BACKGROUND

The Federal Government, through the Australian Research Council (ARC), has funded a four year Professorial Fellowship on Border Policing: Security, Gender and Human Rights. This $1 M investment will examine the relationship between women’s unauthorised border crossing and border policing. It is an international study which includes research in Italy and the US. The research design has been rigorously scrutinised by the ARC, including assessment by international and domestic experts as part of the almost year long evaluation process. These current stakeholder consultations, focused on the Australian component of the research, aim to enhance the existing research design and foster a spirit of collaboration around the conduct of the research. All research is subject to stringent ethical regulations as governed by Monash University Standing Committee on Research Ethics with Human Subjects.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Preliminary and quantitative components

All aspects of the research design and implementation should proceed with due acknowledgment of the sensitivities of the portfolios involved. The Australian research on unauthorised arrivals should be framed by the unique Australian immigration system and the universal visa system.

The consultations recommended that the research should identify all aspects of the system which are well calibrated to the gender sensitivities of managing unauthorised arrivals. For example identifying women’s claims for protection when travelling as part of a family group.

The research should closely liaise with responsible parties for DIAC data to identify gender disaggregated data sets. The research should assess the robustness of data for undertaking analysis of gender related trends over the past 15 years. This should include both maritime and airport arrivals – with these two ‘sites’ serving as a defining feature of the research. From the available data the research should clearly identify the trends in women’s unauthorised border crossing. Consultations with relevant DIAC staff are now advancing on this issue.

Qualitative sample: officials

Some stakeholders noted that individual officers of DIAC or Customs may have limited experience with women who arrive unauthorised with a minority questioning how useful data would be from individual officers. However the majority of stakeholders suggested that to leave out the experience of officers on the front line of border protection may lead to a skewed sample (which relied only on women’s accounts).

THE CONSULTATIONS

During April and May 2011 a series of telephone and face-to-face consultations were undertaken with ten senior members of DIAC and Customs with responsibilities for Border Protection functions and policy. The consultations focused on soliciting feedback on the research design, identifying further feedback cycles, and processes for undertaking the research with DIAC and Customs officials.

In late May DIAC convened a presentation of the research and invited all interested senior DIAC personnel in Canberra. Approximately 18 people attended.

The purpose of this document is to summarise these consultations and map the proposed data collection strategy.
Stakeholders recommended interviewing a range of officials at different sites to consider their experience and observations of women arriving unauthorised including both maritime and airport arrivals. Stakeholders also recommended interviewing both DIAC and Customs officials as they have differing roles and responsibilities and likely to have observed women in different circumstances.

Stakeholders confirmed that considering two cohorts of maritime and airport arrivals the most straightforward device to consider respondent cohorts. Stakeholders recommended excluding visa overstayers from the sample so that the organising feature of the research is unauthorised arrival.

**Qualitative Sample: women**

The consultations confirmed that interviews with women could consider the extent to which they actually participated in decision making, as well as the key triggers for making decisions as to the nature and timing of unauthorised border crossing. This should include but not be limited to a range of environmental factors, family groupings, as well as individual factors. These interviews should also consider the outcome of quantitative analysis of DIAC data where gender and ethnicity can be analysed against other key variables. Stakeholders recommended that comparisons between case loads be made – for example women who are recognised as having higher levels of education and participation in decision making and those regarded as traditionally having less access to education and participation in decision making. Some respondents suggested having a caseload clustered around Iraqi and Iranian women and another around Sri Lankan and Afghan women.

DIAC personnel with responsibility for airports suggested talking to women in holding cells may prove a difficult environment for women to participate in the interview. Similar consideration needs to be given to women being held in immigration detention. Suggestions were made that accessing women in community detention may prove a more appropriate context in which to interview women. DIAC personnel suggested including a sample of female unaccompanied minors, although this would be a necessarily small sample. DIAC Citizenship branch suggested talking to women participating in the Citizenship program Citizenship branch suggested work with them and their citizenship course (4 separate cycles) – could talk to women at their information sessions (which are predominantly attended by women).

Stakeholders were particularly interested in the extent to which the research could consider gender influences on the use of smuggling operations and any gender related issues that could be identified in terms of the operation of the illicit smuggling market. Moreover, the capacity of the research to draw conclusions around the impact of offshore efforts at communication and deterrence related strategies could inform future resourcing considerations.

**IMPLEMENTING THE METHODOLOGY**

In this multi-agency environment there is a commitment to ensuring that all stakeholders are appropriately consulted and research is undertaken in a co-ordinated way. Stakeholders recommended that the overall suite of interviews with DIAC and Customs officials be approved by senior management in DIAC and Customs. Then a central co-ordinating point should be established for interviews in the maritime environment and another for the airport environment. Stakeholders made valuable suggestions for interviewing groups of officials. A summary of the stakeholder recommendations for the interviews and their focus can be found on page 3.

**FURTHER FEEDBACK**

The research is also structured to offer routine summaries that can be easily distributed to interested parties. For example, brief interim findings (2-3 pages) for electronic distribution. The research will also host both academic and practitioner workshops to consider this research in relation to other regional and global trends. Further consultation on timing and structure of such workshops will take place later in 2011.

This project is part of a broader suite of research being undertaken around unauthorised border crossing. That work is now being collated into a website to be launched in July 2011. The Border Crossings Observatory will provide an easy to use portal to access information about current research and related work. Ongoing feedback is welcome and can be directed to Professor Sharon Pickering Sharon.pickering@monash.edu
## AUSTRALIAN FIELDWORK: Post Consultation Design

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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>PHASE 1: Airports</th>
<th>PHASE 1: Airports</th>
<th>PHASE 2: Maritime</th>
<th>PHASE 3: Women</th>
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<td>PHASE 1&amp;2: Officials</td>
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<td>Border Sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIAC Personnel</td>
<td>1.1 Interviews with 5 ALOs preferably with experience in multiple locations</td>
<td>1.2 Interviews with n=10 DIAC managers/experienced personnel at Sydney airport</td>
<td>2.1 Interviews with n=10 DIAC case management personnel; and n=10 DIAC detention operations (Darwin)</td>
<td>3.1 Recruit women (n=25 pilot) with settled visa status through two channels:</td>
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<td>DIAC Interview Material</td>
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<td>1.3 Screening interviews. Analysis of digital tapes. Initial pilot n=20 (10 turn around/10 protection application).</td>
<td>2.2 Entry and/or RSA interviews. Analysis of digital tapes. Initial pilot of n=20 interviews</td>
<td>2.3 Interviews with experienced Customs boat crews n=15 (Darwin)</td>
<td>a) Through DIAC citizenship course (Citizenship branch)</td>
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Review of screening interviews in lieu of interviews with women.

Review of entry and/or RSA interviews in lieu of interviews with women in detention.

Review opportunity to interview women in community detention following evaluation of data collected in Phase2.

b) Through community groups.