



Australian Government  
Department of Home Affairs  
Commonwealth Coordinator-General  
for Migrant Services

# Next steps to improve Australia's **settlement and integration of refugees**



**Australia has a long history of welcoming refugees and other humanitarian entrants, and Australians are rightfully proud of our multicultural society.**

Our settlement and integration services are internationally recognised for their generosity and expertise; and have supported hundreds of thousands of refugees to make new lives in Australia. Most recently, these services have shown outstanding capability and commitment as they delivered support to those in need through both the COVID-19 crisis and the Afghan evacuation.

**In 2019 Professor Peter Shergold AC, Ms Kerrin Benson AM and Ms Margaret Piper AM led a review of our settlement and integration services to determine opportunities to further improve outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.**

The review identified three key areas where we needed to improve outcomes: employment, English language learning and making social connections. The Review's Report – Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia (the Shergold Review) – also said we needed to improve our ability to measure our performance, and make sure people didn't fall through the cracks between siloed services.

**Those priorities have guided the Commonwealth Coordinator General for Migrant Services' efforts over the past two years to improve settlement and integration outcomes.**

Changes have included:



removing barriers that prevented people from accessing the AMEP program. This included extending eligibility for the program to cover study up to and including vocational English and the launch of AMEP Online, an English learning platform that anyone can access, including from overseas.



the introduction of the new Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration Grant Program to create jobs and pathways into employment for those refugees who have limited schooling and low English levels.



amendments to the current Community Support Program from July 2022 to lower the cost of the program, and the introduction of a new Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) program to give communities the opportunity to directly support the settlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants who don't have links to Australia.



the development of the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Data Plan 2021-23, to make it easier to measure how well Australia is doing in settling and integrating refugees and to further develop and adopt data-based strategies in the future.



trials innovative ways to deliver services to support new arrivals – like a 'coaching model' for refugees to find jobs and direct funding to Afghan community organisations to build their capacity and ability to support the settlement of their new community members.

## **Two years on from Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia it's timely to have a further look at how well we are doing.**

The Office of the Coordinator General for Migrant Services has undertaken an assessment of Australia's performance in settling and integrating refugees and humanitarian entrants. We've drawn on available quantitative and qualitative data and feedback and insights from stakeholders provided to the Office over the past two years. The key insights from that assessment are:

- There are wide differences between the communities in which people settle. For example the experience of settling in rural or urban areas is vastly different and these differences may change the services needed.
- There is no stereotypical refugee – their experiences and identities are extremely diverse. For example, of those who came to Australia in 2019, 40% of adults had 6 years or less of schooling, 27% had between 7 and 10 years, and 32% had 11 years of schooling or above. These differences affect the level and type of support entrants may need.
- Refugees and humanitarian entrants report they feel a strong sense of connection with other Australians who share their national, ethnic or faith background, and have a real sense of belonging to Australia and their local community.
- There is great interest in and commitment to supporting new arrivals among Australian individuals, community groups, businesses, philanthropic organisations and local councils. However, many of these groups report it's hard to find a way to practically help with the settlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants.
- There is a need for greater thought on how our services might lift outcomes in housing, and in health and wellbeing. This is particularly important given that poor health and wellbeing, or unstable or poor housing, can affect people's overall settlement and integration – their ability to learn English, or get a job, for example. Significantly, health and housing outcomes are also highly interrelated – inadequate housing can drive poor physical and mental health, and wellbeing.
  - » Housing affordability is a concern for refugees, as it is for many Australians. For most refugees, rent may be unaffordable in areas where there is significant jobs growth, making finding work even more challenging. Lack of transport in areas with affordable housing can also impact access to essential health and social services.
  - » The health and wellbeing, including mental health, of most refugees doesn't appear to improve markedly over the course of their first five years in Australia, and the majority of refugees feel their physical health limits their daily activities, including work. Many factors may contribute to this, including access to suitable, stable housing.
- There may be more we can do to recognise and support the self-agency of people arriving through our humanitarian program, to provide opportunities for people to drive their own settlement and integration journey.



**The upcoming tender and grants process for Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO), Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and Settlement Engagement Transition Support Program (SETS) gives us an opportunity to consider whether changes to our services and how they are delivered could help us continue to further improve settlement outcomes.**

As we begin this process, we want to hear from refugees, humanitarian entrants and other stakeholders.

Some questions we would specifically like feedback on are:

- How do we ensure there is good coordination between our settlement services and English learning, employment and health services, to ensure an end to end approach to service delivery?
- Given the pressures in finding affordable housing in Australia, are there any changes we need to make to settlement services' approach to housing refugees?
- How could we create greater opportunities for all refugees to build deeper relationships and friendships with the wider Australian community?
- How could we improve refugee health outcomes?
- What opportunities are there for the wider community to help refugees and humanitarian entrants settle?
- How do we design programs to take into account the large differences between settlement locations?
- How do we design programs to respond well to people's individual needs and aspirations, and to help strengthen their capability and self-agency?
- What are the biggest existing barriers to the delivery of good outcomes in our current services?
- Are there any examples of innovative programs operating at a state, local or community level that we can learn from?



**We welcome all feedback on these questions, and any other feedback you wish to provide us. This feedback should be directed to [CG.Migrant.Services@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:CG.Migrant.Services@homeaffairs.gov.au) by 27 May 2022.**