labour force in Alice Springs, 96.5% were employed (including 75.8% were employed full time, 20.7% were employed part-time), and 3.5% were unemployed (Table 2) (ABS, 2017b).

Table 2: Employment by people aged 15 years and over

	% in Overseas born people of Alice Springs	% in whole population of Alice Springs	% in whole population of the NT
Employed	97.6	96.5	92.6
(Including part-time)	-	(20.7)	(20.8)
Unemployed	2.4	3.5	7.4

According to National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) 2021 (Table 3), in Alice Springs, the industry which employs most people has been Health Care and Social Assistance, followed by Public Administration and Safety, Construction, Education and Training, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Transport Postal and Warehousing, and Professional Scientific and Technical Services.

Table 3: Structure of full-time equivalent employment by industry sector

	2019/20*	2016**
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Industry	Alice Springs	NT	Migrants in Alice Springs
	%	%	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0.9	2.1	0
Mining	0.2	5.4	0
Manufacturing	1.7	3.6	1.5
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	2	2.3	0.6
Construction	10.7	9	3.2
Wholesale Trade	1.7	2.1	0.3
Retail Trade	7.3	7.1	9.6
Accommodation and Food Services	5.2	4.9	9.3
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	4.8	4.8	4.2
Information Media and Telecommunications	1.6	1.1	0.5
Financial and Insurance Services	0.6	1	1.0
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1.6	1.5	0.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	4.8	5.8	4.1
Administrative and Support Services	3.5	3.2	3.1
Public Administration and Safety	14.6	16.7	15.5
Education and Training	10	8.3	7.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	21.2	13.2	34.7
Arts and Recreation Services	2.9	2.3	1.3
Other Services	4.9	5.5	3.5
Total industries	100	100	100

* Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2021. Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id informed decisions. NIEIR-ID data are adjusted each year, using updated employment estimates. Each release may change previous years' figures. (Cited from: <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/employment-by-industry-fte?WebID=100&sEndYear=2019>)

** Source: 2016 Census (derived from: Shalley, et al., 2020).

As per the 2016 Census, the median weekly household income in Alice Springs was \$1937 (or \$100,724 annually) in 2016 (ABS, 2017b).

2.2. Changes in migrant population in Alice Springs 2009-2016



Photo credit: Alice Springs Citizenship Ceremony, from Alice Springs Town Council's Annual Report 2019/2020.

The Northern Territory Government welcomes and supports the Australian Government's strategic approach to population planning and management and the specific focus on regional migration. This includes changes to migration policy settings that provide incentives and increase the attractiveness of regional jurisdictions to skilled migrants, humanitarian refugees and international students (Northern Territory Government, 2019). For example, during 2009–2011 the Northern Territory Government made targeted visits to overseas regions where they were likely to attract skilled migrants and their families to the NT. For central Australia, this strategy sought to fill skilled vacancies in the Alice Springs Hospital (a large regional hospital with an emergency department) and other health-related occupations. Partly because of this strategy, the town had an emergent and rapidly growing cohort of new migrant communities from India, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe, which are quite different to source countries of migrants before 2010 such as the United Kingdom and the United States. While occupations for new migrants were concentrated in the healthcare and social assistance sectors, the arrival of these new migrants slowed down the town's population fall and changed the demographic profile of Alice Springs, raising the overseas-born population share to 20%, equal to the Indigenous population (Yuhun, Taylor & Winter, 2013).

As per the 2016 Census, there were 5,779 people born overseas in Alice Springs, which increased by 15% compared to the 2011 Census (CDU, 2019). Compared to the 2011 Census, among the top overseas birthplaces, the number of people born in New Zealand and USA had increased, but the number of people born in Europe decreased. For example, people born in England living in Alice Springs decreased by 7%. Those born in Asian countries increased significantly (more than 40%), including those born in India (+53%), Philippines (+43%), Taiwan (+65%) and Sri Lanka (+81%) (refer Table 4).

Table 4: Alice Springs, Overseas born: Birthplace, 2016 and 2011 Census

Top 10 Birthplace	2011		2016		% Change in Persons 2011-2016
	Persons	% of OSB	Persons	% of OSB	
New Zealand	663	13%	873	15%	+32%
United States of America	625	12%	677	12%	+8%
England	718	14%	666	11%	-7%
India	431	9%	659	11%	+53%
Philippines	339	7%	485	8%	+43%
Zimbabwe	186	4%	185	3%	-1%
South Africa	148	3%	145	3%	-2%
Germany	119	2%	119	2%	0%
Taiwan	65	1%	107	2%	+65%
Sri Lanka	59	1%	107	2%	+81%
Total overseas born	5012	100%	5779	100%	+15%

The 2016 Census also showed that among the overseas born population who recently (2006-2016) arrived in Alice Springs, people born in Philippines represented 18%, followed by India (13%), England (7%), New Zealand (7%) and Nepal (5%) (ABS, 2016). Clearly, migrants from Asian countries had replaced those from European countries to become the largest migrant communities. Although Alice Springs' overall population has been slowly declining (refer to Table 1), studies suggested that international migrants had a potential

to generate flow-on effects to enhance population growth in Alice Springs (e.g. Taylor, 2018).

Migrants actively participate in economic activities and significantly contribute to labour force and economic development in Australia. As per ABS (ABS, 2020a), at November 2019, among Australian labour force, nearly one million people were recent migrants (15 years and over), around 80% of them were employed, 69% of them held a non-school qualification before arriving in Australia. Similarly, in Alice Springs, migrants contribute to the local labour force and economic activities. In Alice Springs, 56% of overseas born people (15 years and over) had non-school qualifications, higher than that for the whole population in Alice Springs, in the NT and in Australia (Table 5). This suggests that migrants in Alice Springs provide a relatively high quality labour force.

Table 5: Qualifications by people aged 15 years and over

	% in Overseas born people of Alice Springs	% in whole population of Alice Springs	% in whole population of the NT	% in whole population of Australia
Bachelor Degree level and above	29.6	21.7	17.1	22.0
Advanced Diploma and Diploma level	13.6	8.4	7.2	8.9
Certificate level IV	12.8	3.8	3.6	2.9
Certificate level III		12.6	12.9	12.8
Certificate level II		0.1	0.1	0.1
Total non-school qualifications	56.0	46.6	40.9	46.7

Source: <https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=lga&rqn=70200>; (ABS, 2017b)

Although the 2016 Census and currently available data provided general information about the migrant population in Alice Springs, it is not sufficient to facilitate an in-depth analysis of migrant concerns, related services and other migration issues in a local context. There is also a lack of readily accessible, relevant and up-to-date information available from alternative sources. As mentioned in this section, existing research on Alice Springs' migrant population was either undertaken some time ago, relied on data which is ten years old and/or relied on ABS Census data which is known to be problematic for its accuracy especially considering a local context, remoteness and high mobility of population in Alice Springs.

3. Methodology

The project was initiated in July 2020. The ethics application was submitted to the Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee (CAHREC) in late July and approved in early September 2020. Data collection started in mid-September 2020 and completed in early April 2021. Data collection consisted of three methods: 1) Documentation review to collect second-hand data; 2) Questionnaire survey was conducted to collect first-hand data about the migrant families; 3) Focus group discussions were organised to collect in-depth information about the themes and issues of migration and migrants in Alice Springs. Data analysis included statistical analysis and keyword analysis. Qualitative information and quantitative data were analysed and triangulated to reach the results and to support the discussion and conclusions. These in turn informed upon the recommendations.

Following on from this initial data collection of the experiences of migrants in Central Australia, a secondary online questionnaire was also developed in collaboration with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade to collect data specifically from migrant business owners based in Central Australia. This survey occurred from September to October 2021, with the aim of understanding migrant business owners' experiences in Central Australia, which was not specifically included as part of the initial data collection. This additional survey was requested by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade as part of the scope of this project.

3.1. Documentation review

Reviewed documentation included statistic resources, mainly the 2016 Census data and other ABS resources (such as population prediction) and other available published papers and reports as well as grey literature. This drew a big picture of migrants in Alice Springs, the NT and in Australia, and provided a background for this project.

3.2. Migrant survey

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted to collect detailed information from migrants in Alice Springs. To engage a broad range of migrant communities, both an online and printed survey was created.

Alice Springs has around 5,800 overseas-born population (2016 Census). This represents thousands of migrant families in Alice Springs. We used a purposive-random sampling method to conduct a questionnaire-based survey with migrant families. Each family was allowed to answer only one questionnaire by an adult family member on behalf of the family. The questionnaire was delivered in either online or printed form. Facilitated by MCSCA and migrant associations and societies, the survey was delivered through different channels, including MCSCA's contact lists, MCSCA's newsletters, community leaders and stakeholders. The questionnaire was delivered together with a plain English Statement and a Consent Form following ethics guidelines.

The questionnaire contained 28 questions, including open-ended questions to ask migrants' opinions. The questions included those about family profile (family members' gender, age group, origin, education, employment and income), migration experiences, and perceptions of migration issues and concerns. While only one questionnaire was allowed for each migrant family, the respondents did not have to answer all questions. We used the ABS definition of family¹. We also invited single adult migrants to participate in the survey as one-member households. The survey generally took around 25 minutes to complete.

¹ 'A family is defined by the ABS as two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household. Each separately identified couple relationship, lone parent-child relationship or other blood relationship forms the basis of a family. Some households contain more than one family.' (cited from <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2901.0Chapter32102016>).

The questionnaire is attached to the report as Appendix 1.

A second questionnaire was developed in collaboration with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade to collect data specifically from migrant business owners based in Central Australia. This survey occurred from September to October 2021, with the aim of understanding migrant business owners' experiences in Central Australia, which was not specifically included as part of the initial data collection. The questionnaire contained 23 questions, and asked a range of questions about the demographics of migrant business owners in Central Australia, and their experiences starting or running a business in Central Australia. Surveys were distributed via email and hard copy forms.

The questionnaire is attached to the report as Appendix 4.

3.3. Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of issues faced by migrants and migration associated organisations. They were designed to explore general issues in migration and to further discuss the issues and concerns raised by migrants based on preliminary results from the questionnaire survey. The first focus group discussion was conducted on 5 November 2020. Drawing on the preliminary results of the survey, some key issues were discussed by the focus groups. A total of five focus groups were engaged to discuss issues and concerns about migrants and migration in Alice Springs. Participating stakeholders included migrants, service providers, government agencies and other related organisational representatives. In cases where invited participants were not able to make the scheduled group discussion but were interested in providing opinions, special interviews were conducted as an extension of the focus group discussions. For migrant community members, service providers and government, the focus group discussion used different outlines to guide the discussion, attached as Appendices 2 and 3. Details of the five focus groups are described below:

Focus Group 1: Service providers

10:30am-12:30pm, on 5 November 2020, the first focus group discussion with participants from service providers was held at the MCSCA Office. Two project investigators (Marguerite and Ben) and eight participants attended the discussion in person, and three more service provider representatives who could not be there in person were interviewed individually by the investigator after the discussion. The participants represented: Anglicare, NT Working Women's Centre, Women's Safety Services of Central Australia, Red Cross, Relationships Australia NT, Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre, Central Australian Women's Legal Service, NT Shelter, Steps Group and Lutheran Community Care.

Focus Group 2: Governmental and industry organisations

10:30am-12:30pm, 9 November 2020, the second focus group discussion, with participants from governments, industry organisations and educational institutions, was held at the MCSCA Office. Two project investigators and seven participants attended the discussion in person, and two government representatives who could not be there in person were interviewed individually by the principal investigator after the group discussion. The participants represented NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities

(NT Housing), NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (DITT), Alice Springs Town Council, NT Department of Health, Chamber of Commerce NT, Regional Development Australia NT, public high school (Centralian Senior College), and local university campus (Charles Darwin University).

Focus Group 3: Migrants (Sudanese)

2:45pm-4:45pm, on 22 November 2020, the third focus group discussion with migrants from South Sudan was held at the Catholic Church in Alice Springs. Principal investigator and 20 participants attended the group discussion in person.

Focus Group 4: Migrants (community leaders)

5:15-6:30 pm, 8 Feb 2021, the fourth focus group discussion was held at MCSCA office with four migrant community leaders.

Focus group 5: Migrant community members

5:30-7:00pm, Thursday, 25 Feb 2021, the fifth focus group discussion was held at MCSCA Office, with more than 17 migrant participants, from China, Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Seychelles.

3.4. Data analysis

In terms of data collected online, it was exported from Survey Monkey to an Excel datasheet. For the data collected from printed forms, they were manually entered into another Excel datasheet. The two datasheets were combined into one datasheet, with comprehensive adjustments to overcome the different data structures in the two datasheets. While collated original data resources included personal information, these data were anonymised and a research ID code given to each individual respondent to make the data non-identifiable.

Data analysis tools Excel and SPSS were used for data analysis. Data analysis included statistical analysis and keyword analysis. Qualitative information and quantitative data were analysed and triangulated to support discussion, conclusions and recommendations. The data analysis results are mostly reported in a visual way, such as charts and tables. Rather than reporting the survey results and the focus group discussion separately, this report is organised by topics to integrate responses and perceptions from different data sources. After data analysis results, discussion, recommendations and conclusions follow.

4. Results

A total of 166 valid survey responses were collected, including 65 printed questionnaire forms and 101 online submissions. Additionally, the focus group discussions were attended by 63 participants, including five who were not able to make the focus discussion but were individually interviewed by the project investigator as part of the project.

For the secondary migrant business owner survey, a total of 20 businesses completed the survey out of the 64 businesses that the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade and MCSCA engaged with. The data collected in this survey is only reflected and discussed in

the Migrant Business Owner components of this research project; the data from this survey has not been included in the main research analysis and discussion as the data collected is in addition to this.

4.1. Respondent profile

4.1.1. Origins

The survey collected responses from 166 migrant families (including 42 one-member households), representing 459 family/household members who are currently living in Alice Springs (see Table 6). Totally 311 people (including children) were born overseas at least in 45 countries (21 overseas born people did not reveal their birth countries) (refer to Figure 1).

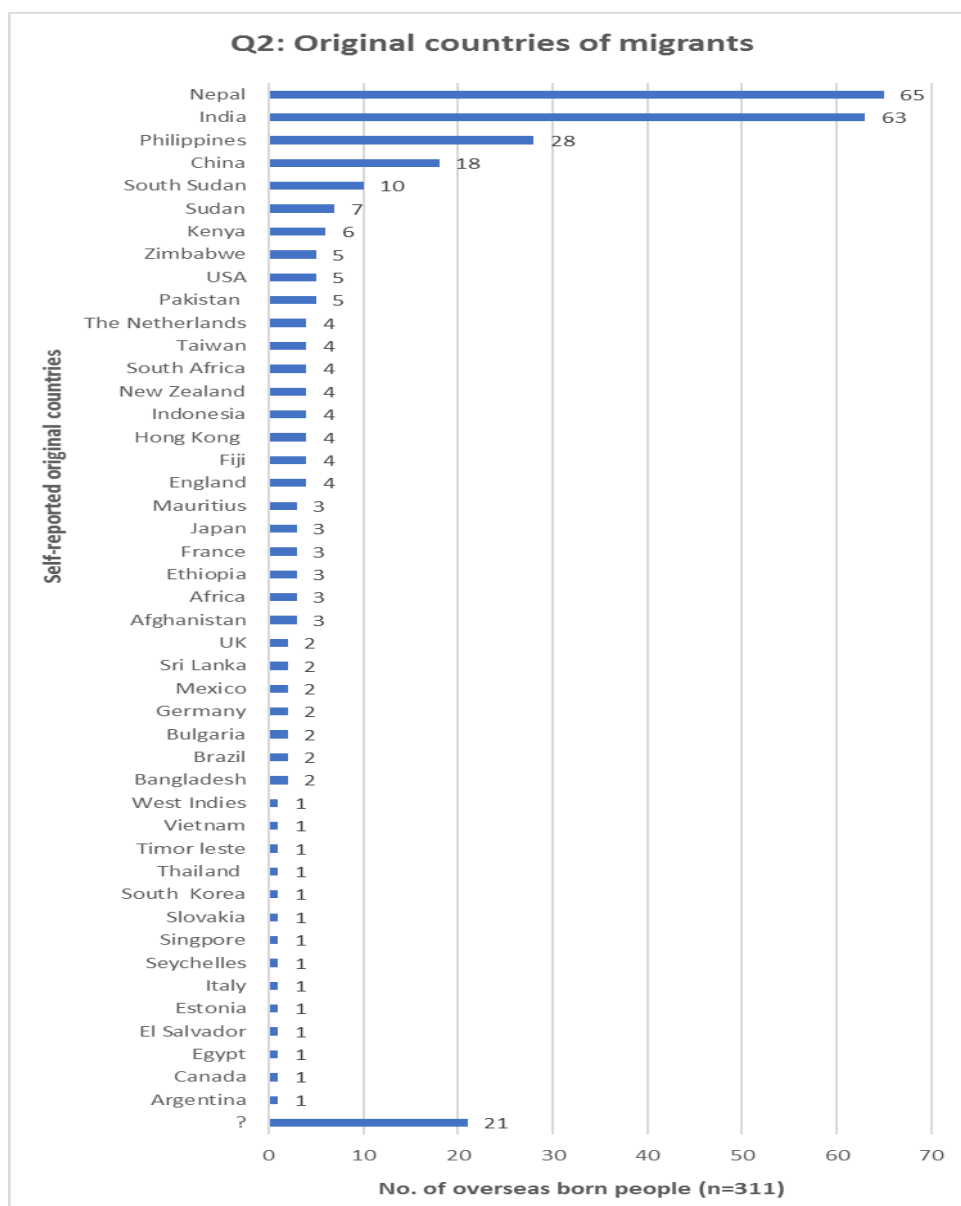


Figure 1: Origins of migrants in Alice Springs

4.1.2. Family structure

Based on the survey data, 31.3% (n=52) migrant families do not have a child. For those families with children, the average number of children is 1.9. However, not all of these children are currently living in Alice Springs, and reside in other places (mainly in interstate Australia), with other family members, in some cases. Migrant families have been in Alice Springs for a relatively long period, with about half of them reporting being in Alice Springs for more than seven years. See Table 6 for the details.

Table 6: Profile of surveyed migrant households

Profile	Number
No. of valid questionnaire responses	166
No. of household members (living in Alice Springs) represented	459
No. of overseas born people	317
Average people per household	2.8
No. of families (at least two members directly related) surveyed	124
No. of one-member households surveyed	42
No. of migrant families with children	113
Average children per family – for families with children	1.9
Average children per family – for all families (including families without children)	1.7
Average years staying in Alice Springs	9.1
Median years staying in Alice Springs	7.0
Average years stayed elsewhere in Australia before moving to Alice Springs	5.5
Median years stayed elsewhere in Australia before moving to Alice Springs	3.0
No. of original countries represented	45

Compared to the general population in Alice Springs, the survey data shows migrant household size (2.8 people per household) is similar to the whole population (2.6 as per the 2016 Census), and the average number of children in migrant families with children is the same as the whole population (1.9 as per the 2016 Census). However, the average number of children for all migrant families (1.7) is much higher than that for the whole population (0.7, as per the 2016 Census) (refer to ABS 2017b). This suggests that most migrant families have children (113 out of 124, or 91.1%), which creates a huge current or future need for various stages of education from childcare to school and even for tertiary education. It provides a huge potential for the local education industry. A relatively high proportion of single migrants (42 out of 166, or 25.3%) are in Alice Springs for employment, which provides a quality labour force for various industry sectors in Alice Springs, but also provides opportunities for the local job training market.

Of the adult migrants living in Alice Springs who are represented in the survey (n=258), 49.2% are male and 50.8% are female. Most of them (61.0%) have a university or above education level. About 90% of adult migrants are employed, and most of them (around 81%) think their employment matches or at least partly matches their education and qualifications. However, there are still 18.5% who reported a mismatch between their current employment and their highest level of qualification (see Table 7 for details).

Table 7: Profile of adult migrant members represented in the survey

		Total	Proportion
Male adults		127	49.2%
Female adults		131	50.8%
University or above Education		153	61.0%
Other education*		98	39.0%
Currently Employed		234	90.0%
Not currently employed		26	10.0%
Employment match with education qualifications	Matched	156	73.9%
	Partly matched	16	7.6%
	Mismatched	39	18.5%

* short courses, school education and other non-university type of education.

Compared to the Census 2016 data that showed 86% of new migrants' employment matched their qualifications in Alice Springs (Taylor, 2018), this survey suggests that this match seems to be worsening. It is critical for government and other stakeholders to be aware of this apparent trend so to address related issues (refer to Section 6.3).

4.1.3. Years in Alice Springs

Most survey participants came to Alice Springs after having spent some time in other places, such as Melbourne and Sydney. Most of them moved to Alice Springs in the last 15 years, i.e. between 2006 and 2020, although some families came to Central Australia much earlier (Figure 2 and 3).

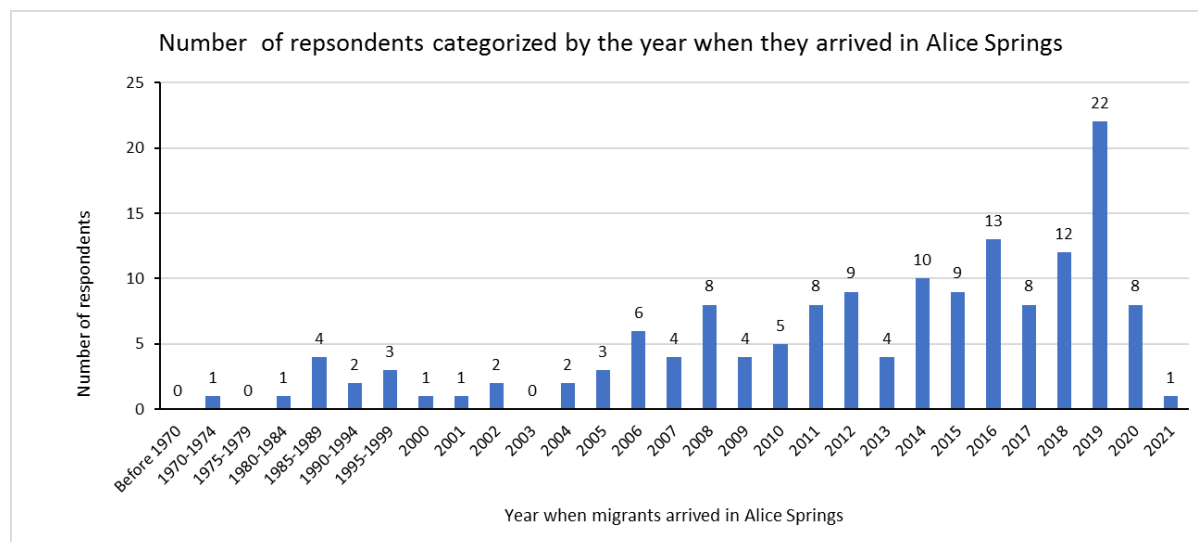


Figure 2: Years when migrants migrated to Australia and Alice Springs

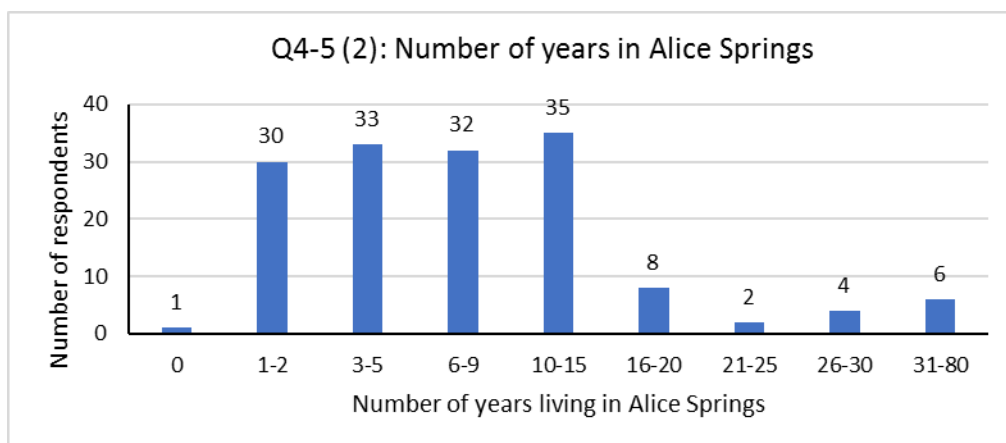


Figure 3: Years living in Alice Springs

Among respondents, just over one third of migrant households (51 out of 151) moved to Alice Springs during 2017-2021, after the 2016 Census (see Figure 2). This suggests that since the last Census, many new migrants have moved to Alice Springs.

From Figure 4, we can see that a substantial proportion of migrants (50 out of 151, or just about one third) had migrated directly to Alice Springs, and had not previously stayed elsewhere in Australia.

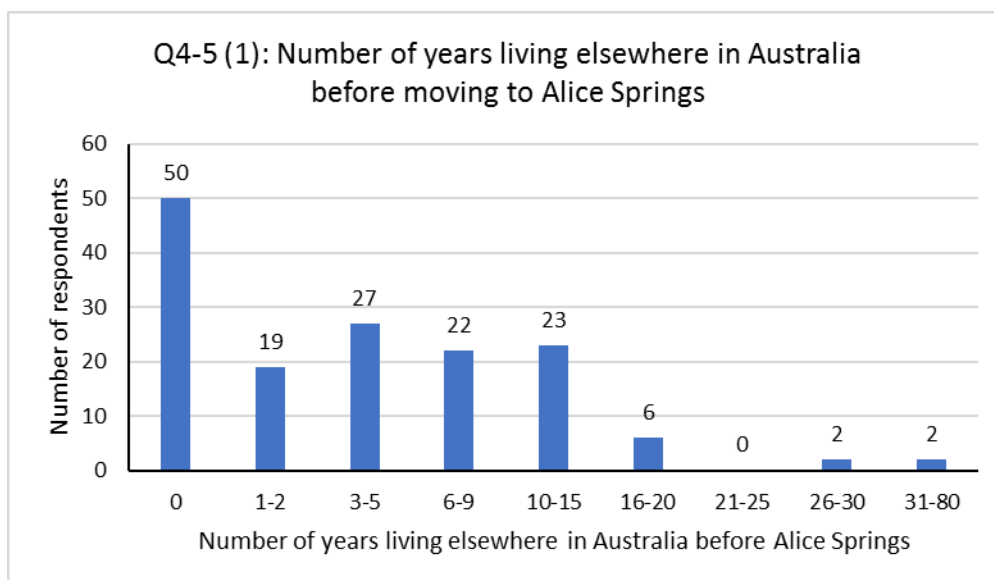


Figure 4: Years living elsewhere in Australia before moving to Alice Springs

The survey found that the number of migrants who moved directly to Alice Springs, or only lived elsewhere in Australia for a short period time before coming to Alice Springs (1-2 years), has been increasing in recent years (see Figure 5).

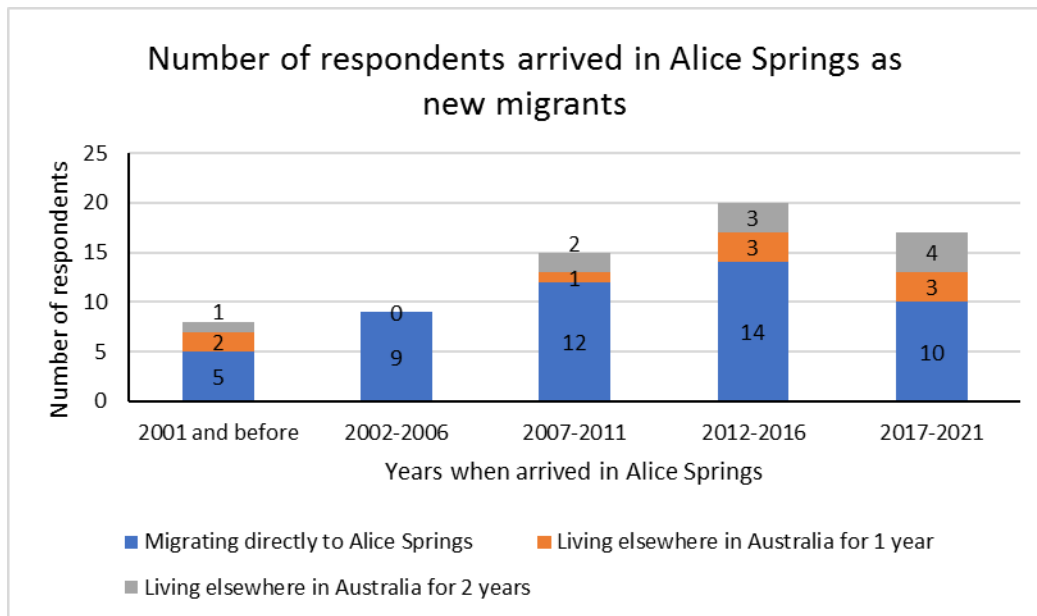


Figure 5: Trends of newly migrated people arriving or moving to Alice Springs

These results are important in terms of characterising the nature of immigrants to Alice Springs; there is a large number of new migrants without any (or with very limited) previous migrant experiences elsewhere in Australia. This raises both opportunities and challenges for local communities in providing tailor-made services and supporting newly arrived migrants.

4.1.4. Age structure

Most (53%) of the respondents were younger than 40, with the biggest proportion of adult migrants in Alice Springs being aged 35-39 years-old (26%) (Figure 5).

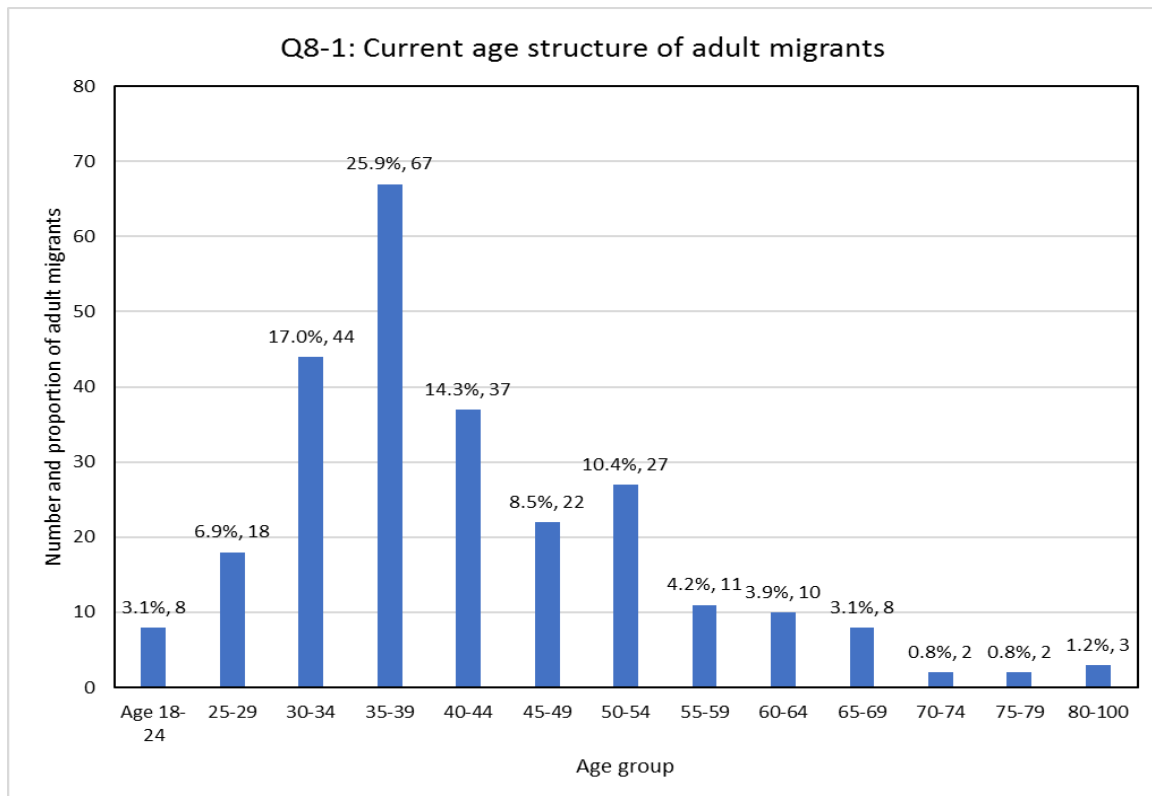


Figure 5: Current age of adult migrants

When respondents first migrated to Australia, 63% of them were under 30 (Figure 6).

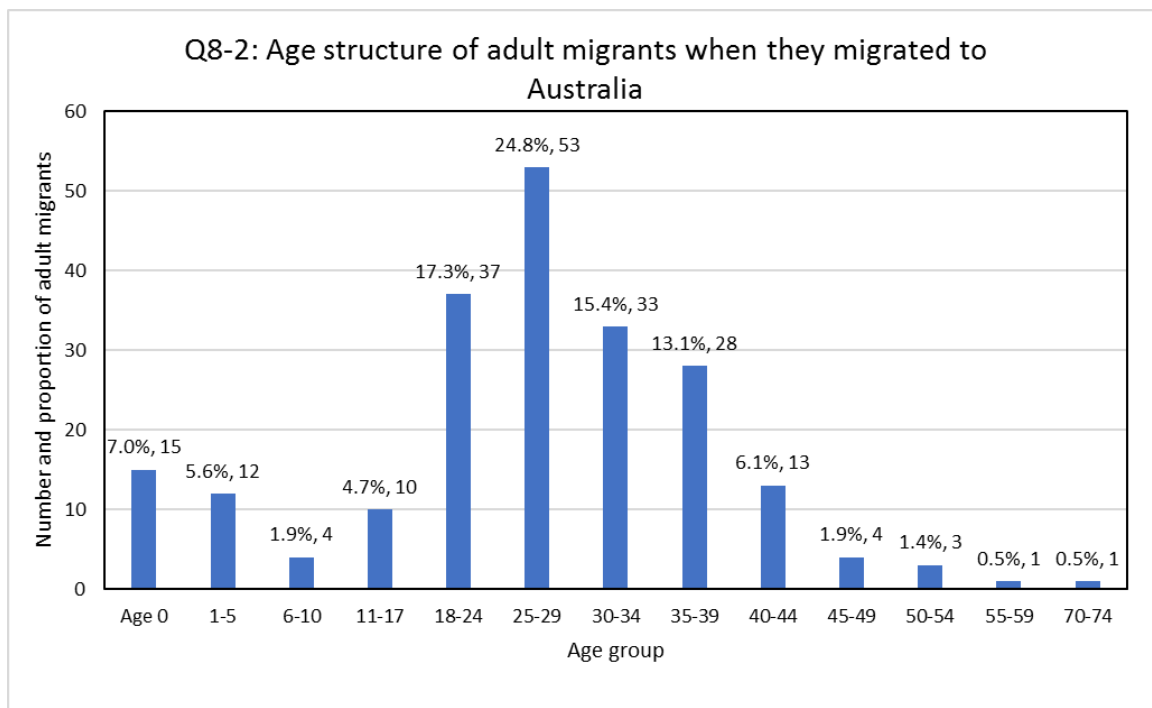


Figure 6: Age of adult migrants when they migrated to Australia

Younger migrants will have substantial needs for training, education and early workforce assistance, and also have urgent demands for quality childcare and children education for their younger families.

4.2. Employment and income

Most respondents believe that it is easy to find a job in Alice Springs ('easy' for 54.9% respondents and 'very easy' for 14.3%). Only just over 10% of respondents think it is 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to find a job (Figure 7). Generally, this is in line with the answers reported in Table 9 about the high rate of 'currently employed' and highly matched employment and education/qualifications.

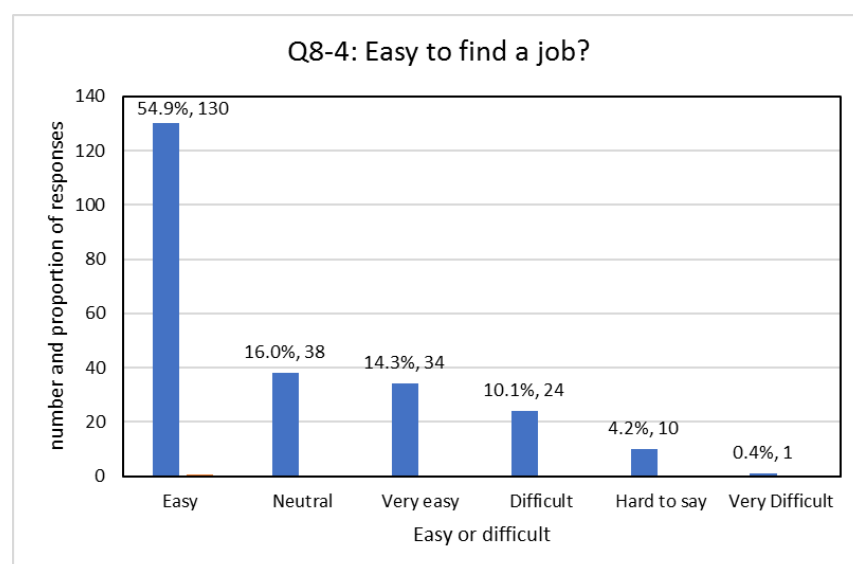


Figure 7: Perceived easiness to find a job

The majority of respondents (41%) work in the Health Care and Social Assistance Sector², followed by Education and Training (7.4%), Administrative and Support Services (6.8%), Accommodation and Food Services (5.8%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (5.8%), and Retail Trade (4.7%) (Figure 8). The proportion of migrants that work in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is significantly greater than that for the broader Alice Springs workforce (21.2%), while the proportion of those working in the Other Services Sector³ (12.6%) is also greater than that for the broader Alice Springs workforce (4.9%) (refer to Table 7).

² The 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) is the latest standard and was used to code the 2016. This survey applied ANZSIC 2006 to classify industry sectors.

³ According to ANZSIC 2006, the Other Services Sector includes a broad range of personal services; religious, civic, professional and other interest group services; selected repair and maintenance activities; and private households employing staff. It includes following groups: Repair and Maintenance, Personal and Other Services, and Private Households Employing Staff and Undifferentiated Goods-and Service-

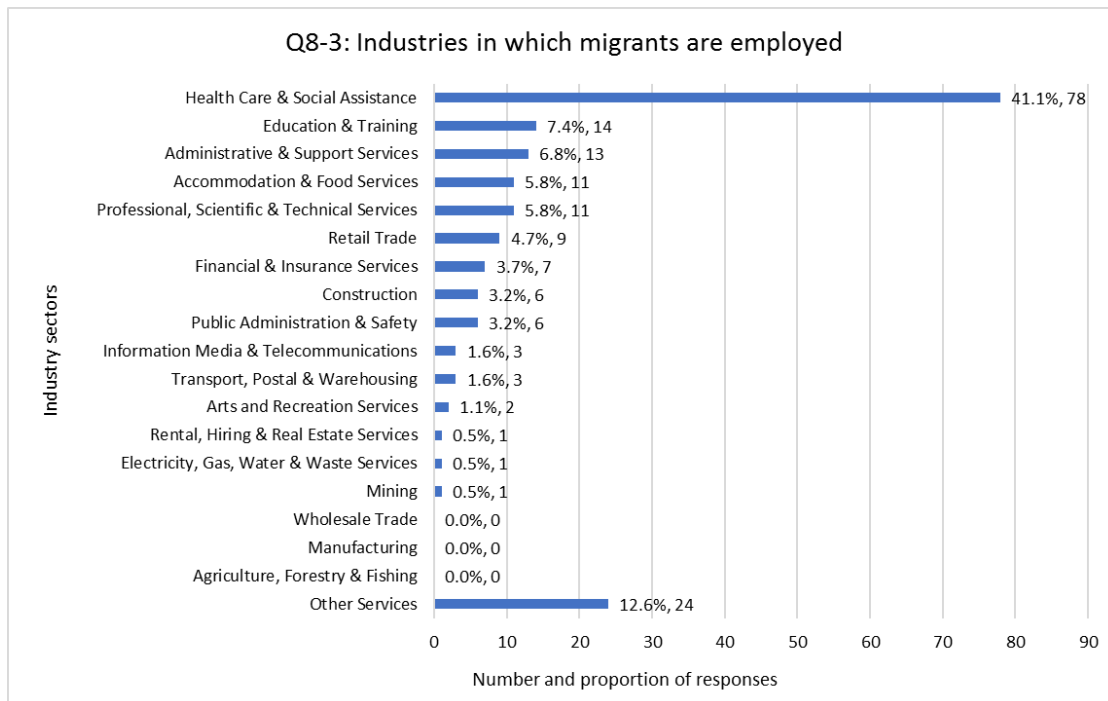


Figure 8: Industries employing migrants

Just over half of the migrant households (51%) in the survey earn an annual household salary of more than \$80,000, with 8% of them earning more than \$180,000 annually (Figure 9). Compared to the median annual household income of Alice Springs population (\$100,724) estimated by the 2016 Census, most migrant families earn a lower than median annual income in Alice Springs.

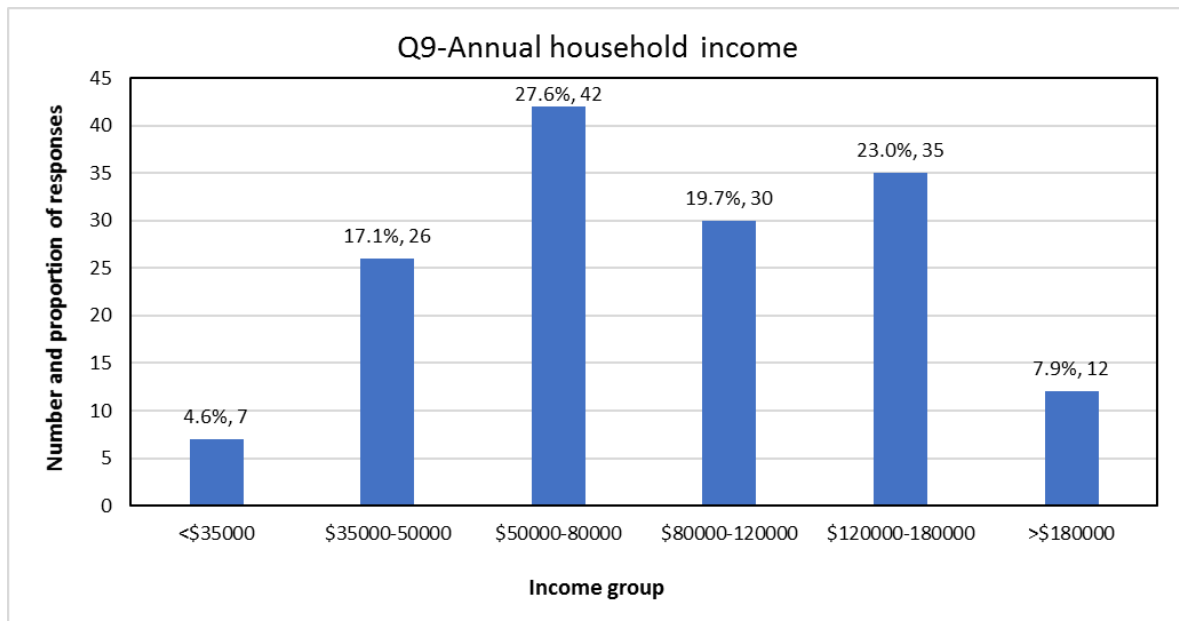


Figure 9: Annual household income of migrant families

4.3. Migration experiences—moving to Alice Springs

When survey respondents were asked about what keywords they associate with Alice Springs, ‘job’, ‘culture’ and ‘weather’ (or similar) were the most frequently cited categories. ‘Aboriginal’ and words relating to the natural environment were also frequently mentioned (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Main keywords about Alice Springs

When grouping the similar keywords, words associated with ‘job opportunities’, ‘cultural and multicultural’, ‘weather or climate’, ‘Indigenous’, ‘desert’ and ‘red centre’ were the top six on the list (Figure 11).

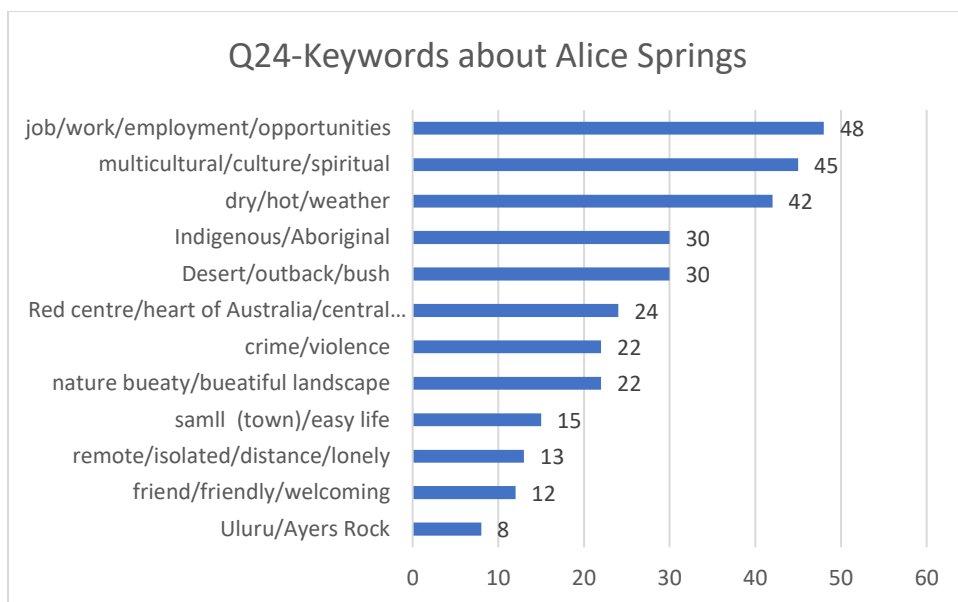


Figure 11: Frequency of keywords about Alice Springs

4.3.1. Motivations to move to Alice Springs

Based on the survey responses, it is clear that economic reasons are the main driver for most migrants (53.0%) to migrate to Australia. Seeking educational opportunities (19.9%) is another important reason (Figure 12).

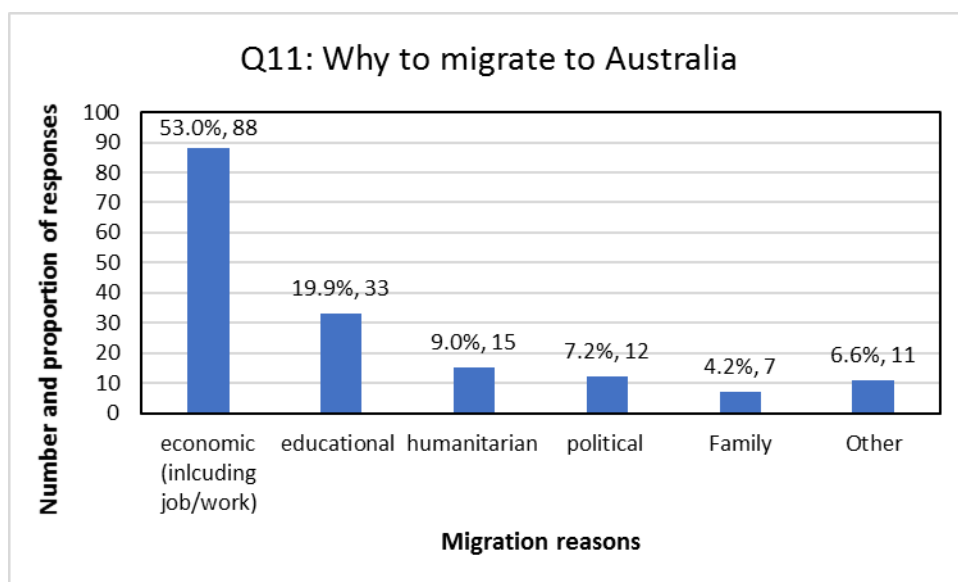


Figure 12: Motivations to migrate to Australia

When asked why they chose to migrate to Alice Springs, and not other places in Australia, the most common answer was 'for job' (61.3%), while some migrated to Alice Springs for 'marriage/family and friends' (16.1%) and for 'small town with easy lifestyle' (12.9%) (Figure 13). The 'job' motivation is in line with their top motivation (economic reason) to migrate to Australia, with the other motivations, reflecting the migrants' perceptions of family ties and friendship, as well as their recognition of the uniqueness of Alice Springs.

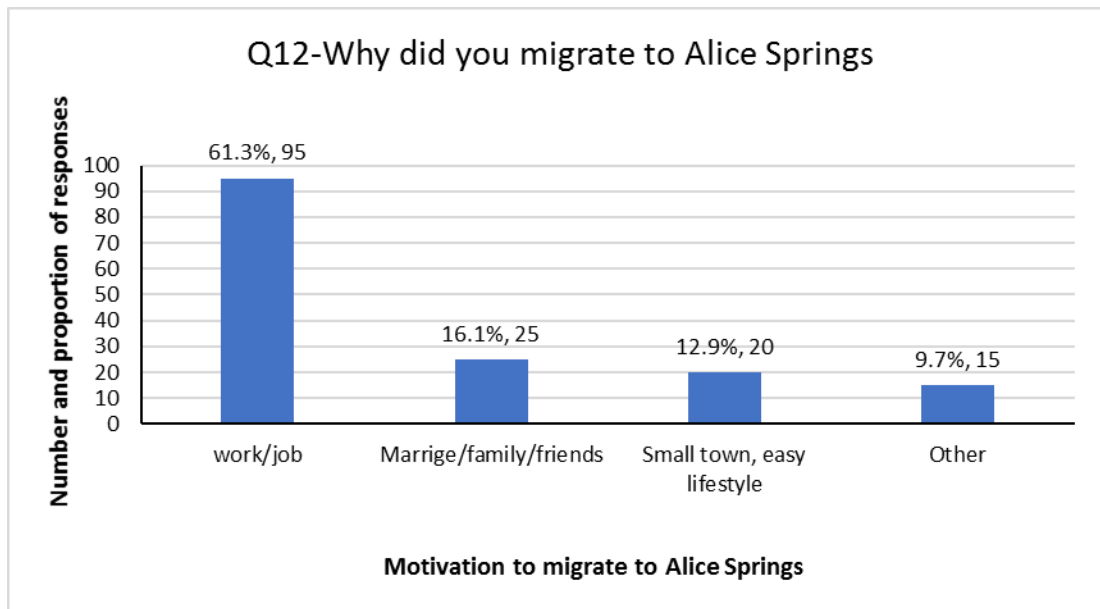


Figure 13: Motivations to move to Alice Springs

4.3.2. Seeking support for migration and settlement

When making decisions to migrate and/or move to Alice Springs, migrants have always sought information from various sources, especially from their friends and families. Based on the survey, friends and family have been the most important source of information for migrants to find out about Alice Springs. Around two thirds of respondents (65.2%) indicated that they learned about Alice Springs through friends and/or families who were already here (Figure 14). This is a key finding from the study which has implications regarding the attraction and retention of future migrants to the region and is discussed in further detail later in this report.

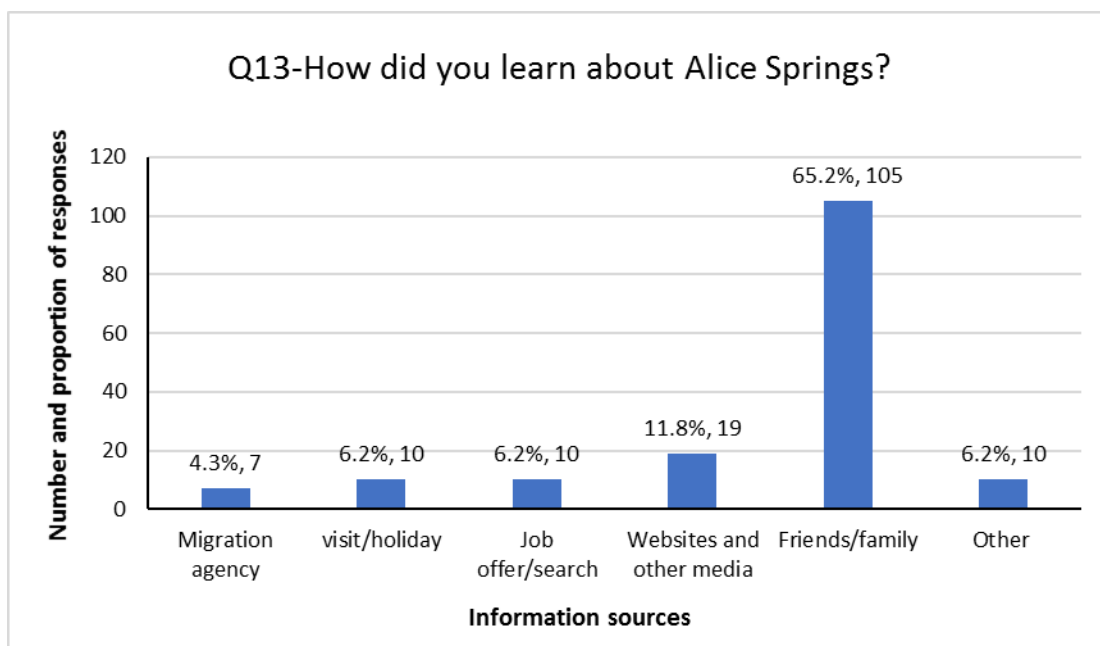


Figure 14: Information sources for migrants to learn about Alice Springs before arrival

Migrant support is a very broad concept. In general, all dimensions of social, cultural and community services can be included in this concept. Settlement support is an important component. When they moved to Alice Springs, most migrants (58.6%) sought settlement support from family and/or friends. While this directly relates to their most important motivations to move to Alice Springs, i.e. job and family, it is also consistent with the results that friends and family are the most important information sources for them to find out about Alice Springs before they arrive. The role of MCSCA in providing settlement support to migrants is also reflected in the responses to this question, with 14.8% of migrant families seeking settlement support from MCSCA (Figure 15). Other sources included Alice Springs Town Council (4.1%), government websites, churches, workplaces, and even just asking around. Again, these results have direct implications for how we attract and retain migrants in Alice Springs and is discussed in more detail later in this report.

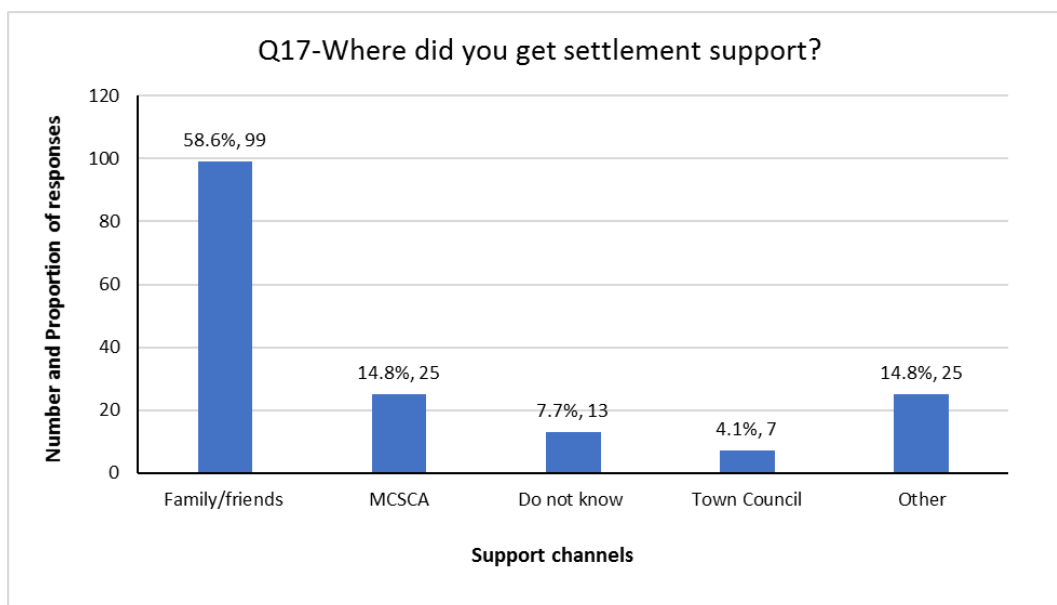
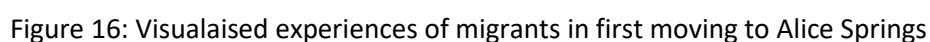


Figure 15: Where to get settlement support?

4.3.3. Experience of moving to Alice Springs

When describing their experiences in first moving to Alice Springs, the most frequently mentioned keywords were positive, including 'welcoming', 'good', 'friendly', 'different' and 'job' as visualised in a word cloud (Figure 16).



Q14: Experience in moving to Alice Springs

Experience highlights	Proportion (%)	Number of responses
Friendly/Welcoming by...	48.1%	65
small town/less...	22.2%	30
got a job	18.5%	25
had hard time	5.9%	8
Other	5.2%	7

Figure 17: Experience narratives in first moving to Alice Springs

4.4. Adaptation to changes

4.4.1. Changes and problems

Survey respondents reported that many changes were required to adapt to the local lifestyle in order to settle down in Alice Springs. The most important change for them is 'getting accustomed to local culture' (more than 58% respondents indicated this), although 'learning a new language' and 'obeying the new laws/rules' are also regarded as important changes for 18% and 14% of migrant families respectively (Figure 18).

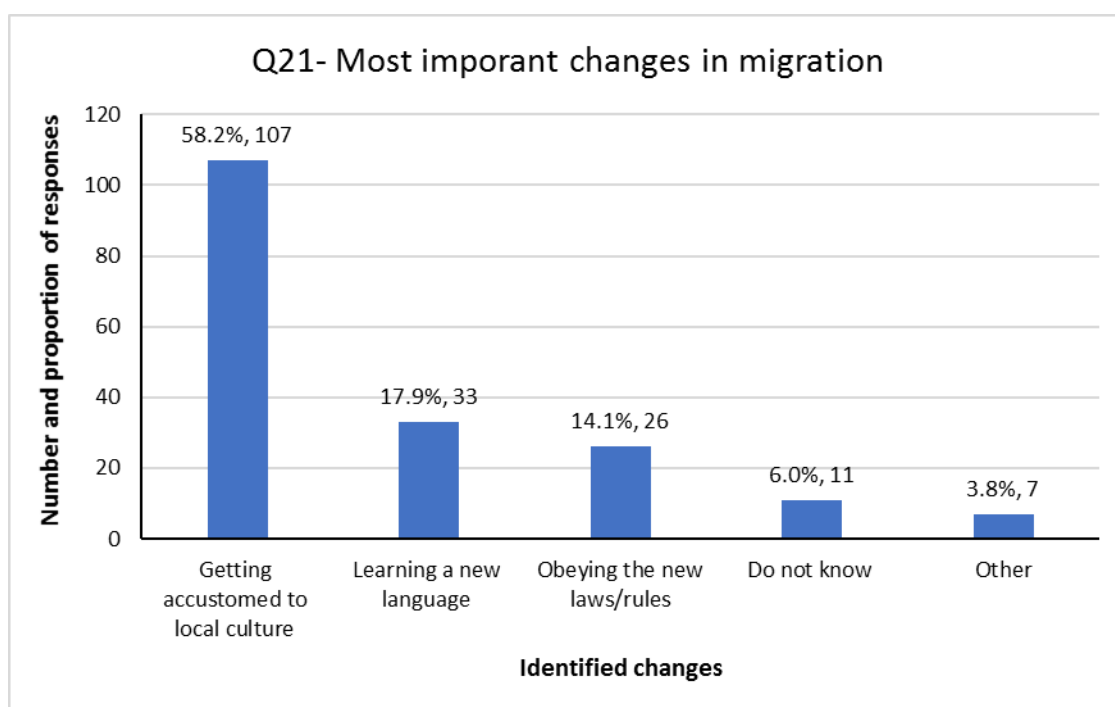


Figure 18: Changes to adapt to a new lifestyle

Based on the survey, most respondents (55.1%) do not mention any problems with migration. However, in order to adapt to life in Alice Springs, some migrants have encountered problems. These problems are related, and include various factors such as a different culture (13.2%), different lifestyle (13.2%) and different languages (12.0%) (Figure 19).

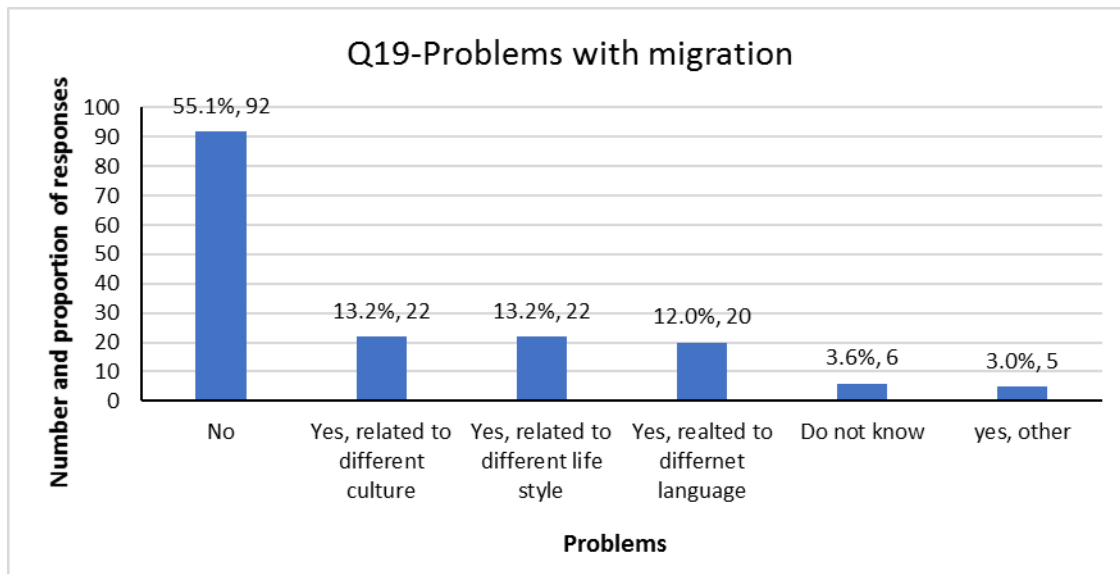


Figure 19: Problems with migration

4.4.2. Opportunities and challenges

Almost all respondents consider migration as an opportunity in general. While 68.7% of respondents consider think migration as both an opportunity and a challenge, 27.3% of respondents think of migration simply as an opportunity (Figure 20).

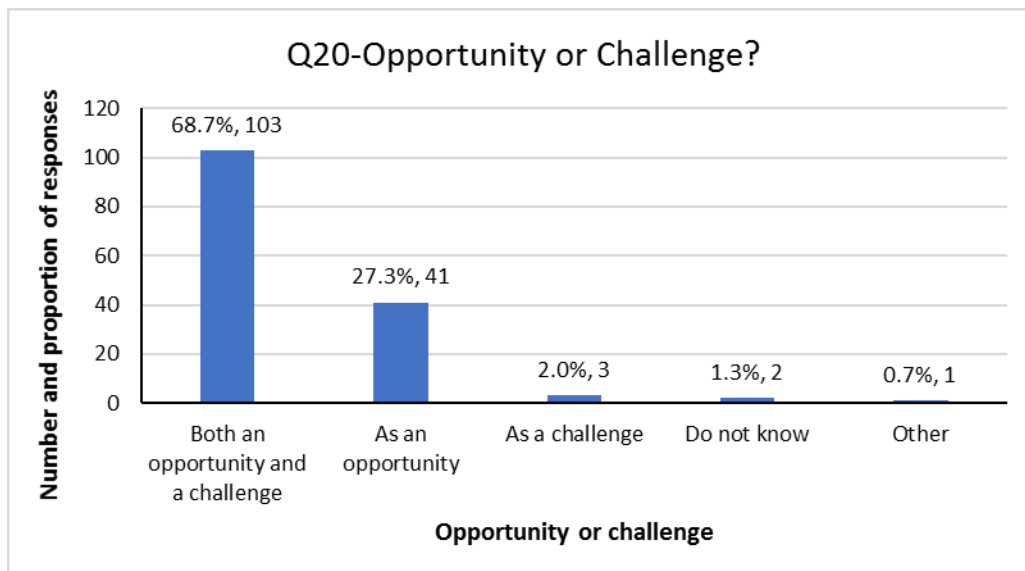


Figure 20: Migration as an opportunity or challenge

Specifically in the Alice Springs context, respondents appreciate the various opportunities that can be found in Alice Springs (Figure 21). The survey respondents reported 'job opportunities' (51.35%) as the biggest perceived opportunity related to living in Alice Springs, followed by other perceived opportunities such as 'friendly people/good community/welcoming' (9.46%), 'small town, easy to access' (9.46%), 'good life' (5.41%) and others.

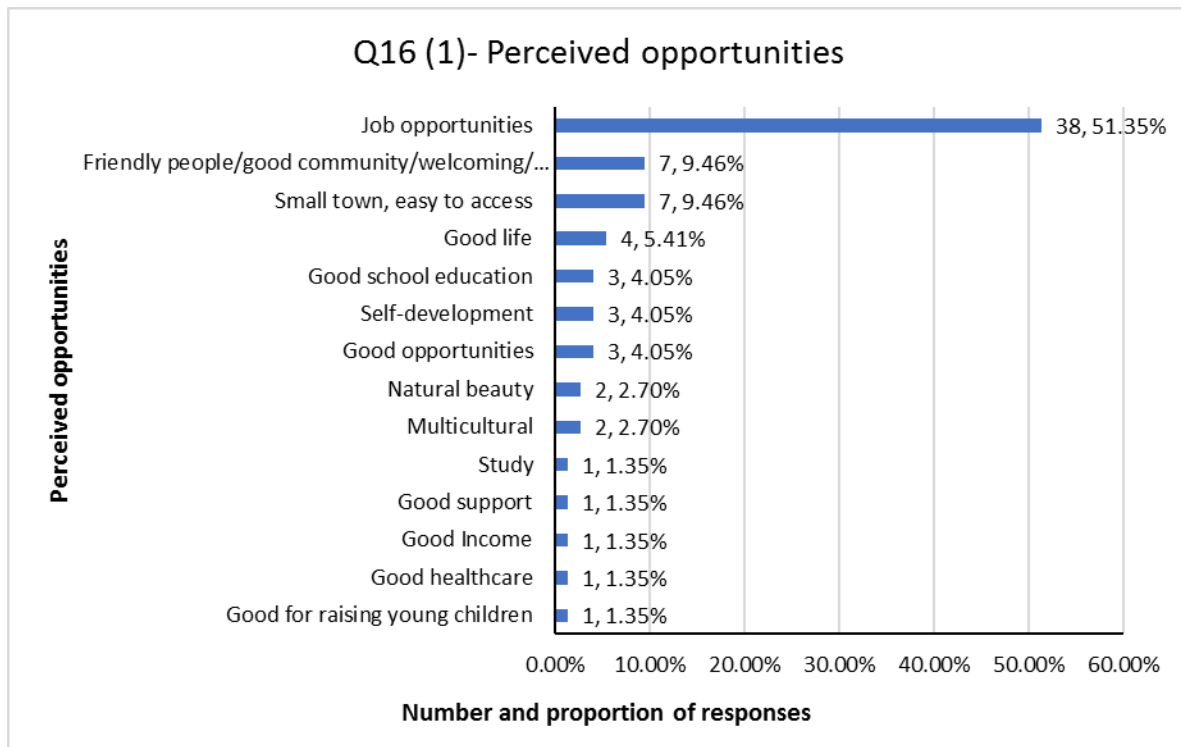


Figure 21: Perceived opportunities by migrants in Alice Springs

They perceive 'crime and safety issues' (16.58%) and 'expensive housing' (13.37%) as the main challenges, followed by 'extreme climate' (8.56%), 'high intercity travel costs' (8.02%), 'isolation/lonely' (8.02%), 'racism/workplace exploitation/discrimination/bully' (5.88%), 'language issues' (5.35%), 'high living costs' (5.35%) and other challenges, such as it being difficult to find a suitable job, making friends, and limited education opportunities (Figure 22).

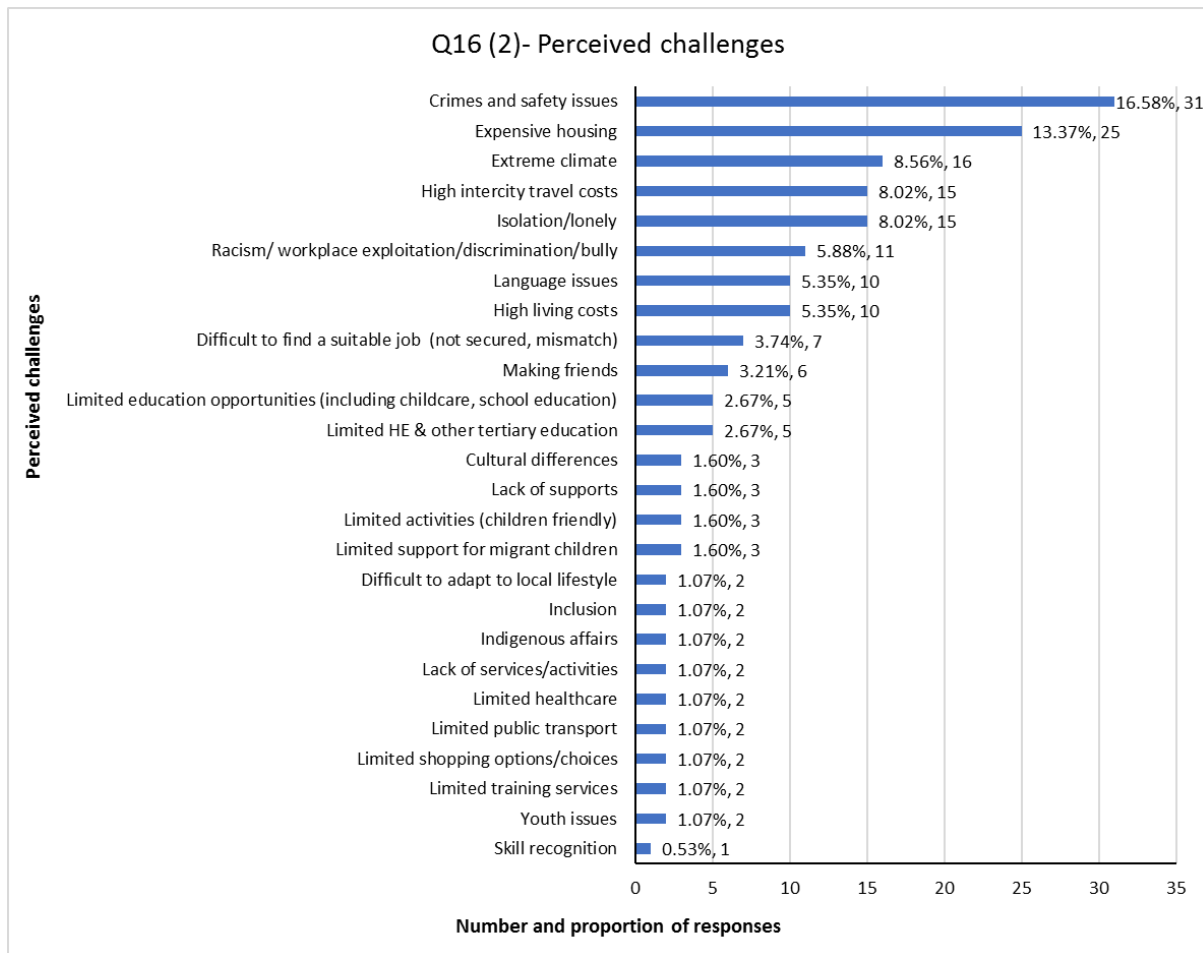


Figure 22: Perceived challenges by migrants in Alice Springs

4.5. Migrants' perceptions of successful settlement

Although migrants have different perceptions of what is successful migration, they do share some common views. An open question of 'what does successful settlement look like?' was asked. Out of the total 166 survey participants, 130 answered this question with one or more elements defining their success. 'Decent job' (31.1%), 'safe and easy life' (19.5%), 'relationship and socialisation' (17.7%) and 'good housing' (14.6%) are perceived as the key elements of successful settlement by migrants. For a small proportion of respondents (7.9%), securing permanent residency and/or becoming an Australian citizen is also perceived as one of the most important indicators for successful settlement (Figure 23).

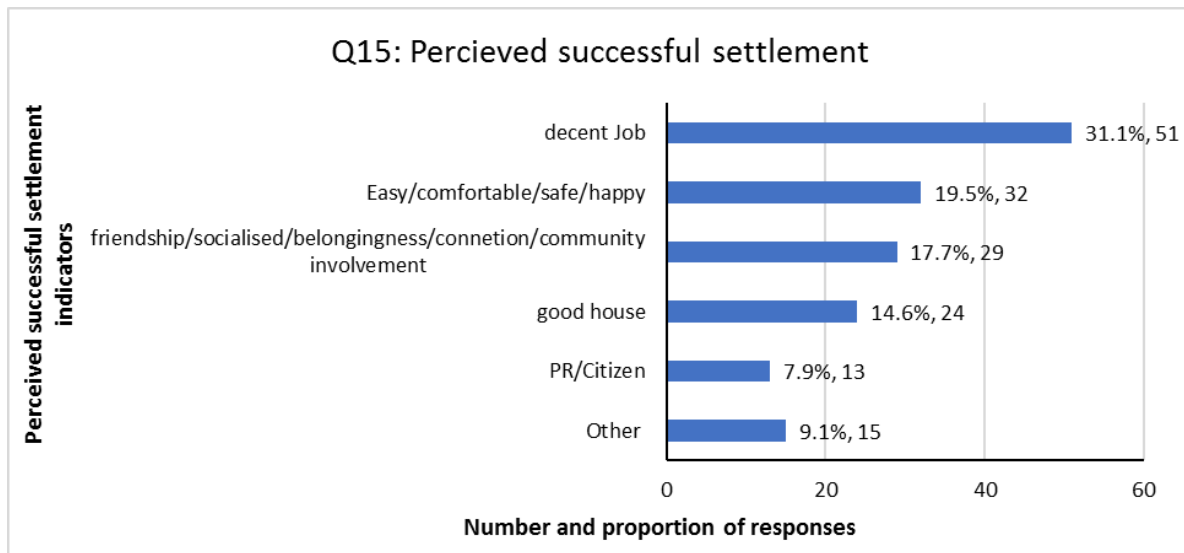


Figure 23: perceived successful settlement

Reflecting one of most important factors for successful settlement - relationships and/or socialisation - the survey asked respondents to what extent they and/or their family participated in the community, based on their own self-assessment. The result suggests that most respondents participate in the community, although a small proportion of them (13%) answered 'very limited'. This is consistent with the finding that migrants consider establishing relationships and socialisation as an important measure of successful settlement and migration. While 52.7% of migrants indicate that they do participate in the community 'sometimes', less than one third (31.5%) of respondents claim that they participate in the community 'very often' (Figure 24). The data suggests that although most migrants do have a connection to the local community, the connection could be closer. It is important to encourage migrant's participation in the community through various ways such as more events. A holistic approach is necessary based on mutual understanding and collaboration between migrants and the broader community. This will be further discussed in the Discusison section.

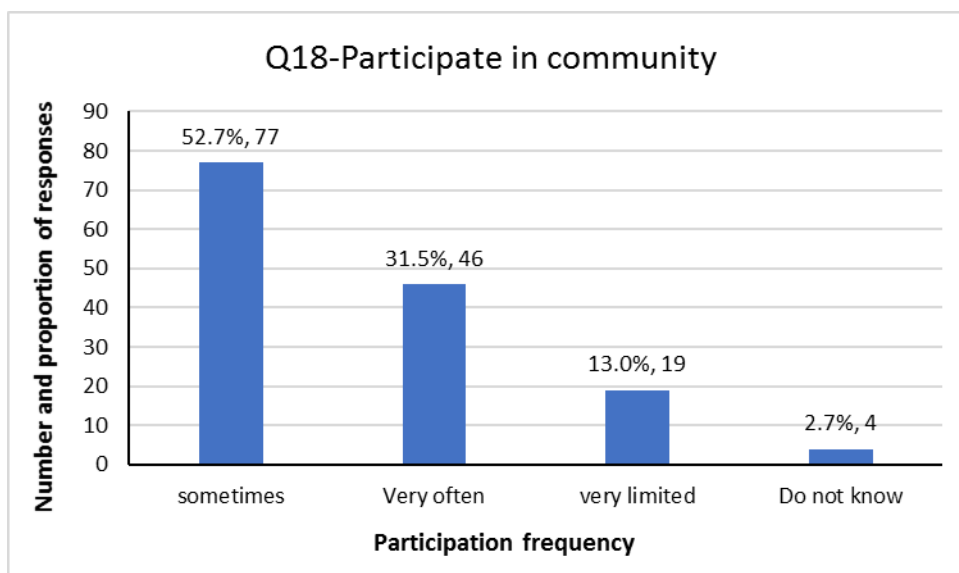


Figure 24: Frequency of participation in the Alice Springs community

Another dimension that might be associated with their perceived success in settlement and migration is a migrant's future plan. When asked 'would you return to your home country to live in the future?' just over half the respondents (51.7%) appear to have a wait-and-see approach, i.e. 'it depends on how it goes'. This suggests that their future depends on whether their migration settlement is 'successful', but that there is also an inseparable connection to their original countries and their mother cultures. Meanwhile, just over 17% of respondents answered 'no, definitely not' to this question while almost 16% answered 'do not know' (refer to Figure 25).

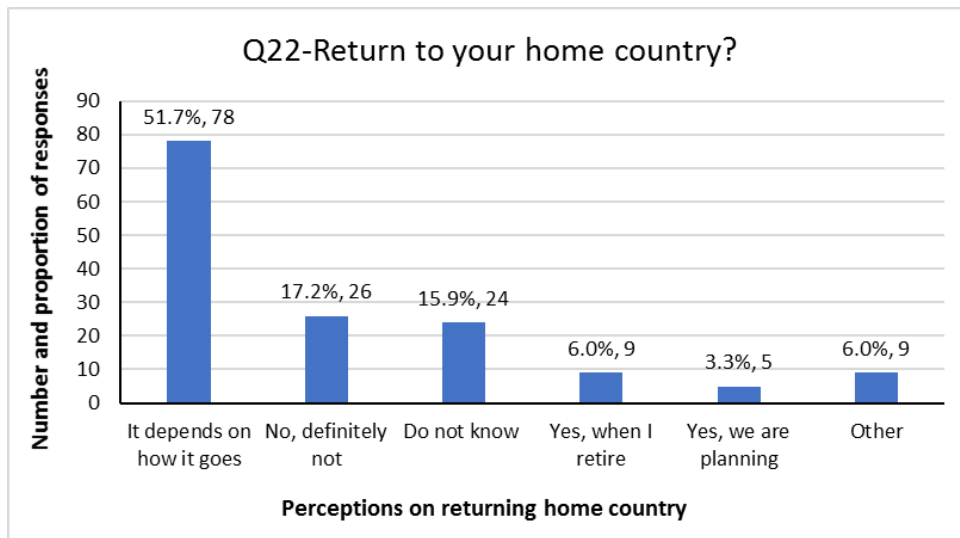


Figure 25: Intention to return to home countries

4.6. Migrants' overall satisfaction

Migrants' overall satisfaction was surveyed from different perspectives, including their comprehensive understanding of Alice Springs, their willingness to recommend Alice Springs and their overall satisfaction ratings.

4.6.1. Understanding of Alice Springs

Results show that generally migrants have positive perceptions of Alice Springs (Figure 25). More than 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Alice Springs is a 'multicultural town' (94.5%), 'welcoming city' (84.4%) with 'good employment/job opportunities' (89.1%). Most respondents agree or strongly agree that 'I like the local environment' (74.1%), 'children are happy at school' (69.7%), 'services are good' (68.0%), there are 'lots of community activities' (67.1%), 'healthcare is good' (66.4%) and 'training and education are good' (55.1%).

However, there are also some negative responses. While most respondents (53.8%) agree or strongly agree that 'I know someone experiencing discrimination or racism', 45.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree that 'I have experiences of discrimination or racism'. Around one third of respondents expressed negative opinions about housing and the geographical isolation of Alice Springs. Among survey respondents, 37.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed that 'there is suitable housing (availability/affordability)', compared with 31% of them who agreed or strongly agreed, while 31.5% of respondents agreed or

strongly agreed that ‘I feel isolation and it is difficult to get to other places’, compared to 35.7% of them who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Other narratives that received significant negative responses include ‘acceptable cost of living’ (disagreed or strongly disagreed by 30.8% of respondents), ‘lots of chances for tertiary education’ (25.2%), ‘good transport service’ (23.8%), ‘many community grants to support migrants’ (24.7%), and ‘easy to access to migration agents and lawyers’ (23.4%) (refer to Figure 26).

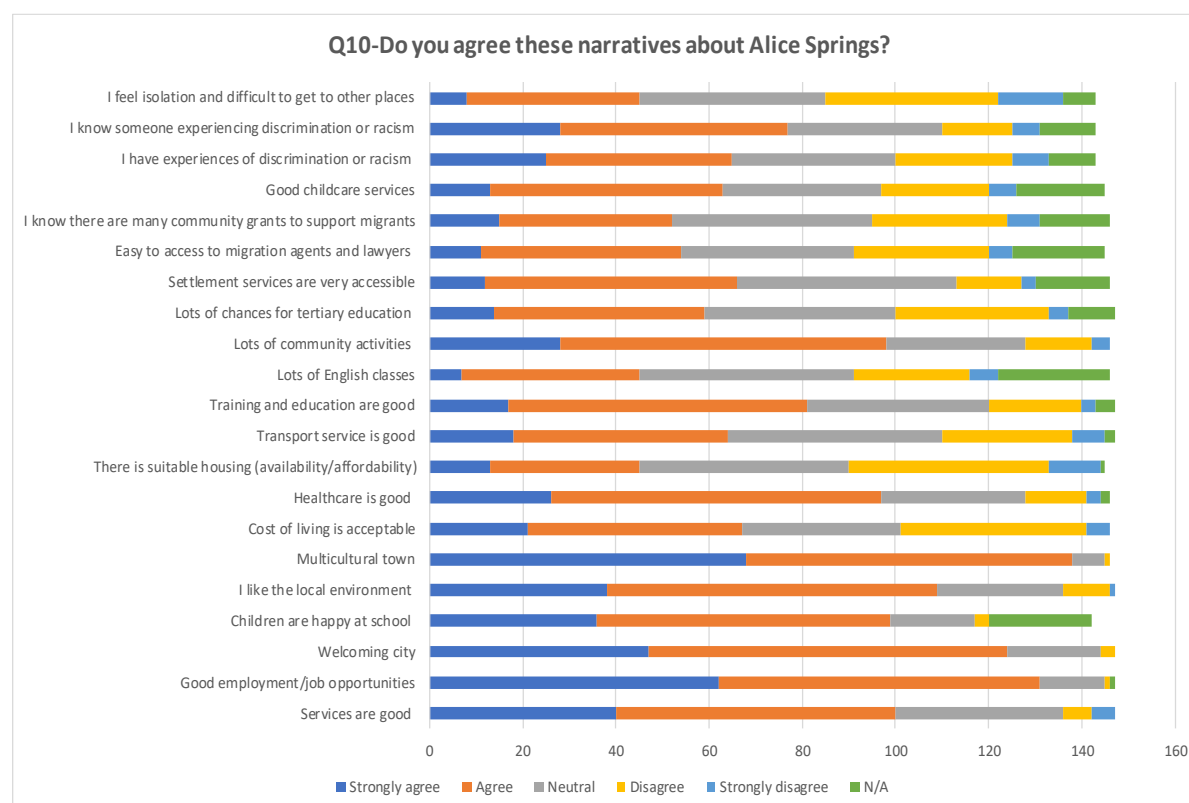


Figure 26: Perceptions of narratives about Alice Springs

Generally, these responses are consistent with answers to other questions, for example, as reported in Section 4.4.2. Although these positive and negative responses have been weighed differently by migrants in answering different questions (as some questions are more about their direct personal experiences while others are more about their general opinions), the answers that top the positive and negative response lists are similar and consistent. For example, migrants put ‘job opportunities’, ‘friendly people/good community/welcoming’, ‘small town, easy to access’, ‘good life’, ‘good school education’ and self-development’ as the top six items on the opportunity list, while they put ‘crimes and safety issues’, ‘expensive housing’, ‘extreme climate’, ‘high intercity travel costs’, ‘isolation/lonely’ and ‘racism/ workplace exploitation/discrimination/bully’, ‘language issues’ and ‘high living costs’ as the top eight on the challenge list (see Figures 21 and 22, Section 4.4.2). These are consistent with their responses regarding the narratives about Alice Springs, as shown in Figure 26.

4.6.2. Willingness to recommend Alice Springs as a migrant destination and reasons why

Out of a total of 134 respondents who answered the question ‘Are there any special things in Alice Springs you would like to recommend to your friends?’, only 11 respondents (i.e. 8.2%) clearly indicated that they would not recommend anything about Alice Springs. Of 123 respondents who recommend one or more things, ‘job/employment’ was the most frequently recommended (44.8%), followed by ‘local lifestyle (11.2%), ‘local attractions such as Uluru’ (9.7%) and culture (9%) (Figure 27). The results suggests that migrants have a very high willingness to recommend Alice Springs to others, particularly because of the perceived job and employment opportunities that are available in the town.

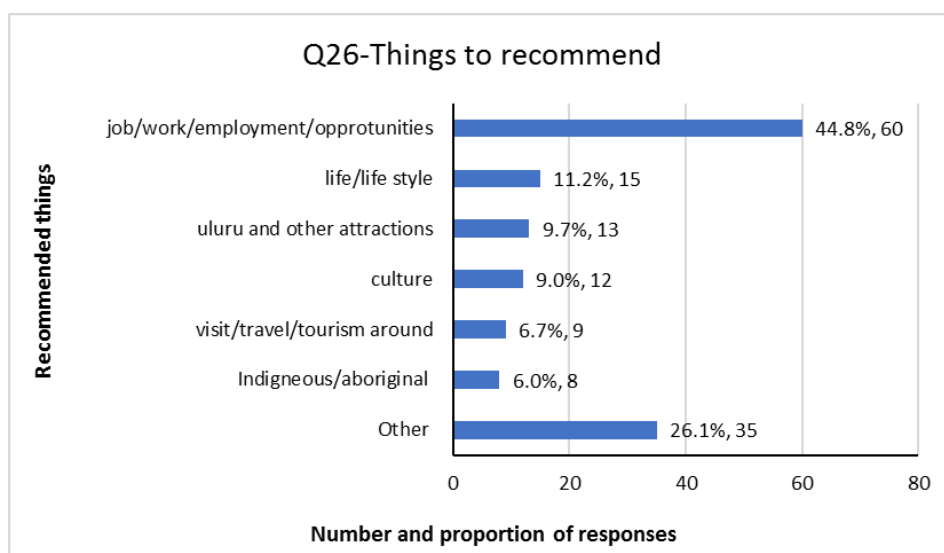


Figure 27: Things about Alice Springs to recommend

4.6.3. Satisfaction ratings

More than 80% of respondents were satisfied with their migration experiences overall including 22.6% of them who were ‘very satisfied’. Only a very small number of respondents claimed that they were ‘dissatisfied’ (2.1%) or ‘very dissatisfied’ (5.5%) (Figure 28). The high satisfaction rating suggests that Alice Springs is a good place for migrants, which is also consistent with the overall positive perceptions of Alice Springs, and the overwhelming majority of respondents who are willing to recommend Alice Springs to others as a place to migrate to.

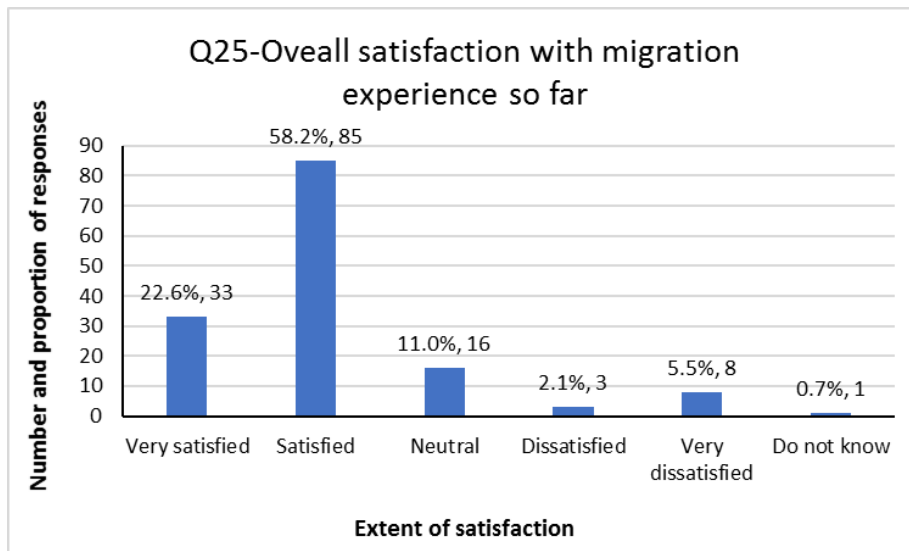


Figure 28: Migrant's satisfaction ratings

4.7. Migrant business owners

20 people responded to the secondary Migrant Business Survey, which was held separately and after the initial survey and focus groups for this research project. While a response of 20 people doesn't allow for robust data analysis, it does provide key anecdotal insights on the needs of migrant business owners in Alice Springs/Central Australia.

4.7.1. Overview of migrant business owners

Of the respondents, the largest percentage of business owners have lived in Alice Springs/Central Australia for 10-15 years.

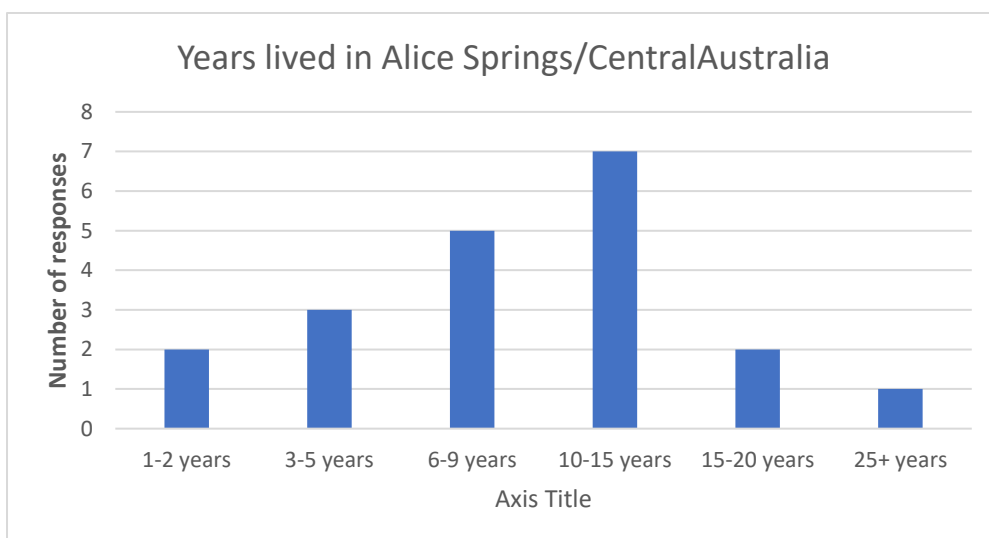


Figure 29: Years lived in Alice Springs of migrant business owners

Thirty-five percent of respondents were aged 35-45 years, 30% are aged 40-54 years, 15% are aged 25-34 years, and the remaining were aged <25 years, and 55-64 years and 75+ years.

Sixty-five percent of respondents were Australian citizens. Every responder identified that they are in business. The main industry / sectors of business owners included: hospitality (45%), other (30%), retail (15%) and health services and trades (5%).

4.7.2. *Experience starting or running businesses in Central Australia*

Business owners shared they felt very supported by the community as they start their business journey and they enjoy running their own business.

Business owners identified several challenges in starting and running business and this includes:

- Finding and retaining skilled employees)
- Frequent break-ins
- Need for start-up grants
- Impact of COVID-19, particularly supply of goods and increased prices, especially feeling they don't feel they can pass on increased costs to customers
- Competition with larger companies and feedback that business was being awarded to interstate companies.

Business owners identified that they employ a range people including family and local residents (50%), friends and other (20%) and backpackers (15%).

4.7.3. *Regional Business Development Service Delivery*

The majority of business owners (65%) had not accessed information or assistance from regional organisations that provide business advice, development or mentor services.

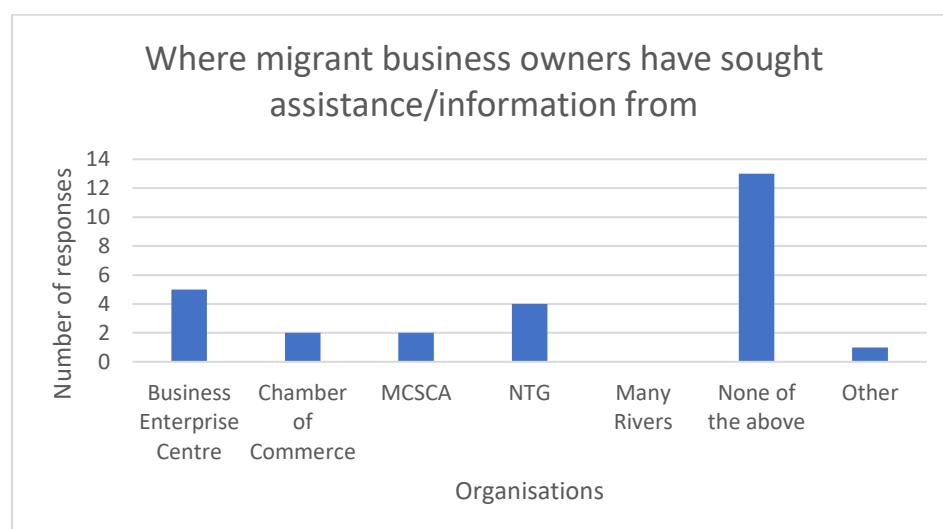


Figure 30: Where migrant business owners have sought assistance/information from

65% of respondents had not sought information or assistance from key local organisations or services, with the biggest source of information/assistance being the Business Enterprise Centre, with 25% of businesses having accessed support from there.

The most common information or assistance businesses would like to access include:

- Digital marketing (35%)
- Business planning, migration support, employing and managing staff and legal (30%)
- Budget and finances (25%)
- How to start a business (10%)
- How to register a business, export and other (5%)
- None of the above (35%)

4.7.4. Future Development

60% of business owners would like 'grow their existing business', 10% of business owners would like to purchase an existing business, and 5% of business owners would like to export.

Businesses that they would like to establish is in the food, hospitality and community services sectors.

4.7.5. Regional Networking and Training Opportunities

The majority of business owners (83.3%) have not participated in local networking and training opportunities. 5.56% of business owners had attended October Business Month and Chamber of Commerce 'Business at Sunset' events.

90% of business owners identified that they had started the businesses, however this was contradicted as 25% identified that they had purchased an existing business.

5. In-depth understanding of main concerns and issues

Despite the overall high levels of satisfaction and generally positive perceptions of Alice Springs, migrant communities did raise some issues and concerns in the surveys and the focus group discussions. Many of these issues and concerns were also shared by government and service providers. This section describes these issues and concerns, as well as broad perceptions of migrants and migration from stakeholders.

5.1. Common issues shared by migrants and stakeholders

To allow respondents to have more chances to raise issues, before completion of the survey, a final open question was asked in the survey: 'Q-28: Do you want to raise any other issues/suggestions related to migration and migrants? Please write down here.' Out of a total of 166 respondents, 54 respondents (32.5%) raised one or more issues to supplement their previous answers in the survey. Table 8 summarises the issues raised by these respondents.

Table 8: Other issues raised in the survey

Issues	Counts of mention	Proportion of respondents who raised this specific issue
Crime/safety/law and order	12	22.2%
Affordable housing	10	18.5%
More services (quality restaurants, youth activities, integrated services, entertainment activities, migrant counselling service, support for women, childcare)	7	13.0%
Better education (school, HE, international students)	6	11.1%
Equal/better/decent job opportunities	6	11.1%
Discrimination/racism/bullying	5	9.3%
Living costs	4	7.4%
Health services	3	5.6%
More English classes, language learning	3	5.6%
Governmental support, flexible migration policy for regional Australia, easier IELTS	3	5.6%
More cultural communication/more love/support not hatred/multicultural promotion	3	5.6%
Town promotion, more migrants to Alice Springs, cleaner street	3	5.6%
High turnover-step stone	2	3.7%
Appreciation	1	1.9%
Hard life for migrants	1	1.9%
Healthier lifestyle	1	1.9%
Lonely/isolation	1	1.9%
Migrants follow local laws not home country's laws	1	1.9%
Migration agent support	1	1.9%
Migration agents: Don't take migration for a commercial ride	1	1.9%
Weather	1	1.9%

These issues and concerns are repeatedly raised by many other migrants in the survey when answering other questions, for example, Q-10 (Figure 24), Q-15 (Figure 21), Q-16 (Figure 20) and Q-24 (Figure 10). 'Safety and crime' (22.2% of respondents raise this issue), 'affordable housing' (18.5%), 'more and better services' (13.0%), 'better educational opportunity' (11.1%), 'equal job opportunities' (11.1%), 'discrimination, racism and workplace bullying' (9.3%) and 'expensive living cost' (7.4%) were mostly raised (Table 10). This reinforces that these are key issues and concerns for migrants in Alice Springs, and need to be addressed.

Box 1- Migrants' concerns:

“Communication, transportation issues, limit types of work/jobs, children education are big issues. They forget about migrants. More tailor-made consideration for migrants may be needed”

- *Migrant participant -- Focus discussion group*

From the focus discussion groups attended by government agencies and service providers, it is clear that these stakeholders understand issues about migration and migrant settlement (living and working) in Alice Springs and share many migrants' concerns.

Box 2- Service providers' understanding of issues faced by migrants:

“We really understand migrants' issues and concerns through our daily connection with them through our services, for example:

Housing, Proper housing is difficult for them to access, because of shortage and expensive cost.

Because of Covid-19, they lose their work time (many halved their work time from 30-40 hours per week down to 20, and many of them do not have government payments for that.

Citizenship test, driver license test, difficult for them because of language issue. Government could make things much easier for them!

Mismatch between jobs and qualifications is another issue.”

- *Service provider participant -- Focus discussion group*

5.2. General concerns of migrant support services

In the survey, migrants raised a wide range of concerns such as the lack of affordable housing, childcare services, education and so on, which are strongly associated with availability and accessibility of various aspects of support services. In the focus group discussions, government and service providers acknowledged and appreciated migrants' contributions to local social and economic development, expressed their welcome to migrants, and were committed to providing better support services.

5.2.1. Availability of services and supports for migrants

In a broad sense, there are a variety of services available for migrants in Alice Springs. These services are provided by government (including Commonwealth, NTG and Alice Springs Town Council), non-government organisations and businesses at different levels. Some examples are provided below, and a more complete list is in Appendix 5.

- NTG published guidelines for migrants to find jobs in the NT (Northern Territory Government, 2018).
- Council grants are available for migrant communities.
- Many organisations and service providers provide housing solutions for local communities including migrants, such as NT Public Housing, NT Shelter, Community Housing and Anglican Care.

- A lot of services for women are available to migrant communities from related service providers such as Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WoSSCA), Central Australian Women's Legal Service (CAWLS) and NT Working Women's Centre (NTWWC).
- Migrants are welcome to use many facilities such as the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre, Alice Springs Public Library.
- Child health services are available through a referral system from the Alice Springs Hospital when new babies are born. Health services are available for new migrant mothers, providing solutions for them.
- STEPS Group provides language services for new migrants in Alice Springs.
- Some public funding is available to help with transport for isolated people, especially new migrants.

Box 3- We support migrants

"Steps Group has an inclusive system to support the migrants, we provide English education for them. We help migrants who approach us to find jobs, to access to childcare, and other services, not just English course. We make our courses services flexible to fit in their work time and lifestyle...Currently have around 20 students, from different countries, including Sudan, South Sudan, China, Hong Kong, Thailand and South Korea...Students are referred to here by MCSCA."

- STEPS Group participant -Focus discussion group

Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia (MCSCA)

As a key organisation that has provided support services for migrants for more than 30 years in Alice Springs, MCSCA has been highly acknowledged and appreciated by many migrants in the survey and the discussion for its efforts in migrant services. Migrants have been using the services provided by MCSCA (refer Appendix 6) and have also accessed other services through MCSCA. From Table 9, we can see how important the support services are for migrants to overcome key barriers such as access to accommodation, financial support, and IT facilities.

Table 9: Statistics of MCSCA client contacts by ethnicity group*

Type of assistance/information sought	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Migration information (Citizenship, PR, Visa, Passport)	194	211	125
Assistance with filling in forms (Citizenship, Medicare, Centrelink, Insurance, Housing, Passport)	150	134	94
Employment (job referrals, CV, job application)	153	174	101
Housing/ Accommodation/Financial support	77	66	456
Education (Homework tuition, online studies, English conversation)	44	185	56
Domestic Violence, Legal, Discrimination issues	74	44	21
Social Interaction, MCSCA Activities	130	116	83
Health, Medical issues	12	20	28
Use MCSCA resources (computer, scan, print)	467	824	425
Total frequency of visits	1301	1774	1389

** Sources: MCSCA annual reports.*

5.2.2. Lack of access to services

Despite the range of current services available in Alice Springs, gaps remain service provision and barriers to accessing services. On one hand, some services that are desperately needed by migrants are not currently provided. On the other hand, some services are available but are difficult to access by migrants. These are described in more detail below, drawing on the results of the focus group discussions. Migrants believe there are needs of more governmental programs supporting migrant communities: “we need more facilities and services to help migrants, especially newcomers”.

A lack of resources was clearly identified by all study participants as a key reason for the shortage of tailor-made services and support for migrants. For example, because of a lack of resources, the only local public high school in Alice Springs is unable to provide special English-language support for migrant children although there is a strong need. Schoolteachers are trying their best to provide some kind of support in their own time (such as after hours). The only university campus in Alice Springs previously had programs targeting migrants such as international internships, but many of these programs are no longer available because of funding changes. These programs now have to be self-funded, which means service users (migrants in this case) must pay for the services, and the service can only be provided at a certain level and a certain scale (such as number of students, certain amount of fee charges). Some other free services accessed by migrants are also facing challenges mainly because of a lack of financial resources. For example, the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre has allowed migrants to hold various social and cultural events at the centre free of charge, but this free use may not be sustainable in the long term, and as a result is under threat. MCSCA used to provide free transport services for newly arrived migrants, but this has now ceased as they have been unable to secure a volunteer bus driver.

Some services do not adequately respond to migrants needs due to a lack of resources. For example, a local language service is contracted to provide free language training courses for eligible migrants, however, it is difficult to accommodate the course delivery around the real needs of migrants. While younger migrants are the main cohort to attend the course, their work hours and home duty commitments, like caring for kids, constrain their availability to follow the course schedule. Without extra resources (including time, staff, financial and facilities) for special arrangements to suit migrants’ flexibility and special situations (such as weekend and after hour lessons, temporary childcare support), it is difficult to deliver the service in an appropriate manner.

Although many services are available for migrants, such as community housing services, and public housing, currently, most clients of these services are Indigenous people, there are few migrant clients. One of the reasons for this is that migrants are unaware that they are also eligible for these services.

Box 4- Many services are available to migrants but not really accessible to them

“Migrants are welcome to Alice Springs, multicultural background, not know anything especially for migrants, but many services are and can be made available for migrants.

We provide services based on different streams of programs.... Most of our clients are Indigenous people. Although a few migrants are served. Some programs could be provided to migrants. For example, last year, we provided services to a few migrants, one from India and one from Sudan.”

- Service provider – Focus discussion group

5.2.3. Connecting services and migrants

In the surveys and focus group discussions, all stakeholders showed a strong willingness to work together to provide better services and support to migrants. While more resources are necessary for services, the importance of service integration was highlighted. All stakeholders shared the perception that an improved interconnection between migrants and government, service providers and local communities is needed, and a better mutual understanding of migration issues and migrant needs is critical.

Box 5- Migrants need holistic services

“Government and organisations and employers should work together. Sponsors should have more sensible association / relation with migrants-to-be to give them a clear understanding of the process and pathway. Government policies should be in place. There are some migration organisations are providing these services and consultancies to these migrants-to-be, MCSCA can provide connection with them. An organisation with more capacity to provide related information and bridge the services and migrants is desperately needed.”

- Migrant participant – Focus discussion group

Service providers are keen to work together to provide holistic services to migrants. While more resources are needed for better services, the importance of service integration was highlighted. In the focus discussions, stakeholders stated that collaboration between organisations would ensure providers work better together to deliver services. Integration and collaboration among different services providers are expected to be able to provide more effective services and be less confusing for migrants to navigate their way around the services.

On one hand, many migrants do not know what services are on offer and where to seek help and assistance, such as migration policies, welfare policies and services, social wellbeing support services for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, the children’s legal system, fair work, women’s protection and so on. This is associated with not only miscommunication but also cultural differences and/or ‘culture shock’.

On the other hand, it seems that government and service providers may not really understand how to best communicate effectively and efficiently with migrant communities to deliver the services and supports they need. They indicated that there is a lack of channels for them to reach migrant communities, and a lack of knowledge around how to

address issues such as: trust, culture, language, tailor-made services and flexibility. Many service providers acknowledge that they do not know how to access migrants, and do not necessarily know what information and how it should be presented to migrants. Regarding how to improve the bridge between services and migrants, focus discussion group participants suggested it is necessary to integrate various services and establish a mechanism that links the integrated holistic services with migrant communities more closely. The need for a mechanism that connect migrants through to potential workplaces was also identified by participants.

Box 6- Deliver tailor-made services to migrants

“We could go to them to deliver the services for specific groups, rather than general talking”;

“Is there a possibility to establish a business to hire and serve for migrants, as a gateway for migrants to get into mainstream workforces (like a middle-man)?”

- *Service provider participants – Focus discussion group*

Service providers also raised the issue about mutual understanding between migrants and services. They are really keen to be fed specific data and information about migrants and migration so that they are able to provide more tailor-made services.

Box 7- We are here to provide services

“For service providers, it is important to understand how to step into these areas to get access to migrant communities to provide necessary services that actually are available for them; We must be careful and cautious to know how to connect with them, considering different situations of different groups, such as culture, religion, availability, language... we want to find a proper way to get connected to migrants.”

“But we need to know their background and what they want from us.”

- *Service provider participants – Focus discussion group*

5.3. Housing

From the survey and discussion groups, a lack of suitable housing is one of the most important issues raised by migrants (refer to Figure 19, Figure 20, Figure 23 and Table 10) and this was also highlighted by stakeholders. Migrants raise housing issues from different dimensions such as affordability, availability and accessibility. Government and service providers shared these concerns, acknowledged the difficulty in addressing the housing issue, and provided some advice and suggestions to help migrants find a way through. These suggestions are identified in the following discussion.

5.3.1. Housing problems

Housing affordability is a significant issue in Alice Springs. Most migrants choose to rent a property as their first home in Alice Springs. As described by migrants participating in the project, “lease cost is too high to afford”. For those migrants who own a house, they feel

that the Council rates are high and regularly increases. This significantly affects the affordability of housing in Alice Springs and has very negative impacts on migrant settlement and retention.

Another issue is overcoming difficulties accessing housing services to secure a property to be able to settle down quickly. As reported by migrants, the current rental reference system makes renting very difficult for migrants who move straight to Alice Springs from elsewhere, including interstate and overseas. When migrants come to the town, it is difficult for them to rent a room or property without a previous rental history. It's even more difficult for single parents with children. For newcomers, it is difficult for them as normally they need to have employment and residency experience/history in the town for six months. For those newly arrived migrants with English as their second or even third language, it is even more difficult to go through the complicated application process.

A social housing assistance program that is tailor-made for newly arrived migrants might be a solution to these issues. This needs to be established based on the government's policy support, service providers' collaboration and community engagement. From the general social housing resources, a proportion of public housing stock could be specifically allocated for newly arrived migrants to apply for, while mobilising more private rentals to be part of this program. Governments would need to provide policy and financial support to secure such housing resources.

5.3.2. Public housing for migrants

Currently, public housing is a possible option for migrants. However, for migrants it is very difficult to understand the public housing policies and the application process, and public housing availability is currently very limited.

Box 8- Migrants' perception on public housing

It is "not clear about Territory housing policies, such as how to apply, what is eligibility, what references are required ... you have to wait for 6-12 months to know if you are shortlisted--taking long time".

It is very confusing: they give houses to either lower or higher income but not my family, not sure what are assessment indicators."

- *Migrant representatives - Focus discussion group*

NT Housing is the government agency responsible for providing affordable housing options in the NT. NT Housing recognises the complexity and difficulties in applying for public housing especially for temporary and interstate residents, big families (there is a regulation about how many people may live in one property), and those without local rental history and/or experience in this market.

NT Housing advised that members of the public, including migrants, can register for welfare housing through either a general application or priority application. The general application process is a very long process where the waiting period is normally 4-6 years. A faster alternative is to make a priority application; however, these applications need to meet stricter requirements. For example, it needs to include such information as why you should

be approved, what are the emergent risks and/or relevant medical needs, and it should be accompanied by support letters, support agency references including a statement indicating why you should be approved. NT Housing provides detailed information on its website (<https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/apply-for-housing/apply-for-public-housing>) about how to apply for public housing. While the information provided on the website is comprehensive and easily navigated, it is only available in English. It would be helpful to migrants if other language versions of key information were available, and if they were presented in a simpler way.

While encouraging migrants to seek more information about public housing, NT Housing indicates that public housing resources are very limited in Alice Springs, especially compared to other big cities in Australia. NT housing suggests that migrants also seek support and assistance from local social services, as many organisations in Alice Springs provide housing services for people including migrants. Migrants, for example, can seek housing information and housing services from various organisations such as Alice Springs Community Support Services, NT Shelter, Anglican Care, Community Housing Central Australia and other organisations.

Box 9- Housing services

“NT Shelter is a peak body for community housing in the NT. Public housing is for low income population, for example, these people need to be eligible for CenterLink’s payments. Community housing also needs an income check, availability is very tight. We are here to help, although we are not an organization especially for migrants, but we do provide some help. We are exploring various approaches such as the ‘Private Rental Brokerage Program’, ‘Public Housing Community Building Initiatives’ to address the housing resource issues.”

“NT Housing applies ‘Bond Assistance’* policies under which public housing applicants can get an interest free loan for 18 months to pay the initial bond ... when you make Bond arrangements, your income will have to fall into some specific range, not too high (you must be Centre link eligible) but not too low (you have to be able to pay the bond back in an arranged way), and you need to be a resident/citizen.”

* ‘Bond Assistance’ is an interest free loan to help pay the initial bond for a private rental property. (refer to: <https://nt.gov.au/property/renters/find-out-about-rental-costs/help-with-set-up-costs-for-a-private-rental>)

- Government and service provider participants – Focus discussion group

5.4. Community safety and security

Migrants report community safety and crime in the town as a major concern, and are very frustrated about the issue.

Box 10- Migrants' concern about crimes

“We understand this is a long-lasting issue for Alice Springs.”

“Street is OK, home security is a problem: break-in, car stolen. It's scared.”

“Good safety in internal migrant community other than kid problems, but issues are with broad communities, streets.”

“Youth crime: trespass, break-in... you can do nothing, even for police, to my understanding, what they can do is also very limited against youth crimes in the town”.

- Migrant representatives-- Focus discussion group

‘Reducing crime’ is most mentioned by respondents (30.4%) when answering the question ‘how to make Alice Springs more welcoming?’, followed by ‘more services’ (16.5%), ‘better opportunities’ (15.7%), ‘better flight connection/transport’ (13.0%) and ‘affordable housing’ (10.4%) (Figure 28) . The results are consistent with earlier findings that identified crime and safety/security as an issue of concern for migrants. However, all stakeholders recognised that this issue is not restricted solely to migrants, and is a broader community issue for Alice Springs. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that for some migrants, particularly those who have fled oppressive and worn-torn countries, that threats (real or perceived) to their personal safety and peaceful life may have a relatively greater impact upon their mental health and general wellbeing.

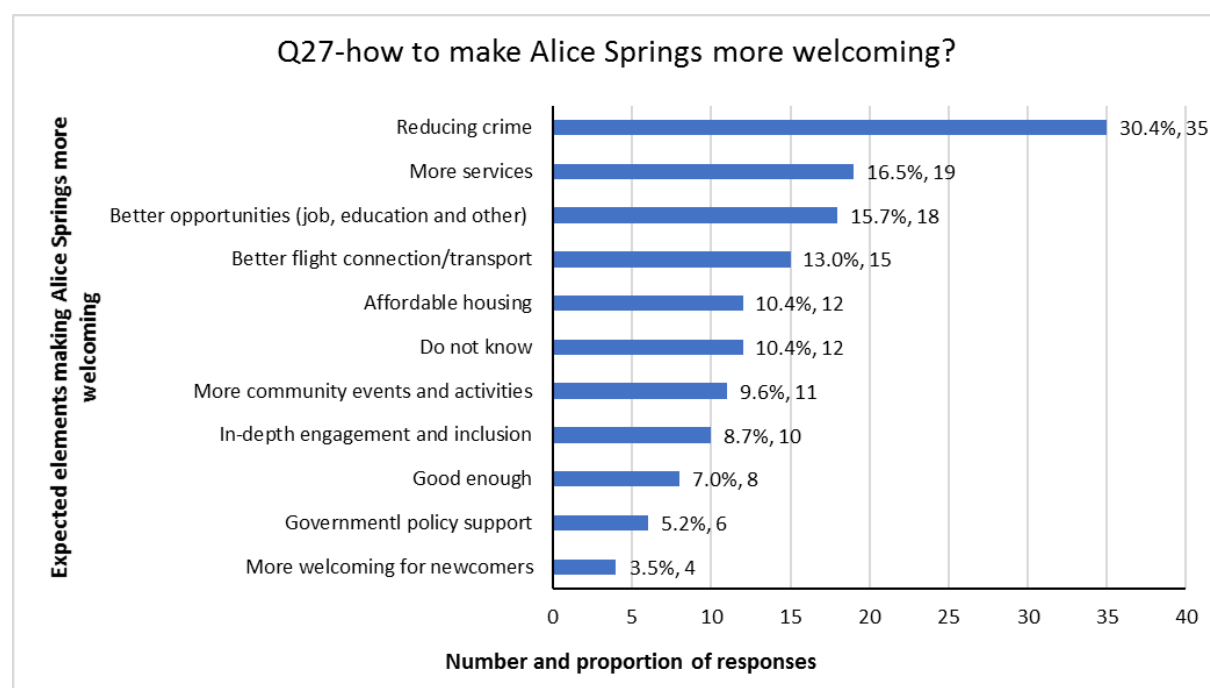


Figure 30: Issues to be addressed to make Alice Springs more welcoming

5.5. Educational opportunities

Migrants' perceptions of local education opportunities are mixed. While many migrants were satisfied with education (refer to Figure 25), there were those who wanted 'better education' (11%, Table 10), and 'education' is also listed as one important challenge (refer to Figure 21). It is understood that, given newly arrived migrants to Alice Springs are

predominately young and with young children, access to education is an important issue, extending from childcare services, to school education, tertiary education and further education and training. Considering that training opportunities are associated with qualification recognition and employment placement; it is even more critical for migrants.

5.5.1. Access to proper educational opportunities

School education and childcare are a big issue for migrant families in Alice Springs. Many children migrated to Alice Springs with their parents as teenagers. There is a lack of special support with their studies at school regarding language and cultural difficulties, owing to limited resources (as reported in Section 5.1). These language and cultural difficulties negatively affect their school learning experiences, which could cause a long-term negative impact on the next generation of migrants, in terms of their perception and capability in participating in local communities and establishing their Australian identity.

Lack of childcare services

Although the lack of childcare services is not restricted to migrants, it has become a critical issue for many migrant families that impacts their settlement.

Box 11- Lack of childcare services

“While we have to pay more compared to other places, we do not have enough facilities, we have a long waiting list to get into childcare services, such as Larapinta family and child center and other childcare services. Children got neglected, child service is lack.”

“Who will look after our children?”

- *Migrant representatives—Focus discussion group*

As reported in the focus discussion, many migrant families are here with non-school age children. While both parents have to work hard to sustain their livelihood, they can't really afford to send children to childcare, even if they are offered a place in a childcare service. In many cases, they have to self-organise a special home care for childcare. For example, one family looks after children at home for several migrant families on a rotation basis; or young mothers stay home to look after their children. But such uncertified and temporary home care can have lots of concerns, such as health issues, safety and insurance issues. School holidays can also be challenging for many migrant families with school-age children, as there are limited suitable and affordable holiday care services available. Therefore, it can be difficult for a working migrant family, even more difficult because of the current Covid-19 environment, and especially for single parent households.

Some local services are providing limited temporary support to migrants, such as the SusuMama playgroup, which organises activities for newly arrived migrant parents and their children. However, more community services for children are needed to not only help migrant kids to study and communicate with other kids, but to also more accessible and affordable childcare services to allow their parents to participate in the workforce and community.

Lack of higher education

A lack of tertiary education opportunities in Central Australia has been another educational difficulty for migrants, especially those who propose to stay here for a longer period of time. Participants in the focus discussion groups reported that they would have to move away from Alice Springs for better educational opportunities for their children.

Box 12- No higher education in the town

“After 12 years, you have to go to other places... People can’t not stay here longer. Children finish year 12 here, they have to leave for other places to seek tertiary education opportunity, the family then have to move out.”

“Asian families see family as the most important thing, the whole family will move together with children who are going to university. It is difficult for them to separate.”

- Migrant representatives—Focus discussion group

Without comprehensive higher education, it is difficult for potential migrants who come to seek education opportunities in Alice Springs. A lack of higher education opportunities makes it hard to attract and keep international students. It was reported in the survey and focus discussions that many migrants would like to invite their family members or friends to come here for study, but it is always difficult if not impossible.

Although there are online courses available, most migrants who pursue higher education prefer face-to-face education. Even for many online courses, face-to-face teaching and learning is always an important part of courses, but very difficult to access from Alice Springs. Although Charles Darwin University currently offers some VET courses in Alice Springs, there are only very limited online HE degree courses available. Migrants would like to see more HE courses for international students available here in Alice Springs. They also suggested that more VET courses at CDU Alice Springs would be helpful and better for people to come here and stay longer.

Box 13- Services for international students

“We need to welcome international students coming here, online study is hard for them”.

“How my relatives can come to Alice Springs to study? What is the procedure? How about cost?”

“We need to get ready for more students and migrants in the town. Seems government has done nothing in recent years for migrants!”

When we talk about welcoming international students and more migrants here, government and organisations need to put more resources to build required infrastructure and facilities.

- Migrant representatives—Focus discussion group

5.5.2. Mismatch of employment and education/qualifications: An opportunity for further education

‘Job opportunity’ is the most important attraction factor for migrants to move to Alice Springs. As reported in the survey, while a majority of migrants are employed, there are 18.5% of migrants (refer to Table 7 in Section 4.1.2) reported that they were employed in

a job that does not match their education and qualifications. This proportion is not high but is an increase from what was reported in the 2016 Census (only 14%). While changed migration policies might have had some impacts (in particular in the short term) on this worsening, this project was not able to establish what other factors may be contributing to this trend. Further investigation of this issue is necessary.

There are different reasons for mismatches between type of work and education/qualifications for migrants, but one of the main reasons is that their overseas education and qualifications are not recognised in Australia. Migrants expect government to provide support to migrants in professional development, including qualification recognition. However, there are no available services that are able to provide specific support with this matter. This is a clear gap in this area, which could provide an opportunity for local tertiary institutions to step into, i.e. to offer further education and qualification recognition services.

Box 14- Mismatched employment and education/qualifications

“People finished their degree, come to Alice Springs but professional opportunities are limited, there is a mismatch between qualifications and employment. Our employment here in Alice Springs does not match with our qualifications.”

“Lawyer/government jobs were our original jobs of many of us in our original country, but they are here being a taxi driver, security and cleaners.”

“Highly qualified without matched jobs. At least 65% in my community (African community), jobs do not match with qualifications. 35% matched. We have around 400 South Sudanese here in Alice Springs.”

- *Migrant representatives—Focus discussion group*

In the focus discussion groups, stakeholders agreed that it is not too late to work on this issue. From their perspective, stakeholders listed many possibilities for migrants to get into the workplace and would like to facilitate this engagement, such as through volunteer opportunities with Red Cross, sports, churches and other channels. Not only do stakeholders express their strong willingness to work together to provide support, but they also offered some specific ideas and proposals. For example, CDU Alice Springs would like to cooperate with other organisations to do more in providing training in some sectors such as business and cookery, while Red Cross proposed a collaboration with MCSCA and the Chamber of Commerce to provide more opportunities for international students. To bridge international and Australian qualifications, educational services must play a critical role. However, it was also identified that educational services need support from government to fill the gap between available services and migrant needs in terms of access and resources. Meanwhile, service providers could do something to help migrants. For example, “Red Cross recognises your skills, works together with you to take advantage of opportunities”. “We could link migrants to various volunteering opportunities through which you progress to get onto a paid-job (employment) pathway”.

5.6. Discrimination and exploitation

Discrimination, exploitation, workplace bullying, and racism were raised as another concern by both migrant respondents and other stakeholders in the focus discussions.

Migrants' complaints in terms of discrimination mainly focus on job recruitment discrimination. Migrants claim that "although in most cases, it is not openly said or recognised, obviously many businesses are doing so: they reject your application not because of your merit but your background". In the focus discussion groups, migrants clearly indicated that they would like businesses to treat English-as-second-language groups equally when recruiting to positions.

Box 15- Discrimination cases

"I got degrees here in Australia, including one Bachelor in Community Development, two diplomas...I got job interviews, but unsuccessful. They did not tell me the reasons, but just told me I was unsuccessful. Negative about my background."

"One of my friends with a white people name, but black background, when she went to interview, and surprised the employer, although she performed well in the interview but failed to get the job. This was very disappointed, but eventually Alice Springs is better than many other places in Australia regarding this issue."

"Casual job for longtime, but when a contract position available, it is always offered to another people (Aboriginal or white people) without any experiences and qualifications. Why? Policy issues?!"

- *Migrant representative—Focus discussion group*

A majority of migrants are aware that this type of discrimination based on race and ethnicity is illegal, but when some of them encounter this situation, they choose not to report it because of various reasons including cultural reasons, or they simply do not know how and where to make a complaint and who to speak with. Temporary visa holders – migrants to be, who don't yet have permanent residency, are more likely to experience exploitation and bullying in workplaces, such as "less pay, forced to do overtime without proper penalty payments". This cohort of people are in a disadvantaged situation when these things happen; they generally do not make formal complaints as they are worried about their visa application (i.e. that it will be refused if they make a complaint) and related issues. Migrants and stakeholders all agree that bullying and discrimination are not an issue in government agencies, while it is an issue in some NGOs and businesses.

Stakeholders acknowledge that sometimes there exists discrimination or racism when employing migrants, even if this is not clearly obvious. Claims that the migrant applicant is "overqualified" for a position is sometimes used as an excuse to discriminate against migrants with higher qualifications. One stakeholder described the exploitation of international students, newly arrived migrants or migrants-to-be as including them being "paid less, or paid cash without paying superannuation".

5.7. Multicultural community integration

5.7.1. Facilitating integration of migrant communities

During focus group discussions, stakeholders called for more attention to be paid to migrant family relationships, especially for those 'one-working-member' families and 'married-to-an-(non-migrant) Australian' families. The former are more likely to experience greater negative emotions and settlement pressure leading to family

arguments and conflict. Migrant members of blended families may often feel isolated from their migrant communities.

While most migrants to Alice Springs maintain a close relationship within their own ethnic group or migrant community, they recognise that communication and engagement among different migrant communities (ethnic groups) needs to be enhanced. In fact, migrants are willing to establish connections with the broader community.

Box-16: Migrants are willing to communicate with communities

“We are a community-oriented society. We use the church as an important venue for community communication, we are keen to connect more with other communities. We are communicating with mainstream communities.”

- *Migrant representative—Focus discussion group*

The focus group discussions also indicated that the cooperation between migrant communities and MCSCA, between various communities, and between community leaders and their community members, must be enhanced to ensure that there is information sharing and that migrants' voices are better heard.

Stakeholders suggested a variety of approaches and instruments to facilitate integration of migrant communities, for example via ethnic food shops (such as Chinese food shops and Indian food shops), via migrant support services and through community activities such as festivals.

Box-17: Facilitating integration of migrant communities

“An Ambassador Program could help new migrants to connect to local communities and people”.

“Friends/families/sports clubs/food stores/churches/religious locations are important for migrants for communication and seeking help.”

“Babies are source of connection for migrants, through mother's groups/clubs”

- *Stakeholder participants-- Focus discussion group*

5.7.2. Engaging cultural inclusion with local community

Although not occurring on a large scale, there does exist some issues between migrants and local communities in terms of cultural inclusion. As reported in the survey and focus discussions, we do have a few cases that suggest that there is a cultural difference, and even conflict, between people of different cultural backgrounds. This can occur in various situations and locations, such as in schools. For example, some migrants reported that their children felt uncomfortable and unable to get along with some students because of this cultural difference. Stakeholders also indicated that cultural conflict had occurred between migrant school students and local Indigenous students.

Box 18- Conflict between migrants and local community

“Migrant girl students said some culturally improper words to Aboriginal girls in the school, while the Aboriginal girls told the migrant girls to ‘go back to where you came from’.”

- Stakeholder participant-- Focus discussion group

5.7.3. Lack of resources for multicultural activities

Migrants perceive a close connection with society, social acceptance and inclusion, as well as community belongingness as important elements of successful settlement (refer to Figure 22). Most migrants have been participating in the community in one way or another, but only less than one third of them (31.5%) claimed that they had participated in the broader community ‘very often’ (refer to Figure 23). In the focus group discussions, migrant participants pointed out that there existed an issue of less communication and engagement with society, including not only within and among migrant communities, but also with the broader community. Besides some other factors such as cultural and lifestyle differences and language issues (as indicated in Figure 18), they regard insufficient resources for multicultural integration activities as an important reason. They appreciated the significant role of MCSCA in facilitating this multicultural inclusion; they called for more resources from government and other stakeholders to improve this service and enhance its capacity, and to support more migrant festivals, cross-cultural interaction activities, and multicultural celebrations.

Box 19- Facilities for community integration

“Currently we have MCSCA, but not fully funded, with limited capacity to serve broad migrant communities. We need more funding and resources to secure an organisation to provide comprehensive services including information sharing, engaging with migrant communities, various government agencies, organisations and services, and organising multicultural activities, to help migrants to integrate into mainstream society quicker and easier.”

- Migrant representative – Focus discussion group

During the course of this research project, many migrants expressed their desire for a community facility to hold events for migrant communities, as currently many migrant communities find it difficult to secure such a facility for regular activities. They describe this facility as a multifunctional cultural facility where there is not only a suitable space and equipment for migrants’ cultural and social activities and events, including connection and engagement with various service providers, but also the capacity to exhibit colorful migrant cultures to the public.

5.8. Other issues

In addition to the main issues and concerns reported above, other issues raised in the course of this study are included in this section.

Newly changed migration policies: Recent changes to policies associated with the Skilled Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 489) (closed to new applications on 16 September 2019) and Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491) (commenced on 16 September

2019), seem to have caused some misunderstanding or miscommunication to those migrants-to-be who apply for Skilled Regional Migration. It was reported in the focus group discussions, that many people who are holding these visa categories do not really understand the policy and the possible pathway to migration. They feel the policy is more difficult and complicated, adding to the uncertainty for applicants within Australia. For example, the whole process from EOI to invitation for application, to application submission and then to final migration approval, is a relatively long process. It could take more than two years to get approval of a provisional visa and then at least three more years before you can apply for permanent residency. During this process, there are comprehensive and strict regulations about work and residency.

Both migrants and stakeholders also raised concerns about the **lack of appreciation** of the contribution of migrants, which is reflected in various migration policies. Some migrants believe that migrants have not been appreciated by government and communities in the health system, and cited Covid-19 as an example, emphasising that migrant health workers have been a significant part of the team, sacrificed a lot, but their contribution has not been appropriately appreciated by the government or other organisations. Meanwhile, some stakeholders argued that government and business sponsorship for regional migration has not been appreciated by migrants themselves, i.e. many migrants see this opportunity as a stepping-stone to being able to permanently settle in a large capital city and therefore do not really appreciate local government and businesses in the region. This then discourages local businesses from offering sponsorship, with the result that sponsorship not providing full impacts for the business or Alice Springs community.

Expensive transport costs were raised by many migrants. It is also an issue for the entire community in Alice Springs. However, considering 'linking back to home country' is critical for migrants as reported in the survey, the transport issue understandably becomes more important for migrants than for some others. Airfares are considered too expensive which acts as a barrier for migrants to travel back to their home countries and return with their friends and relatives to Alice Springs. In this regard, expensive transport costs are a key concern.

6. Business ownership

Migrant business owners shared they felt very supported by the community as they start their business journey and they enjoy running their own business.

Business owners identified several challenges in starting and running businesses, including:

- Finding and retaining skilled employees
- Frequent break-ins
- Need for start-up grants
- Impact of COVID-19, particularly supply of goods and increased prices, especially feeling they don't feel they can pass on increased costs to customers
- Competition with larger companies and feedback that business was being awarded to interstate companies.

The majority of business owners (55%) in Alice Springs/Central Australia who responded to the questionnaire have been in business for only 1-3 years, which indicates a potential need for support, but the survey didn't collect data on whether this was the first time they had run a business, or if they had previous experience as a business owner. 65% of people indicated that they hadn't accessed key forms of assistance/information (such as MCSCA, NTG, Business Enterprise Centre etc.), but it is unclear whether this is due to a lack of knowledge regarding the availability of these services, or if they feel like they don't need support in running their business.

Business owners indicated that freedom and the community are the key reasons as to why they enjoy running their business. However, in terms of actually running the business, one third of the respondents indicated that they would like support in key areas of running their business, such as business planning, digital marketing, and employing and managing staff. Migration support was another key area for people, and 35% of respondents indicated that they didn't require support in the key areas listed in the questionnaire.

With 50% of business owners employing family members, it also indicates strong employment opportunities within the migrant sector for migrant run businesses.

7. Discussion

Migrant communities, as an important part of the population, have changed the demographic, cultural, and social structure of Alice Springs. New migrants offer the potential to further grow the town. While migrant communities contribute to sustaining Alice Springs' population, services, and economy (Taylor, 2018), there have been a lot of challenges and issues faced by both migrants and local communities, for example in terms of migrant services and social inclusion.

7.1. Current size of migrant population

In 2016, there were 5,779 overseas born people living in Alice Springs as per the 2016 Census. Since then, as reported in the survey and focus discussion, many one-member migrant households and young migrant families with children have migrated or moved in Alice Springs, while some migrants moved out. This study was not able to make a proper prediction or estimation of the size of migrant population in Alice Springs, but we could make an assumption: assuming that there was no change in the proportion of overseas born population over the period from 2016 to 2020, i.e. around 23.4% (based on 2016 Census), among total ERP of Alice Springs in 2020 (i.e. 26,448), there were around 6,200 overseas born people.

Importantly, when discussing and dealing with migration and migrants' issues, we should focus more on migrant families (including one-member households) rather than on individual migrants and also include migrants-to-be and their families (such as visa 491 and 489 holders). As per our migrant survey conducted in this project, among 166 responses representing 459 family/household members, there were 311 people born overseas, i.e. 67.75% (refer to Table 6). Applying this rate, we have estimated that 6,200 overseas born people in Alice Springs represented around 9,150 migrant family/household members, which was 34.6% of total ERP of Alice Springs in 2020. Given the survey sample size is relatively small, this estimation might not be accurate, but it still gives us a meaningful

concept that a smaller size of overseas born population represents a much bigger scale of migrant family and household members. This estimation suggests that migration and migrants' issues are directly associated with and impacting on more than one third of total population in Alice Springs.

Another important fact is that in recent years, more and more temporary visa holders have arrived in Alice Spring to seek opportunities, for example, as working holiday makers. They have close relationship with local migrant communities. From a public perspective or a general sense, they are always regarded migrants or migrants-to-be, but they are not migrants in the official statistics. This could generally create some misunderstanding and misconception about the size of migrant population: in most cases, the migrant population will be over perceived.

7.2. Family-focused migrant services

Immigration is not just a sole phenomenon as migrants bring their families as dependents with them, or establish families with local community members, or give birth and raise their children after they have migrated. It is important and necessary to consider migrants not just as individuals but also as members of families. When discussing migrants and migration issues, we should pay more attention on migrant families, including measuring the size of migrant communities by the number of migrant families and not just the overseas born population.

The family/friend tie has been one of the most important factors to motivate migrants to settle down in Alice Springs. On one hand, migrants immigrate directly from overseas to Alice Springs under family-stream migration programs which are strongly encouraged by the government's migration policies and related initiatives. Obviously, the clusters now living in Alice Springs provide the opportunity for chain migration under these family-focused and regional sponsored migration programs. This would have long-term effects on population growth, which benefits local sustainable development, especially as the existing communities are relatively young with a greater proportion than the overall population in partnered relationships (Taylor, 2018).

On the other hand, migrants move to Alice Springs from elsewhere in Australia to join their families and/or friends. Reported in the survey and discussion, more and more migrants have moved to Alice Springs from elsewhere, like Melbourne and Sydney, in recent years. While many migrants have moved to Alice Springs with their families, a substantial proportion of migrants have arrived in Alice Springs as pioneer members of their families, who currently reside in other places in Australia. These migrants, temporarily leaving their families behind, are in Alice Springs as single-person households to seek better job and settlement opportunities. They expect to settle down soon and to then bring their families over for reunion. Most likely, this cohort of migrants will bring their family members to Alice Springs in the near future once they feel satisfaction with their experiences.

The increasing trend of family-stream migration may suggest that related migrant services will need to become more family-focused, for example, providing support and services to migrant families such as family tax benefits, childcare, school education, affordable housing for families, and employment opportunities for spouses. More importantly, the approach to how services are provided to migrants needs to be re-thought i.e. instead of thinking of

providing services to individuals, it's providing services to families or households. On one hand, there is currently lack of "packaging up" of migrant services. It is possible to establish a mechanism to provide services to migrants as "packages" that integrate between services and providers and to represent a more holistic approach. On the other hand, a family-buddy type of connection between current migrant families and newly arrived migrant families could be important to strengthen this family-focused service model.

Considering the word-of-mouth and family/friend tie are the most trusted sources of information about Alice Springs and are also the primary source of support for migrants, they are key and have implications for government's migration policies and migrant programs. To develop and implement related policies and programs properly and efficiently, it is important to consult migrant communities and the public to understand their perceptions, concerns and experiences.

7.3. Decent employment opportunities

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), decent employment involves opportunities for employment that are productive, deliver a fair income, and provide security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (International Labour Organization, 2021).

'Job opportunities' is regarded the most important pull factor for migrants to make the decision to migrate/move to Alice Springs. However, their perception of 'job opportunities', as reported in the focus group discussions, seems not as simple as what was reported in the survey. When discussing this issue in-depth, all stakeholders emphasised that it is critical to clarify 'what kinds of jobs'. While acknowledging 'good job opportunities' in general, they are conscious that there are not enough professional jobs suitable or accessible to migrants who have higher education and non-school qualifications.

Although most migrants move to Alice Springs for work, it does not necessarily mean that their working lives are straightforward. While most migrants think it is 'easy' to find a job in Alice Springs, a considerable proportion of migrants in the workforce believe that their employment does not really match their education and qualifications. Some migrants also believe workplace bullying and discrimination is an issue. In other cases, a lack of support services, such as childcare services, creates 'insurmountable' barriers for migrant families with younger children to get into the job market, especially for mothers, as discussed previously.

While the issue of recognition of overseas qualifications is considered as a major barrier, another factor that negatively affects the match between employment and education for migrants is uncertainty regarding their future and the pressure of high living costs. Among those migrants who indicated that employment mismatched their education and qualifications, 75% of them were aged 40 or below; they arrived in Alice Springs for a shorter time, had younger families, and were without much experience in the Australian workforce. Some of them were on the 489 or 491 visas, which is a provisional migration visa, still a long way from getting permanent residency. This uncertainty about their future compromised their efforts to secure a decent job. Some of them had young children and

the substantially high financial pressure of raising children and paying off high living costs had forced them to find whatever job available to sustain their daily lives. In this regard, the fact that more and more young migrants have recently arrived in Alice Springs might contribute to the enlarged mismatch of migrant employment and their education.

To create more suitable job opportunities for spouses in regional Australia including Alice Springs is a challenge. Policy level changes that promotes family settlement and investment by government, businesses and communities to create more decent job opportunities are needed. In addition to this, policy level changes are also needed to better address workforce related issues such as discrimination and bullying so that migrants can better access these opportunities.

However, a mismatch between employment and education/qualifications may push these migrants to seek further education to refresh their knowledge and skills, especially tailor-made training and short courses for the purpose of qualification recognition. While services targeting achieving qualification recognition represent a gap, it also provides a new niche market. For example, there might be a possibility for government to work together with local education institutions, training providers, migrant communities and local industries to establish special short-term qualification recognition programs to help migrants to get overseas qualification recognised and bridge them to industry workplaces. Moreover, other education opportunities associated with new migrant families might boost, for example, recruitment of international students to provide a migration pathway, childcare services and school education with special support. There is a potential to establish pilot migrant community controlled childcare services that employ migrant mothers (after suitable training) to look after migrant children. These pilot childcare services will not only provide proper childcare services for young migrant families, but also create employment opportunities for young migrant mothers, and free more young parents from home care duty to take part in the labour market. Government must also play a critical role in providing policy support and governance coordination, in the areas of professional development and overseas qualification recognition, including through government assistance programs for preparation for employment, and clear pathways for migrants/migrant applicants to get a job and settle down.

Another important issue raised in the survey and focus group discussion is discrimination, racism and workplace bullying. This issue impacted directly (they had experienced this themselves) or indirectly (they knew someone who had experienced this) many migrants and their families and friends. While this issue will significantly compromise the 'decent job opportunity' and dissatisfy migrant's overall settlement experiences, it will also damage reputation of Alice Springs as a 'welcoming' and 'easy to find a job' city. It is important for government, organisations, businesses and other stakeholders to work together to address this issue.

In summary, it is worthwhile and important to pay more attention to addressing the related issues associated with migrant employment. As reported in the survey results, compared to the entire Alice Springs population, the migrant community has higher education levels and a higher labor force participation rate, but lower median annual family income. This is directly associated with qualifications not being recognised, so migrants tend to take lower paid jobs. From another perspective, this shows that there is huge potential for local industries to employ a highly educated labour force.

7.4. A better mutual understanding between migrants and stakeholders

While migrants and other stakeholders in Alice Springs share many concerns, a better mutual understanding between all stakeholders is required.

Migrants generally lack knowledge and information about migration policies, the social welfare system, and available community services. They are not aware about how and where to seek support and services although there are a wide range of services are available. Many social and community services are available to all residents in Alice Springs, including migrants and migrants-to-be. However, currently many migrants are not able to access to these services. Among many reasons, unawareness of services for migrants and misunderstanding of service targets for both service providers and migrants are important factors that negatively affect migrants' ability to access and use these services. For example, there is a common perception amongst migrants that many mainstream services provided by government or community organisations are only available to local Indigenous communities or other specific (non-migrant) groups, when in actual fact these services are available to migrant communities.

Government and service providers need to develop a more in-depth understanding of migrants' cultures, expectations, concerns and challenges, in order to provide better tailor-made services and support to migrants. Although many issues and concerns are not migrant specific - affordable housing, community safety, public transport, expensive transport costs - the way these concerns can impact upon migrants, and the magnitude of this impact, may be very different than the broader community. Migrants, especially those newly arrived, need special support and specific help, such as identifying and accessing a service provider, lodging a Centrelink form, language translation and interpretation, training course enrolment, writing a resume, applying for a job and so on, to face these challenges even if they are common ones for broader communities. We recognise that MCSCA actually provides this kind of support already as listed in Table 9 and Appendix 6. However, as the only organisation that routinely provides this kind of support in Alice Springs, MCSCA is not able to, in its current capacity, totally satisfy the overall need of migrants. Moreover, the need of family-focused services also calls more resources and supports for organisations like MCSCA.

A lack of resources has been highlighted as an important reason that many services are unable to provide efficient services for migrants. While more resources are necessary and important, there is potential for government, service providers, migrant communities and other stakeholders to work together to integrate current services, adjust policies and implementation, and prioritise migrant needs to provide holistic and desperately needed services. For example, some of the housing issues might be addressed by:

- modifying the current rental reference system to make it easier for migrants to access the rental market;
- integrating public housing resources managed by different organisations through one location/portal; and
- exploring private housing resources in the market.

However, this requires not only a high level of coordination, but also close collaboration between stakeholders, and a strong commitment to serve all communities in Alice Springs.

It is important to understand why people migrate to Alice Springs. They come here for a better life. Considering the population transience (and high labour force turnover) in the NT and Alice Springs is a characteristic of the local population and economic development (Taylor & Carson, 2017), it is important to realise and acknowledge the transience nature of migration in Alice Springs in policy making and service provision. Many migrants migrate to Alice Springs temporarily and will move away to big cities in later stages. While this raises an obvious challenge for Alice Springs to retain migrants for long periods, it reinforces the need to improve the support and services for new migrants as part of an efficient and effective migrant service strategy.

7.5. Holistic approach in attracting and retaining migrants

Attracting and retaining migrant communities is important for Alice Springs' population growth and the sustainable development of the region. While government's efforts in attracting migrants to the NT, such as its population strategy (Northern Territory Government, 2018b) and other economic development strategies, have been facilitating this possibility, the relative lack of Covid-19 in the region will also possibly enhance Alice Springs' attraction to migrants from overseas and elsewhere in Australia. There is an urgent need to prepare for a higher traffic of migrants to Alice Springs once international borders reopen. In the focus group discussions, an important concern was raised: 'Is Alice Spring really ready for more migrants?' It reflects a concern that in order to attract more migrants and retain them for longer, a systematic capacity building of Alice Springs is needed, not just 'jobs', but also services, social inclusion and enjoyable lifestyle.

Retention will depend on the extent to which migrants positively achieve their settlement outcomes such as a decent job, affordable housing, community safety and continuing acceptance in the community. Previous research has suggested that stakeholders must work together to create good settlement experiences for migrants (Barrie et al. 2017) and 'holistic' approaches must be applied. The complexity of this issue requires a coordinated approach involving all levels of government to align the different structural and policy settings, and ensure the best chance of settlement success (Thornley, 2010; Australian Migrant Resource Centre, 2019).

Migration issues are interlinked with each other. For example, as reported by migrants in the survey, living costs are high in Alice Springs, so you cannot wait a long time to find the right (in terms of salary) job. This really compromises the 'decent job' dream of migrants, and negatively affects the number of migrants who can secure jobs that match their education and qualifications. Another example is migrants' participation in the community. As previously reported, migrants have strong willingness and motivation to participate in the community, as they regarded 'establishing relationships and socialisation as an important measure of successful settlement and appreciated 'multicultural' environment in Alice Springs. Although most migrants did have a connection to the local community, the connection could be closer. Migrants' participation in the community is associated with not only their participation willingness and attitude, but also specific barriers such as language difficulty, cultural difference, perceived lack of opportunities to participate, communication skill and other specific difficulties (e.g. transport, home duty, time), as well as local

community's acceptance, engagement and participation. To address these interlinked issues, it is critical to provide a comprehensive support and services.

8. Conclusions

This project collected basic data about migrants and established evidence to inform government, organisations and communities in their policy making, service delivery, and support of migrants' integration into the broader community. The project provided deep insights into migrants' experiences of living and working in Alice Springs, which are not available through other data sources such as the ABS.

Migrants are generally satisfied with their migration experiences in Alice Springs. All stakeholders consider Alice Springs as a welcoming destination for migrants, although some issues remain unresolved. It is clear from the data that the opportunity to get a job is the main driving force that brings people to Alice Springs, alongside family/friend ties (including marriage) and the local lifestyle. Important determinants perceived in successful settlement include employment outcomes, satisfaction with their current job (decent job), and accommodation (good housing). Notably, enjoyable lifestyle, community safety, social inclusion and community acceptance (such as connection with family/friends and communities) are also highly regarded.

Stakeholders generally understand migrant and migration issues, and appreciate migrants' contribution to the region. They acknowledge the importance of migration for the economic development and sustainability of Alice Springs, and the need to retain migrants in the long term. Migrants contribute significantly to local labour forces, especially in some industry sectors such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Education and Training, Administrative and Support Services, Accommodation and Food Services, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services.

Migrants have a generally positive perception on Alice Springs and would like to recommend it as a good place for other migrants to come and live and work. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed. While some of these issues are common to regional migrants across Australia, such as inaccessibility of affordable housing, unavailability of appropriate local tertiary education, a lack of English language services and inadequate tailor-made support services, some issues are of relatively greater concern in Alice Springs. These include mismatched employment with education/qualifications, community safety, insufficient childcare services (associated with holding back migrants from workplace participation) and the geographical and psychological isolation of Alice Springs. Generally speaking, a wide range of services are available, but some gaps still exist. Migrants and stakeholders are calling on more mutual understanding and better collaboration to address migrant and migration issues in Alice Springs.

8.1. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- A strong theme that emerged, particularly in the focus group discussions, was the need to enhance mutual understanding between migrants and other stakeholders (government agencies and other service providers). Therefore, **it is recommended**

that government agencies, service providers and MCSCA work collaboratively to establish a regular consultation mechanism between migrants, government agencies and other service providers.

- A service coordination mechanism is critical to deliver much needed holistic services to migrants. MCSCA has been playing an important role and can be a platform to further coordinate all current services and explore other needed services. Therefore, **it is recommended** that the NTG provides extra support to MCSCA to create this coordination mechanism. This mechanism would include development of migrant service strategy and annual working plans, as well as service delivery coordination. Development and delivery of migrant service packages could be an important function of this coordination mechanism.
- **It is recommended** that a housing assistance program for migrants is established by the NTG, as a special category of its 'Affordable Housing Scheme' (<https://nt.gov.au/property/renters/find-out-about-rental-costs/affordable-housing-scheme-rental-dwellings>). This program will specifically target newly arrived migrants to provide short-term accommodation solutions.
- **It is recommended** that the NTG leads an initiative to work together with the Commonwealth Government to explore better pathways for qualification recognition. While understanding the complexity of the process, we urge the government and industry to collaborate to explore how the overseas qualification processes could be simplified to fit the local context in Alice Springs. Government should play a leading role in establishing initiatives to encourage business engagement and involvement in migrant training/recognition programs to bridge overseas qualifications to Australian ones, and transfer qualified migrants to decent employment.
- **It is recommended** that MCSCA seeks funding to run a series of workshops and information sessions to raise awareness of discrimination, racism and workplace bullying associated issues. This will help migrants to identify, act and report these issues. We call on governments and businesses to work together to address this issue to create a fairer environment and decent workplace.
- To respond to migrants' need for a multicultural event facility, **it is recommended** that the NTG and Alice Springs Town Council work collaboratively to secure resources to provide or build a permanent space for migrant communities to host social and cultural activities to celebrate cultural diversity. A cultural complex is important for migrant communities to present their ethnic cultures, communicate with other communities and link with government and service providers. This facility could be a hub to welcome and serve migrants and show multicultural inclusion in Alice Springs.
- **It is recommended** that the government reviews its policies and programs in relation to the attraction and retention of migrants, fully consulting migrants and the broader community in the review process and appreciating public perceptions and word-of-mouth.

- As a long-term migrant attraction and retention strategy, **it is recommended** that the Alice Springs Town Council develops a multicultural policy for Alice Springs, in conjunction with local migrant service organisations such as MCSCA and other stakeholders. This strategy is underpinned by the concept of Alice Springs as a 'Welcoming Town for Migrants'. This multicultural policy will appreciate the migrant contribution, engage communication between all communities, and provide holistic services for migrants. It will facilitate migrants to establish their sense of belonging and pride of local lifestyle.
- **It is recommended** that the NTG supports regular studies on migrants in the NT and Alice Springs to track changes and trends to inform government decision making, industry development, service delivery and local community development.
- **It is recommended** that the NTG further engages with migrant business owners to support the sustainability of migrant businesses in Alice Springs/Central Australia, including support in finding and retaining skilled employment, providing accessible and targeted business management training, providing advice and support to grow existing migrant businesses, and supporting engagement with existing networking and information sources and opportunities.

Through this project, we gained insight into migrants' living and working experiences in Alice Springs, with implications for understanding regional migrant settlement more comprehensively especially in remote regions.

These initial insights indicate while Alice Springs is being regarded as a potentially ideal destination for migrants where there are 'good job opportunities' in general, younger migrants with little or very limited migration experiences come for economic opportunities. There is an urgent need for effectively mobilising various social, economic and political resources to facilitate the building of capacity to accommodate changed composition of migrant population and changed needs. It is critical to link migrants to the broader community and engage them in social and cultural activities for smoother transition from migration to successful settlement.

9. References

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10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Reference Number: _____ (once you submit the form, the researcher will give it a number to enter a draw)

- You can submit the filled questionnaire form as an attachment to: zengbx2001@yahoo.com.au
- Or you can drop off the printed copy to Multicultural Community Services (MCSCA) Office: 5B Wills Terrace, Alice Springs, Northern Territory 0870
- OR, using computer, you can enter this address <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6GDCGDY> to your internet browser to fill a SurveyMonkey questionnaire.

Questionnaire for migrants

(please only fill ONE questionnaire for each family)

Please note: If you or your family experience any emotional difficulties during the questionnaire fill, you can call this number: (08) 8952 8776 to seek help from the Social Worker at MCSCA.

If you are a single person (one-person household), you are also invited to answer this questionnaire.

1. How many family members are there in your family living in the same dwelling with you (including **yourself** and **dependent children** who are currently temporarily living away from home)? _____
2. Were you or any of your family members born overseas?
☐ No ☐ Yes. If yes, **which country or countries** were they born in?

3. Do you define your family as a migrant family (at least one member is a migrant)? ☐ No ☐ Yes.

[Note: Defined by Australian Bureau of Statistics, a migrant is a person who was born overseas whose usual residence is Australia. A person is regarded as a usual resident if they have been (or are expected to be) residing in Australia for a period of 12 months or more, with Australian citizenship, permanent resident status, or temporary resident status (but waiting for permanent resident approval).]

If you answered YES to question 3, PLEASE CONTINUE to answer following questions. Otherwise thank you for agreeing to fill out this questionnaire.

=====

4. In what year did you or your family move to Alice Springs? _____
5. In what year did you or your family move to Australia? _____
6. How many children are there in your family? _____
7. Children's info

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
Born in Australia? Yes or No				
Age				
Gender				

School year (if not in school, fill "No", if in university, fill "Uni")				
Speak English? Please choose: a) advanced; b) medium; c) limited; d) none				
Speak other languages? Please specify				

8. Your family members' Education and employment (**adults**)

	You (Adult member 1)	Adult Member 2	Adult Member 3	Adult Member 4
Age				
Gender				
Are you an Australian citizen? Yes or No				
If you answered NO, what is your visa type and nationality?				
How old were you when you immigrated to Australia? (if you were born in Australia, please fill "0")				
Highest education, please choose: a) Did not finish school; b) Finished high school; c) University degrees or above; d) Other, please specify.				
Speak English? Please choose: a) advanced; b) medium; c) limited; d) none				
Speak other languages? Please specify.				
Ever employed in Australia? Yes or No				
Are you currently employed? Yes or No				
Current employment (industry) and type of employment (e.g. casual, permanent, part or full-time, self-employed or own business)				
Does your current employment type match your qualifications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
Is it easy for you to find a job in Alice Springs? Yes OR No				

9. Your annual **household** income:

- ☐ <AU\$35000 ☐ AU\$35000-\$AU\$50000 ☐ AU\$50000-\$AU\$80000
☐ AU\$80000-AU\$120000 ☐ AU\$120000-AU\$180000 ☐ >AU\$180000

10. Do you agree the narratives about local life and services in Alice Springs? Please "v" in the box.

Narratives	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
<i>Example: Alice Springs is a desert town</i>	v					
Services are good						
Good employment/job opportunities						
Welcoming city						
Children are happy at school						
I like the local environment						
Multicultural town						
Cost of living is acceptable						
Healthcare is good						
There is suitable housing (availability/affordability)						
Transport service is good						
Training and education are good						

Lots of English classes						
Lots of community activities						
Lots of chances for tertiary education						
Settlement services are very accessible						
Easy to access to migration agents and lawyers						
I know there are many community grants to support migrants						
Good childcare services						
I have experiences of discrimination or racism						
I know someone experiencing discrimination or racism						
I feel isolation and difficult to get to other places						

11. What are your reasons for migration? (you could choose more than one)
- ☐ educational ☐ economic ☐ political ☐ humanitarian
- ☐ other reasons _____ ☐ Do not know
12. Why did you migrate to Alice Springs, and not another place?
13. How did you learn about Alice Springs (e.g. Migration agent, family/friends, Govt websites etc.);
14. Your experience of moving to Alice Springs, including how you travelled to Alice Springs, and reception from Alice Springs residents; Experiences when first arrived (e.g. first 100 days); Please write down some most impressive experiences.
15. What does successful settlement look like?
16. What are the challenges and opportunities for migrants living in Alice Springs?
17. Where did you seek settlement support? (you could choose more than one)
- ☐ MCSCA ☐ family/friends ☐ Town Council ☐ Other
- _____
- ☐ Do not know
18. Do you and your family participate in the community (including economic and social participation) often?
- ☐ Very often ☐ Sometime ☐ Very limited ☐ Do not know
19. Have you and your family had any problems because of migration?
- ☐ No ☐ Yes

If you have answered Yes, the problems are related to (you could choose more than one)

☐ The different culture ☐ The different lifestyle ☐ The different language

☐ Other _____ ☐ Do not know

20. How do you perceive migration?

☐ As a challenge ☐ As an opportunity ☐ Both an opportunity and a challenge

☐ Do not know

21. What have been the most important changes required for you and your family to adapt to a new lifestyle in Alice Springs? (you could choose more than one)

☐ Learning a new language ☐ Obeying the new laws/rules ☐ Getting accustomed to local culture

☐ Other _____ ☐ Do not know

22. Would you return to your home country to live in the future?

☐ Yes, we are planning ☐ Yes, when I retire ☐ No, definitely not ☐ It depends on how it goes

☐ Do not know

23. Please write down three countries you think where most immigrants in Alice Springs come from.

1) _____ 2) _____
3) _____

24. What do you know about Alice Springs? Write some keywords associated with Alice Springs:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
4) _____
5) _____ 6) _____ 7) _____
8) _____

25. Are you satisfied with your migration experience in Alice Springs so far?

☐ Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied

26. Are there any special things in Alice Springs you would recommend to your friends?

27. How could Alice Springs be more welcoming and accessible to migrants?

28. Do you want to raise any other issues/suggestions related to migration and migrants? Please write down here.

When you complete and submit the questionnaire, you have a chance to enter in a draw. There are ten (10) prizes to be won. Each prize is a \$100 gift card. **If you would like to enter in the prize draw, please enter your contact:**

Your contact number: _____

OR Your email address: _____

(The prize will be drawn by the MCSCA Committee Members at the MCSCA Office in **November 2020** when the questionnaire survey completes.)

Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion Outlines for Migrants

Introduction to the participants and the project and the survey and explain the focus group discussion by Ben (10 mins)

- Why to do the project
- Implementation of the project
- Primary results of the Questionnaire Survey
- Main issues mentioned in the survey

Discussion of these main issues (1 hour and 30 mins)

Your responses to these issues:

- Have issues: cost of living; suitable housing; chances for tertiary education;
- Facing problems related to different lifestyle, challenge to get accustomed to local culture, workplace bullying; discrimination;
- When asked “Would you return to your home country to live in the future?”, Many migrants answered “it depends how it goes” or “don not know”
- Most migrants are satisfied/very satisfied with their migration experience in Alice Springs

How to become more welcoming: crime control; more activities; better services and supports for newcomers (financially and information); cheaper flights; better transportation and housing; more diverse to different cultures/learn non-English languages/learn Aboriginal culture;

Raised other issues: One issue is people who come to Alice Springs used this place as a port of entry to permanent residency and do not stay in the place for long; bullying in workplace; government should listen to people more;

General discussion about migration issues

- Around you, which countries do you think the migrants mostly come from?
- The situation of migrants around you and your workplaces
- What kind policies and services you want to be improved?
- Your concerns, suggestions, opinions...

Follow-up and further contact (10 mins)

We would like to keep in contact with you regarding this project. Please help us to disseminate the online survey to encourage your networks to participate in the survey.

Light lunch provided (before/after discussion depends on time arrangement)

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion Outlines for Other stakeholders

Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia Inc. (MCSCA) invites you to participate in a focus group regarding our research project “Migration Snapshot of the Centre: Planning for a positive future”.

The aim of our project is to gather up-to-date demographic data as well as gain a better understanding the experiences and challenges faced by migrants in Central Australia, so that this information can be used to help Government and non-government organisations provide better services for migrants in this region, and also help migrants to better access these services and contribute better to CA. Basically the project data collection includes questionnaire survey and focus group discussion.

The project started from July 2020. We have been delivering a questionnaire survey targeting local migrants since Mid-September, and today is our first focus group discussion, we will have 5 such group discussions inviting a wide range of stakeholders. Through focus group discussion, we try to understand better about the policies and services and other issues associated with migration and migrants in local contexts. Currently we have collected around 100 valid questionnaires, representing around 350 migrants in the town. We target to get in 150-200. So far they raised many issues, such as: cost of living; suitable housing; chances for education; cultural inclusion; law and order; supports for newcomers; discrimination and racism; workplace bullying; only stay here for short term and then leave and so on.

We really want to know your opinions and perceptions (both from your personal and organisation’s perspective) about various issues associated with immigration and migrants, such as what governments can be done, what services and supports the local service providers can offer, and what else can done for better outcomes?

We invite the opinions and comments and information from you, especially about:

Q1: what do you think the main issues associated with migrants in the town? What can be done to deal with these issues?

Q2: what services and supports can your organisation provide for migrants?

Q3: do you have any suggestions for migrants, governments and other organisations?
General discussion about migration issues: concerns, suggestions, opinions...

Q4: do you know the situation of migrants around you and your workplaces? If yes please briefly describe.

Q5: would like to offer any other related opinions and information? Please specify.

Further contact

I would like to keep in contact with you regarding this issue. Please help me to disseminate the online survey to encourage your networks to participate in the survey.

Contact: Dr Benxiang Zeng, email: zengbx2001@yahoo.com.au, mobile 0402678292.

Appendix 4: Business owner questionnaire

Q1: How long have you lived in Alice Springs/Central Australia?

Q2: In which age group do you belong?

Q3: What is your country of birth?

Q4: Are you an Australian citizen?

Q5: What is your visa type and nationality?

Q6: Are you currently in business?

Q7: What kind of business do you run?

Q8: How long have you been in business?

Q9: Did you start this business?

Q10: Did you purchase an existing business?

Q11: What do you enjoy most about running your own business?

Q12: How many people do you employ?

Q13: Who do you employ?

Q14: Have you accessed information or assistance for your business from any of the following: Business Enterprise Centre, Territory Business Centre, Many Rivers, MCSCA, Chamber of Commerce, NTG (Small Business Champion), NTG (Migration NT), none of the above, other

Q15: What kind of information or assistance do you need?

Q16: Do you have any feedback on your experience in running or starting a business in Central Australia?

Q17: Are you interested in? Starting your own business, purchasing an existing business, growing your existing business, exporting, none of the above

Q18: What kind of business would you like to start or purchase?

Q19: What kind of information or assistance would you like to start a business, purchase a business, or grow an existing business?

Q20: Have you participated in local networking and training opportunities? Have participated in October Business Month, I have not participated in October Business Month, I have attended a Business at Sunset networking event, I have not attended a Business at Sunset networking event, none of the above.

Q21: Would you like to receive information on local networking and training opportunities?

Q22: Would like a Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, Small Business Champion to contact you regarding your business?

Q23: What is your preferred method of contact?

Appendix 5: Datasets

Records and datasets collected from the questionnaire survey and the focus group discussion are stored in a computer in the MCSCA Office. Access to the datasets needs a permission from the MCSCA Office.

Appendix 6: Migrant Services in Alice Springs, the NT and Australia

General services and information

- Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia Incorporated (MCSCA)

Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia Incorporated (MCSCA) is a community based organisation whose aims and objectives are to deliver quality confidential services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

MCSCA provides the first port of call with friendly, culturally sensitive orientation and information, and ongoing activities and events to promote harmony in our community.

MCSCA is run by Management Committee elected by the community at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) of MCSCA Inc. Members represent the diversity of the Alice Springs community and bring MCSCA a range of skills, knowledge and expertise.

Phone: (08) 8952 8776

Website: <https://mcscsa.org.au>

- Multicultural Council of the NT

The Multicultural Council of the NT provides direct services for individuals, families and communities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Darwin and surrounds.

Phone: (08) 8945 9122

Website: www.mcnt.org.au

- Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia

Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia Inc assists with the settlement of migrants in Alice Springs.

Phone: (08) 8952 8776

Website: www.mcscsa.org.au

- Melaleuca Refugee Centre

Melaleuca Refugee Centre provides settlement programs for humanitarian entrants, including case management and counselling.

Phone: (08) 8985 3311

Website: www.facebook.com/MelaleucaCentre/

- NT Legal Aid Commission

<https://www.legalaid.nt.gov.au/>

➤ Central Australian Women's Legal Service (CAWLS)

CAWLS delivers a holistic, culturally safe, trauma informed legal service for all women in Central Australia and the Barkly Region. CAWLS provides legal advice, engages in the community and provides community legal education to cultural and linguistically diverse women on temporary visas (including tourist, bridging, temporary skilled visa, partner visas).

Phone: (08) 8952 4055

Website: <https://cawls.org.au/>

➤ Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WoSSCA)

Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WoSSCA) is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation that operates on a feminist framework and is committed to assisting and enabling women and children experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

Website: <https://www.woSSCA.org.au/>

➤ NT Working Women's Centre (NTWWC)

The NT Working Women's Centre is a community based non-profit organisation with a mission to support women. It provides free and confidential advice to women about work-related matters.

Website: <https://www.ntwwc.com.au/>

➤ Alice Springs Youth & Community Centre (ASYCC)

ASYCC creates opportunities for everyone to build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities. Provide affordable sport & recreational activities in a safe, clean, and inviting environment for people of all ages through sound business and management practices

Website: <https://alicespringsyouthandcommunitycentre.com.au/>

➤ Alice Springs Town Council

Website: <https://alicesprings.nt.gov.au/>

➤ Migrate to the Northern Territory

<https://theterritory.com.au/migrate>

➤ Office of Youth Affairs

<https://youth.nt.gov.au/>

- Red Cross Central Australia

Website: <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Charity-Organization/Australian-Red-Cross-Central-Australia-418639425561227/>

- Office of Gender Equity and Diversity

Website: <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/social-inclusion-and-interpreting-services/office-of-gender-equity-and-diversity>

- Office of Senior Territorians

Website: <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/social-inclusion-and-interpreting-services/seniors>

- Northern Territory Government Office of Multicultural Affairs

Website: <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/social-inclusion-and-interpreting-services/multicultural-affairs>

- Anti-Discrimination Commission

Website: <https://adc.nt.gov.au/>

- Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)

Website: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/>

- Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA)

Website: <https://www.mara.gov.au/>

- Human Rights Council of Australia (HRCA)

Website: <https://www.hrca.org.au/>

- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)

Website: <https://fecca.org.au/>

- Department of Social Services – Families and Children

Website: <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children>

- National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)

Website: <https://www.neda.org.au/>

- Human Rights Commission

Website: <https://humanrights.gov.au/>

- Department of Home Affairs (Immigration and Citizenship)

Website: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

- Commonwealth Centrelink

Website: <https://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

- Access to Australian Government Information and Services

Website: <https://www.australia.gov.au/>

Language, education and training services and information

- Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

Website: <https://www.sbs.com.au/>

- Interpreter and Translating Services NT

Interpreter and Translating Services NT provides interpreting and translating services for migrants and assists government and non-government agencies to communicate with Territorians who speak languages other than English.

Phone: (08) 8999 8506

Website: www.dlgcs.nt.gov.au/interpreting/itsnt

- Adult Migration Education Service (AMES)

Website: <https://www.ames.net.au/>

- STEPS Group Alice Springs Office

The Adult Migrant English Program is funded by the Australian Government and provides unlimited hours of free English language lessons to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants. If you have been granted a permanent visa or eligible temporary visa and speak little or no English, you may be eligible for AMEP. Some migrant youths aged between 15 and 17 years of age may also be eligible.

Phone (08) 8950 7600

Website: <https://www.stepsgroup.com.au/contact/steps-education-and-training-alice-springs/>

- Group Training NT

Website: <https://www.gtnt.com.au/>

Employment services and information

- Commonwealth Centrelink

Website: <https://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

- Migrants Looking for Work in the NT

Northern Territory published a handbook to provide information for migrants looking for work in the Northern Territory.

Information

link:

https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/551331/Migrant-Employment-Booklet.pdf

- WISE Employment

Website: <https://wiseemployment.com.au/offices/alice-springs/>

- Salvation Army Employment Plus

Website: <https://www.employmentplus.com.au/>

- Centre Labour Force

Website: <http://centrelabour.com/about-centre-labour-force>

- Job Find Disability Employment Services

Website: <https://jobfind.com.au/>

- MAX Employment

Website: <https://www.maxsolutions.com.au/>

Housing services and information

- Anglicare NT

Anglicare NT provides settlement support, services and referrals to clients (up to 5 years from arrival) under the Refugee and Migrant Settlement Services.

Phone: (08) 8985 0000

Website: www.anglicare-nt.org.au

- NT Public Housing

Website: <https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing>

- NT Shelter

Website: <https://ntshelter.org.au/>

- Community Housing Central Australia

Website: <https://www.chca.org.au/>

Appendix 7: MCSCA's Services and Programs

Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia Incorporated (MCSCA) provides a wide range of services and programs to refugees, migrants and the whole multicultural community. We summarise the information provided at from of MCSCA's services and programs is extracted from MCSCA's website: <https://mcscsa.org.au/services/>.

MCSCA provides various services, supports and help

MCSCA helps refugees and migrants to

- learn more about the Australian way of life, how systems work, what supports you can access to help you settle in well
- make new friends through MCSCA's regular meet and greet events
- access Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) (eligibility rules apply)
- meet other parents and finds friends for your children through the SUSU Mama Playgroup
- meet people from your country / culture / language
- keep up to date with what is happening by and for the migrant and multicultural community in Alice Springs
- access MCSCA's computer suite to assist you with researching and applying for work

MCSCA promotes the diversity, cultural inclusion and harmony and support to local community groups and associations so that they can maintain their cultural practices, and develop and maintain their places of worship and cultural centres. Specifically, MCSCA helps multicultural groups and organisations to

- connect with existing cultural groups and associations
- form your own incorporated association for your cultural group
- learn more about governance and organising the running of an association
- learn how to access grant funding for events and other activities for your association
- participate in multicultural events and share your culture with the wider community
- represent your community in consultations with government agencies

MCSCA organises activities and facilitates programs

MCSCA organises:

- regular 'meet and greet' events to welcome new members of the multicultural community who are settling in Alice Springs
- information sessions with topics of interest to the migrant and multicultural communities of Alice Springs
- seminars and workshops for multicultural groups and associations
- consultations with local, Territory and Australian Government departments on issues of concern to members of the multicultural community
- events linked to specific projects

MCSCA facilitates multicultural programs funded by governments and non-governmental organisations, including:

- Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)

The Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program is funded by the Australian Department of Home Affairs. The program aims to equip and empower humanitarian entrants, other eligible permanent migrants and their communities to address their settlement needs, in order to improve social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal well-being and community connectedness. The SETS program fills an important gap in the post-arrival period for eligible clients who do not have family and other community supports to rely on.

The program is complementary to the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and other Commonwealth support to humanitarian entrants and for other vulnerable migrants.

SETS Client Services provides clients with settlement-related information, advice, advocacy, and assistance to access mainstream and other relevant services. Services will be delivered in accordance with a needs-based approach. Typically, client needs will align with the nine priority areas identified in the National Settlement Framework.

- Multicultural Grant Program

The Multicultural Grant Program provides support and assistance to the multicultural communities of Alice Springs. The program can also assist individual people from multicultural communities who continue to need help after the initial five-year period of settlement assistance has finished.

- Susumama Playgroup

This long running and much-loved multicultural playgroup is facilitated by MCSCA and is run in partnership with Anglicare NT.

SusuMama playgroup is an important activity for newly arrived migrant parents and their children. It is a fundamental tool for integration in the Australian community in Alice Springs.

Susumama Playgroup enables parents and children to meet weekly in a convenient and comfortable CBD location at the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre. This program helps families to make friends and to have fun, enjoying various hands-on activities organised by our enthusiastic and welcoming Playgroup Leader.

Susumama Playgroup is non-religious and non-denominational. All are welcome!

Guest speakers are invited to provide a variety of information sessions to parents and carers. The aim is to facilitate the integration and acceptance of women into the Australian multicultural community covering a spectrum of issues from legal, mother and child, health and mainstream services.

SusuMama Playgroup meets every Monday and Friday at the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre from 9.30am to 11.30 am.

➤ Big Day Out In Harmony

Celebrating the vibrancy of our town with community events like Harmony Day is an important part of MCSCA work, ensuring that Alice Springs is a welcoming place for all.

Harmony Day is a United Nations-recognised global celebration that began in 1999. Officially held on March 21, it coincides with the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and has been enthusiastically embraced by MCSCA as a community celebration in Alice Springs in early May. We call this event Big Day Out in Harmony.

MCSCA works with the Town Council to combine their resources to stage Big Day Out in Harmony on the beautiful lawns at the southern end of the Council property. The stage is set like a village green, with performance area, food and drink stalls, family-focused activities and lots of places to sit down with old and new friends. It is a community celebration of culture and coming together that draws hundreds through its simple message of unity and strength through sharing culture and friendship. The event can also be enjoyed by people who are unable to attend or if they are away from Alice Springs through a live broadcast by the local community radio station 8CCC 102.1FM.

Each year, MCSCA invites all the multicultural groups and associations to participate in the event, to share some of their culture with the wider community. After months of rehearsals, it comes together on a day filled with colours, sounds, fragrances and tastes from across the world.

MCSCA provides facilities for the multicultural community

Multicultural groups and incorporated organisations can access facilities at MCSCA and within the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre Complex at 5B Wills Terrace.

MCSCA has the following facilities:

- a computer suite with scanning and printing facilities and internet access for employment purposes
- meeting space

Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre Complex has additional facilities including meeting rooms, training rooms, a large hall and facilities for community events. Multicultural groups and incorporated associations access these facilities for a range of purposes including meetings, social gatherings, cultural dance practices, choir practices, homework tuition and language classes.