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Community Policing and Refugee Settlement  
in Regional Australia:  
A Case Study of Tasmania

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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November 2011

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The co-authored published papers acknowledge the contributions made by the second author in her role as PhD supervisor only and a statement of authorship is included in the declarations in this thesis.

The Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethic Committee granted this research full application approval (reference number H8597) on the 22 March 2006 and an additional acceptance of amendments on the 11 May 2007.

Signed

Date – 17 November 2011

## DECLARATION 2

### Statement of Co-authorship

The appendix to this thesis includes two co-authored publications. Danielle Campbell is cited as the first author in both publications. This reflects the fact that the research and the primary authorship of both papers is hers. The inclusion of Roberta Julian as the second author is an acknowledgment of her intellectual input in the role of primary supervisor for the PhD.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roberta Julian', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Associate Professor Roberta Julian

17 November 2011

## **ABSTRACT**

Although Australian police were not the perpetrators of the profound violation of trust that characterises the refugee experience, they have the potential to be one of the key agencies in settlement to assist in the restoration of trust. This research explores the perspectives of police and refugees concerning police-refugee and refugee-police relations. The research was conducted in Tasmania, Australia, as a regional location settling refugees. The qualitative research involved 160 participants including police and members of seven of the African newly arrived refugee communities. The data was collected from 2006 to 2008, a time that was characterised by periods of negative media attention focusing on African refugees and debate about settlement in regional Australia.

The research offers an understanding of both the perspectives of police and the members of newly arrived African communities in regional Australia on factors that can influence interactions between them. The research reveals that an understanding of experiential difference and community dynamics is crucial. The data analysis identified three distinct themes affecting police-refugee relations: the process of transition for refugees, the timing of police interventions and individual/community dynamics, highlighting a need for police awareness of the refugee experience and how this awareness may then influence contact between police and refugees. The study also tackles the issues of reporting and racism from both the perspectives of police and the African refugee communities.

The research explores ways to expand community involvement in a range of safety and crime prevention initiatives by increasing the flow of information between refugee communities and police, and improving feelings of safety and security for individual refugees, refugee communities and police. The study identifies principles to create, maintain and sustain positive police-refugee relationships that support the complex dynamics of settlement in regional Australia, with a focus on the vulnerability of refugees during stages of transition. It was found that using a number of targeted community policing strategies to support newly arrived refugee communities during initial settlement contributed to an increase in refugees' understandings of Australian law and that trust, perceived legitimacy in police, and cooperation were increased. The thesis also argues that police-refugee relationships are enhanced by a procedural justice framework and could be positively affected by restorative justice practices. Finally, the findings from this research can be translated into a series of practical applications that could have a positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of police work by increasing the capacity for community engagement, improving feelings of safety and encouraging reporting to police.

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