



Australian Government

INVESTING IN REFUGEES

INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA

The findings of a Review into Integration, Employment
and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and
Humanitarian Entrants in Australia

Peter Shergold, Kerrin Benson and Margaret Piper

February 2019

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

In accordance with the Terms of Reference issued to me on 3 December 2018, I am pleased to provide you with *'Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia: The findings of a Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia'*.

As Chair of the Review, I would like to express my great appreciation for the terrific contribution made by my fellow Panel members, Kerrin Benson, Chief Executive Officer - Multicultural Development Australia Ltd, and Margaret Piper, member of the NSW Joint Partnership Working Group on Refugee Resettlement.

I would also like to express the Panel's appreciation for the exceptional support provided by the taskforce drawn from the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Home Affairs, Social Services, Jobs and Small Business, and Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, which was led by Matthew Roper.

There is a wealth of community experience and academic evidence that we have been able to draw on, both from Australia and overseas. We were helped to marshal this knowledge by the consultations that we held with government agencies, community organisations, business groups and educational institutions. We also benefitted from listening to the lived experience of refugees.

The Panel owes our sincere thanks to everyone who went out of their way to share their wisdom with us. Without their extraordinary support and encouragement this report would not have been possible. We found a significant degree of consensus amongst stakeholders on the best way to improve refugee settlement and, in particular, to enhance labour market integration.

After careful consideration, the Review Panel has put forward only seven major recommendations for your consideration. We see them as an integrated package which builds on the strengths of refugees and provides an opportunity for your Government to unlock their potential. This would not only help refugees to take back control of their lives but also enrich the economic and social life of Australia. All of us would benefit. It is our hope that this report will be made publicly available as a basis for community feedback. If nothing else, it should help to tell a story of Australia's proud record in accepting refugees and how much they have contributed to our nationhood.

Yours sincerely

Professor Peter Shergold AC

THE REVIEWERS

The Review was led by an independent three-member review panel and supported by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

PETER SHERGOLD (CHAIR)

Peter Shergold is the Chancellor of Western Sydney University, where around 700 refugee students are studying. He has long experience in the area of settlement outcomes. More than 30 years ago, he wrote (with Loucas Nicolaou) one of his first reports for the Commonwealth Government. Entitled *Why Don't They Ask Us? We're Not Dumb!* (1986), it was a study of the needs of new arrivals, including refugees. From 1987-90, he was the founding Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. He is presently the Coordinator General of Refugee Resettlement in New South Wales.

KERRIN BENSON

Kerrin Benson has led Queensland settlement provider Multicultural Development Australia (MDA) for the past 15 years. Settling 3500 newly arrived refugees annually MDA recently hosted the first national 'Regions of Welcome' conference in Toowoomba. Kerrin has enjoyed roles in both the non-government sector, and at all three levels of government, including the Brisbane City Council's Inclusive Brisbane Board and the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council. At the Commonwealth level she has been a member of advisory committees for the last six Ministers for Immigration and the current Minister for Families and Social Services.

MARGARET PIPER

Margaret Piper has worked in various roles in the refugee sector since 1986, including 15 years as the Executive Director of the Refugee Council of Australia. She has also conducted research in Australia and internationally, written extensively on refugee issues and spearheaded capacity building initiatives. She currently sits on the Advisory Board of Multicultural New South Wales and the Board of the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (New South Wales). Margaret is also an adjunct fellow at Western Sydney University.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

OBJECTIVES

Refugees and humanitarian entrants have always played an important role in enriching the Australian community and building our strong economy. The review will provide advice to the Government on how to better support refugees and humanitarian entrants to make valuable contributions to our social fabric and our economy. The review will recommend ways to improve integration, employment and settlement outcomes. The review panel will report to Government by February 2019.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The review should undertake research allowing for the recommendation of policy options for improving the integration, employment and settlement outcomes of refugees and humanitarian entrants.
2. The review should investigate employment outcomes in refugee and humanitarian cohorts, and the ways in which positive outcomes benefit individuals, communities and strengthen the economy.
3. The review should seek out best practice case studies of how Australians can work together to encourage integration of refugees and humanitarian entrants in the wider community, including identifying significant barriers to success.
4. The review should consider the literature on settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants, and identify key areas influencing positive settlement outcomes.
5. The review should consider how integration, employment and settlement outcomes vary by region.
6. The review may have regard to any previous or ongoing reviews, inquiries, recent policy measures undertaken or academic literature that it considers relevant.
7. The review may also invite submissions and seek information from any persons or bodies that it considers relevant.

'Investment in migration and settlement is for the prosperity of all Australians. To fully realise the returns of migration, and to deliver a stronger nation through a more diverse workforce, requires enabling the most to be achieved by every person who comes to Australia.'

Settlement Services Advisory Council



INTRODUCTION

Australia is a beacon of hope to people in some of the world's most dire circumstances. Through our Humanitarian Program, we provide permanent resettlement to those in the greatest need of protection, offering refugees a safe place to call home and the opportunity to build a new life.

We have successfully settled refugees into our society for more than three generations. It is estimated that more than 880,000 refugees have made their home in Australia. On a per capita basis Australia has been one of the world's most generous countries in resettling refugees. It is one of our nation's great achievements.

In the fiercely contested public debate on asylum-seekers and detention, it is often forgotten that we continue to welcome refugees. Indeed in 2016-17, with a special intake of refugees from Syria and Iraq, the number of humanitarian visas granted was close to 22,000. This was higher than in any year since 1983. The planned number of humanitarian visas set for 2018-19, 18,750, is larger than the annual average of around 13,500 humanitarian visas that has generally prevailed since the mid-1980s.

Our proud record in refugee settlement is a story worth telling. It is an opportunity to acknowledge who we are as a nation. Australians are inherently people who are welcoming. We like to help others. We pride ourselves on our long history of giving people a fair go. This is to be celebrated and promoted. Far more important, it is a means of letting refugees know how much they are valued.

The refugee families who arrive in Australia have often lived with unimaginable violence and torture. They have had no choice but to leave their old lives behind. Many bring deep mental scars which will often reveal themselves at unexpected times. They need access to health services and counselling for post-traumatic stress. But refugees have also developed a resilience which has allowed them to survive in a world of fear and uncertainty.

That quality of character often translates into a fierce drive to succeed in a place of peace and order. A few will build extraordinarily successful new lives largely through their own efforts. Many more, provided with effective settlement support from governments, can be helped to do so. With the right assistance, they have the fortitude and strength of purpose to overcome barriers of culture, language and understanding.

Each year the Commonwealth Government spends around \$500 million on providing settlement support to refugees and vulnerable migrants in Australia. This figure includes the **Humanitarian Settlement Program**, the **Translating and Interpreting Service**, the **Australian Cultural Orientation Program**, **Settlement Engagement and Transition Support** and the **Adult Migrant English Program**. This figure does not include other Commonwealth support provided through mainstream welfare, health, education and employment services. Nor does it count the significant expenditures by state, territory and local governments. This cumulative investment is large. We need to ensure that we organise its delivery to get the best returns.

We start from a position of strength. The Australian settlement services that refugees receive, and the ongoing assistance which is made available, are of a high standard. Our approach is well-respected internationally. Nevertheless, government interventions could be significantly improved in order to enhance the prospects of newcomers being successful contributors to Australian society, sooner.

In our view, the present provision of adult English and access to employment services is inadequate and does not achieve the best labour market or social outcomes. More broadly, the extensive range of settlement programs remains poorly coordinated, across and between governments. The valuable experience of community-based organisations is inadequately utilised, with their contributions too often being restricted to their role as contracted service providers. The immediate needs of refugees are generally well met but their strengths are insufficiently utilised.

These weaknesses can and should be addressed. If we continue to do what we have done until now, we will continue to get what we always got. We can do much better. We need to make changes.

While English language skills will remain fundamental, it is the Panel's view that it is better to invest in building up refugees' strengths and aspirations. This requires strong coordination of a range of complementary programs by Commonwealth Government, but undertaken in genuine partnership with refugees and front-line service providers. We also need to harness better the tremendous goodwill of Australians towards helping those in humanitarian need, and to give voice to the particular desire of those regional communities which see refugee settlement as one important way to secure their futures.

To do this, the process of refugee settlement needs to be improved. Refugees need one-on-one help to navigate the complexities of life in Australia. By investing upfront, governments can enable newcomers to participate in Australian life to the greatest extent, as early as possible. Opportunities for labour market participation should be enhanced. They are a key component of integration. Indeed, for many refugees and their families, finding a job is central to the success of their settlement in Australia. It is a stepping stone to building a career or founding a small business. It is crucial to their families' financial security.

The success of refugees is equally important to the wider community. The opportunity cost to governments of not capitalising on the untapped potential of refugees to participate fully in the economic and social life of Australia runs to hundreds of millions of dollars. Governments have the opportunity to get better returns on their investment in public services by increasing the economic and social contributions of refugees, improving their integration and enhancing their settlement outcomes.

REVIEW CONTEXT

All three of us have brought to this Review our first-hand experience of working with refugees for many years. We have learned much, sometimes from success, often from failure. We have been given a rich evidence base to inform our work. We have also been able to draw on the expertise of those within government, the community sector, think tanks, academia and business. We have listened carefully and tested ideas with them.

In truth, our report has been written to very tight deadlines. This would not have been possible without the extraordinary support and encouragement we have received from all with whom we have engaged. They have gone out of their way to meet with us. Community based organisations have been particularly responsive, which bears testimony to their commitment to their social mission. We have also benefitted from extensive discussion with academics and business advocates. Importantly, we have learned much from public servants, many of whom recognise the opportunities that exist for improvement.

Significantly, we have found common sense and wisdom from listening to refugees directly. They generously shared with us their stories, hopes, aspirations and frustrations. It has confirmed our belief that services need to build on their strengths and learn from their experiences. As one young man told us, 'We want to show the government, which gave us the opportunity, that we can succeed.'

Our Review does not stand in isolation. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is currently developing a framework on population planning and management. The size, composition and regional distribution of migrants is likely to be a key part of its deliberations, given the substantial contribution which newcomers make to Australia's population growth.

At the same time, the Commonwealth Government has reviewed, or will be reviewing, the effectiveness and responsiveness of a number of mainstream programs and policy settings. These include:

- the recently released Review into the future of Government-funded employment services (**jobactive**), *I Want to Work*, which considered how enhanced labour market services might be better delivered to more vulnerable job seekers;
- the ongoing evaluation of the **Adult Migrant English Program** (AMEP), which will assess the appropriateness, effectiveness and practicality of its new business model; and
- a Review into the effectiveness of the vocational education and training (VET) sector, which will focus on how the Commonwealth Government's investment in VET can be optimised to ensure that the employment outcomes of school leavers and workers align with industry needs.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

As indicated above, our Review has been informed by targeted consultation with refugees, service providers and peak body organisations, academics and think tanks, business and industry groups, regional development organisations, youth settlement groups, and public servants working for Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments.

During an intensive consultation period:

- 90 people attended roundtable meetings, including refugees themselves, with many stakeholders providing follow-up statements and case studies to supplement our initial discussions;
- 57 submissions were received; and
- 134 case studies were made available.

A list of those consulted is set out in *Appendix A - Stakeholder Consultations*.

A list of the submissions and case studies received by the Review is available in *Appendix B - Stakeholder Submissions, Documents and Case Studies*.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the consultations or provided a submission. We are indebted to the many individuals who met with us, at short notice, often interrupting their summer break. Your willingness to talk to the Panel was vital. We discerned a broad consensus of opinions expressed on many substantive issues. We complete the Review with a strong sense that the refugee services sector benefits enormously from the shared goodwill and sense of purpose that drives community based organisations. We hope that your feedback will help to shape the improvement of settlement services for refugees.

THE FRAMEWORK

We have sought to write a short report. A longer one would have been easier, given the length of Australia's experience and the volume of evidence available. There is a considerable body of literature on the settlement and integration of refugees, some of which we have set out in *Appendix C - Bibliography*.

Our decision was to focus our attention on identifying what the goals of an effective refugee and humanitarian settlement program should be. We have set these out in a set of ten principles, which we elaborate. Using that framework we then distilled our arguments down to just seven recommendations. Each has its own chapter, setting out briefly the reasons for our decisions and how our proposals might be implemented.

In short, we have sought to summarise our own shared knowledge of the sector, the research findings of academics and other experts, and the lived experience of refugees. Consistent with our terms of reference, we have sought to identify the best ways to improve the integration, employment and settlement outcomes of refugees. In our view, the proposals represent a coherent set of measures which should be considered as a package.

REVIEW PRINCIPLES

1. Australia should continue to select refugees on the basis of humanitarian need.

Australia has a long and proud record of resettling refugees. We should maintain a generous and well-targeted program, working in close collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Maintaining the integrity of selection based on humanitarian need is paramount. It should be strongly affirmed that the selection of refugees for resettlement in Australia is fundamentally based on the need for protection.

2. Australia will benefit from helping refugees to capitalise on the diversity of strengths, skills, experience and drive that they bring to their new home.

Refugees are risk-takers. While they have experienced traumatic violence and displacement, this often builds tremendous strength and resilience. They arrive determined to build new lives for themselves, their families and their communities in a safer place that offers them stability, order and opportunity.

Successful integration into the Australian economy can assist refugees to achieve the self-reliance and independence that they seek and, by doing so, enhance the economic and social contribution that they make to their new home.

The fact that refugees face barriers of language and misunderstanding should not just be perceived as problems to be overcome. The cultural and linguistic diversity to which refugees contribute, properly harnessed, is a great source of opportunity for Australia's future in a global economy.

3. Australia should seek to enhance, tailor and coordinate settlement programs in order to significantly improve refugee integration.

Australia's settlement services to refugees, many of which are well-delivered through committed community-based organisations, are of a high international standard. Most refugees report satisfaction with the help they are given in the period after their arrival.

However, bureaucratic silos, within and across governments, often undermine an end-to-end approach to service delivery. A more holistic approach is necessary, based on the strengths and

aspirations of refugees. Labour market assistance should be integrated with initial settlement services, English language provision, health support and opportunities for further education and training. Partly this can be achieved by bringing specialist services together in a single government agency; partly by improved cross-agency collaboration.

Ongoing evaluation is crucial to measure what works best. Experience is a key form of evidence. A centralised effort to collect data and set outcomes can better inform refugee experiences and shape program development. Focussed leadership is required to facilitate collaboration between government agencies and across jurisdictions and to build partnerships with community and business organisations.

4. Programs to assist refugees should be designed not just to help them overcome disadvantage, but also allow them to capitalise on the abilities that they possess.

A strengths-based approach will unlock the economic potential of more refugees sooner. It is likely to be far more effective than a needs-based approach which runs the risk of increasing their welfare dependency, social deprivation and isolation. Refugees need advice and encouragement to take back control of their lives, rather than to learn helplessness from a narrowly 'welfarist' approach to service provision.

5. Australia should ensure refugees and their communities benefit from targeted case coordination, helping them to navigate the maze of support services available and find the best integration pathways.

A case-based approach to service delivery is imperative if government is to reduce waste and duplication of effort and overcome the territorial demarcation of officialdom. Opportunities must be taken to work with refugees as soon as possible after they arrive in Australia, helping them to develop their own targeted plans. This will harness their drive and aspirations. There should be a particular focus on their economic goals, which are often the key to successful settlement. Economic participation is a major contributor to self-esteem and paid employment plays a crucial role in funding family expectations.

Flexibility needs to be built in. Plans need to be evaluated and revised as individual circumstances change. The approach should be based upon mutually understood obligations rather than compliance requirements. The goal is to enable refugees to take increasing responsibility for directing available government support to help them achieve their ambitions. The ethos of 'consumer driven directed care', in which beneficiaries are given more control over the types of care and services they access, has strong applicability to refugee empowerment.

6. Australia should make upfront investments in the labour market integration of refugees to ensure that the greatest personal and community benefits are achieved in the shortest time.

Government agencies involved in refugee settlement have shown an increased preparedness to innovate in recent years. This willingness to experiment needs to be encouraged. Opportunities should be taken to trial and demonstrate a range of specialised, place-based approaches to individualised labour market integration. Service delivery should be based on genuine partnership between governments and community providers. Public servants should facilitate cross-sectoral approaches focussed on agreed measurable outcomes.

All levels of government, businesses and social enterprises should be encouraged to work together with refugees to provide them with employment preparation, mentoring, skills assessment, work experience, training and job opportunities. Successful labour market integration will create beneficial returns both to the refugees and for Australia it will create social capital, provide workforce skills for industry, reduce welfare dependence, increase tax revenues and build community cohesion.

7. *English language proficiency is crucial to economic and social participation and should be delivered in ways that respond more flexibly to the community and workforce needs of refugees.*

Current Commonwealth Government investment in the classroom provision of adult migrant English is not achieving the intended results. Too few Adult Migrant English Program participants attain a functional level of English on completion of their program. Too many drop out before using their entitlement or fail to make full use of the publicly-funded tuition provided by the Commonwealth Government.

Classroom teaching does not suit everyone. It can be complemented by the provision of conversational English in community settings. Importantly, Australia should capitalise on opportunities to help refugee jobseekers to develop workplace English tailored to employment opportunities and professional requirements.

Labour market integration is not a linear process. The acquisition of fluency in English should not be seen as a necessary prerequisite to commencing a job search. Greater effort should be focused on ensuring that language acquisition can occur concurrently with workplace experience and continue to develop once refugees are in employment.

8. *Opportunities for the regional settlement of refugees should be actively encouraged.*

Many regional and rural communities are strongly supportive of the valuable contributions that refugee families can make to the social and economic life of their towns. As a matter of priority, more effort should be placed on ensuring that refugees are aware of the opportunities that exist outside the major metropolitan centres.

Secondary migration has not been given sufficient priority in settlement services. Refugees already settled in Australia should have the opportunity to experience regional and rural life at first-hand in order to help them make considered decisions about where they want to bring up their families. Existing regional-based programs should be coordinated and new programs developed, to ensure that refugees attracted to regional settlement are able to take up the opportunities available in regional labour markets.

Settlement of refugees in rural and regional communities as their first home in Australia should also be encouraged. Towns or cities able to exhibit strong levels of support from local, state or territory governments, civil society organisations, educational institutions and local businesses should be given greater opportunity to welcome refugees. This could be achieved both by the Commonwealth Government selecting more regional locations for the initial settlement of larger numbers of refugees and by allowing communities to undertake their own refugee sponsorship.

9. *Whilst the existing Humanitarian Program should continue to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable, new visa categories should be introduced to enable sponsorship by local communities, employers or universities.*

'Additionality' is the crucial element of this proposition. There are many highly skilled and educated refugees across the world awaiting resettlement. Modest numbers could be offered a home in Australia, complementing (but not reducing) the existing program.

Sponsorship by engaged place-based local communities should be promoted, building on the new approaches that the Commonwealth Government has recently introduced. Emphasis might be placed on encouraging regional centres to take up such opportunities. Similarly, employers should be encouraged to recruit skilled refugees, and universities to sponsor postgraduate or post-doctoral refugees, from overseas.

Those selected should be allowed to enter Australia with their families on the same settlement basis as other humanitarian entrants. They should be granted permanent residence on arrival.

10. Australia should encourage the goodwill that exists in many areas of the Australian community towards helping refugees build new lives.

We know that many Australians are keen to offer help to refugees. We know, too, that many refugees benefit from such assistance. Successful settlement can often be attributed to refugee families forming friendships with Australians who are able to help them with practical advice. Too often this occurs by chance.

Governments can help to structure this serendipity by actively encouraging the positive attributes of volunteering and reducing barriers that sometimes deter individuals and communities from getting involved. Governments can also play a facilitative role, helping to bring together refugees who would like assistance with Australians willing to provide it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISHING A 'CENTRE OF GRAVITY'

In order to provide a 'centre of gravity' for refugees, the Commonwealth Government should appoint a Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Humanitarian Settlement to coordinate refugee settlement, employment and integration programs across the Commonwealth Government. The Coordinator-General would work closely with state, territory and local governments, industry and the community sector to ensure that complementary programs become part of a 'joined-up' approach.

More specifically, the Coordinator-General would:

- a) articulate publically a strong positive narrative by promoting Australia's proud record of accepting refugees and emphasising the contribution this has made to our national development and identity;
- b) provide performance based accountability for specialist and mainstream spending on refugees by Commonwealth Agencies;
- c) support the redesign of the Commonwealth Government's specialist and mainstream services, placing a particular focus on labour market outcomes and social integration;
- d) facilitate cross-governmental and cross-sectoral collaboration to improve settlement outcomes;
- e) promote and invest in community measures that foster positive relations between refugees and other Australians by engaging the goodwill of local communities;
- f) foster and support greater opportunities for regional settlement; and
- g) provide regular advice to the Commonwealth Government on the implementation of Review recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 2: BRINGING REFUGEE SERVICES TOGETHER

In order to deliver end-to-end service design that supports the economic and social participation of refugees, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) bring together adult migrant English programs and employment services for refugees with humanitarian settlement services within a single social services program;
- b) recognising that good health is vital to economic participation, ensure that refugees have good access to appropriately funded primary health care and (as necessary) torture and trauma counselling, supported by the provision of interpreter services for all allied health services; and
- c) improve coordination of those programs with other specialist and mainstream services, such as immigration, human services, housing, education and training.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CREATING PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

To improve the social and economic participation of refugees, the Commonwealth Government should invest in labour market integration strategies by trialling a range of specialist place-based employment services, that:

- a) work with refugees to develop and implement a personal plan based on their strengths and aspirations and labour market opportunities, which can be periodically reviewed to reflect changing circumstances;
- b) engage with industry to meet employer needs;

- c) incorporate employment preparation, mentoring, work experience, skills assessment, recognition of prior learning, provision of workplace English, vocational and professional training, job placement, career development and assistance with setting up small businesses;
- d) ensure that more vulnerable groups – such as young people, full-time parents, older refugees and at-risk women – are not excluded, by tailoring English provision to their particular needs, identifying volunteer and part-time job opportunities, increasing their financial literacy and building their social capital and capabilities;
- e) use collective impact approaches to ensure strong cross-sector collaboration in the delivery of services; and
- f) identify appropriate measures of success against which performance can be assessed.

RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUTCOMES

To develop a results-based performance regime that is ded across programs, and to measure success, ensure accountability and improve planning, program design and service delivery, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) improve the collection and coordination of de-identified information across government agencies;
- b) capture greater information from refugees before they arrive in Australia to inform better case coordination;
- c) with the informed consent of refugees, enhance case coordination by allowing real time sharing of information on their personal circumstances with government and community service providers; and
- d) utilise technology to provide a personal digital record for refugees which would reduce the need for duplication and streamline their relationships with government agencies and service providers.

RECOMMENDATION 5: PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL RESETTLEMENT

In order to support and assist regional communities to develop locally-led approaches to attract and retain refugees, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) promote the benefits of regional settlement and encourage communities to explore its potential;
- b) oversee a national strategy that supports regional settlement opportunities; and
- c) facilitate stronger planning, coordination and evaluation of regional settlement by bringing together all levels of government, community, and business.

RECOMMENDATION 6: ADDING COMPLEMENTARY VISA PATHWAYS

In addition to the current Humanitarian Program, the Commonwealth Government should introduce three complementary permanent visa pathways for refugees, based on a shared cost model:

- a) a place-based community sponsored visa which harnesses the collective strength of whole communities partnering with their local governments, service providers and community organisations;
- b) an employer sponsored visa offering immediate employment opportunities to suitably skilled refugees; and
- c) a university sponsored visa offering post-graduate or post-doctoral places to academically qualified refugees.

RECOMMENDATION 7: BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

In order to harness the goodwill of many Australians who want to offer friendship and support to refugees, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) utilise and increase existing Commonwealth grant funding to establish a small 'Bringing the Community Together' grants program to encourage communities to develop innovative approaches at the local level; and
- b) sponsor the development of digital approaches that will connect refugees who require assistance and practical support with members of the broader Australian community who are willing to provide it.

CHAPTER 1: ESTABLISHING A CENTRE OF GRAVITY

Recommendation 1

In order to provide a 'centre of gravity' for refugees, the Commonwealth Government should appoint a Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Humanitarian Settlement to coordinate refugee settlement, employment and integration programs across the Commonwealth Government. The Coordinator-General would work closely with state, territory and local governments, industry and the community sector to ensure that complementary programs become part of a 'joined-up' approach.

More specifically, the Coordinator-General would:

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- b) provide performance based accountability for specialist and mainstream spending on refugees by Commonwealth Agencies;
- c) support the redesign of the Commonwealth Government's specialist and mainstream services, placing a particular focus on labour market outcomes and social integration;
- d) facilitate cross-governmental and cross-sectoral collaboration to improve settlement outcomes;
- e) promote and invest in community measures that foster positive relations between refugees and other Australians by engaging the goodwill of local communities;
- f) foster and support greater opportunities for regional settlement; and
- g) provide regular advice to the Commonwealth Government on the implementation of Review recommendations.



1.1 OVERVIEW

Refugee services are funded by all tiers of government. They are often delivered under contract by third party service providers. Many of these are large civil society organisations, although at the local level they often work in co-operation with smaller community organisations.

Coordination across agency and jurisdictional lines remains weak. The Commonwealth's refugee settlement services are not yet delivered in a fully 'whole-of-government' manner. Cross-governmental collaboration tends to be episodic and focussed on sharing information. Cross-sectoral relationships are too often designed around the oversight of government contracts rather than partnerships built on shared purpose. Advocacy organisations are sometimes treated with suspicion. Business is too rarely consulted in a substantive manner.

The Panel has considered areas of action and innovation that can significantly improve outcomes for refugees. Our view is that they will only be successful if there is strong, national leadership fostering better connections between all involved, with sufficient authority to oversee and evaluate Commonwealth program performance and influence future policy directions. There is widespread support for this concept. The Centre for Policy Development called for a 'centre of gravity'. Navitas suggested a 'settlement hub'. They were not alone. Most organisations to which we spoke emphasised the needs for a mechanism to coordinate at a high level.

1.2 CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

The Commonwealth Government administers the Humanitarian Program and funds service providers to deliver specialised settlement services to refugees during the first five years of settlement. The Commonwealth also funds initiatives that encourage multiculturalism and community cohesion.

That, of course, represents just a part of the picture. Refugees are able to access a wide range of mainstream Commonwealth Government services, particularly in the areas of income support, employment, health, rent assistance, education and training. A number of these programs specifically recognise refugees as a cohort who need targeted assistance.

Responsibility for major policies which impact refugees sit in a wide range of portfolios including Social Services, Home Affairs, Human Services, Health, Jobs and Small Business and Education and Training. Each have different objectives and program structures. Committees and informal networks exist to try and ensure interdepartmental coordination, with limited success.

The Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG) works to improve settlement-related services and outcomes for refugees and other eligible migrants across jurisdictions.

It comprises senior officials of Commonwealth, state and territory governments and representatives from the Australian Local Government Association. SOSOG is chaired by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. It meets twice a year, providing a useful forum for the representatives to exchange information on a range of settlement related issues. It works far less well as a coordination mechanism.

STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS

State and territory governments are responsible for the provision of many other services to the Australian community, including those supported by Commonwealth funding such as education and health services.

State and territory governments also fund their own programs to help refugees. Levels of commitment vary, but most jurisdictions, to a greater or lesser extent, fund additional support for public schools, provide subsidised access to vocational education, support health strategies, contribute to legal aid and provide forms of housing assistance to improve refugee settlement.

Some state and territory services are intended to complement Commonwealth services. Many have programs or grant programs to support migrant and refugee communities establish themselves, often with the intention of promoting community harmony or countering extremism.

Other services have been set up to fill perceived gaps. For example, the **Refugee Employment Support Program** in New South Wales and the **Jobs Victoria Employment Network** (which includes refugees in its target group) run in parallel with Commonwealth employment services. They reflect dissatisfaction with the ability of the *jobactive* network to adequately address refugee needs and are an attempt to improve labour market outcomes at the state level.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Refugees do not just move to Australia: they settle in specific communities. Local governments provide a range of services and infrastructure to their residents including specialised services to refugees. Many have established refugee or migrant coordinator positions and have set up advisory committees. They also have responsibility for organising citizenship ceremonies.

A small number of local government authorities in Sydney and Melbourne have struggled with the influx of refugees into their suburbs, arguing that it places too much pressure on their community

infrastructure and services. On the other hand, a significant number of local governments have taken a lead in welcoming refugees. Some regional councils actively encourage refugee settlement.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Community based service providers are key leaders in this sector. Often they win contracts from Commonwealth, state and territory governments to deliver programs to refugees on the basis of their frontline experience.

A wide array of community and faith based organisations contribute to successful settlement, often working at a local level. Some receive government funding to deliver programs to refugees. Others rely solely on community or philanthropic funding.

Five organisations are funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide intensive initial support: AMES Australia, Australian Red Cross Society, the Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Multicultural Development Australia and Settlement Services International.

These service providers are the human face of settlement services and support. They are the organisations that refugees have the most contact with in the early months, and they have developed a profound understanding of how programs impact refugees.

In many instances they have shown significant innovation in working with refugees to get better outcomes.

Settlement providers play a key role in advising all levels of government on community and client groups, settlement needs and social policy issues. They have been a driving force behind improving outcomes for refugees. They are the organisations that bring together a variety of contracts and grants from a range of government agencies and use them to wrap a myriad of services around refugees. To a significant extent they are organisations that make governments “whole”.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

Businesses across Australia have shown leadership in developing their own employment and economic participation initiatives. Their industry associations – Business Council of Australia (BCA), Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and Australian Industry Group (AI Group) – have actively promoted the contribution that refugees can make to economic growth.

Many individual companies – large, medium and small - have also taken a public stand in supporting Australia’s refugee intake. Others, with the support of their CEOs or Chairs, have shown a genuine willingness to provide advice, work experience and job opportunities to refugee jobseekers. The Friendly Nation Initiative, for example, is a business led strategy that encourages Australian companies to provide mentoring, internships and employment to refugees.

The Panel has heard from industry stakeholders that these initiatives are not just based on recognition of social licence or corporate social responsibility. Rather, they are founded on a recognition by individual business owners that helping refugees find work can also be in their own interest. Employing refugees is good for business. It not only helps companies to meet their skill needs but also allows them to develop customer markets for the future. Helping refugees provides shared financial and social value in an ethnically diverse nation.

ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Settlement Services Advisory Council (SSAC) is appointed by the Commonwealth Minister for Social Services. It is comprised of leaders in settlement, migrant and social policy matters. SSAC advises the Commonwealth Government on strengthening social cohesion through the successful settlement of migrants and humanitarian entrants into the Australian community. Its goal is to maximise their social and economic participation by improving English language, employment and education outcomes. SSAC members, led by Paris Aristotle, bring a wealth of experience to this task.

Similar bodies exist at state and territory level. For example, in New South Wales a Joint Partnership Working Group has been established between New South Wales and Commonwealth Government agencies and service delivery and peak body organisations. It has built strong partnerships between public servants and community leaders and, as a consequence, created improved levels of collaboration on refugee settlement not only across governments but with community based organisations.

PEAK BODIES, ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS AND THINK TANKS

Peak bodies, advocacy organisations and think tanks play an important role in seeking to influence government policy. Some of these organisations include the Settlement Council of Australia, Refugee Council of Australia, Migration Council Australia, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, Centre for Policy Development and Harmony Alliance.

In summary, there is a complex network of Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, working with multiple community organisations and industry, in the joint endeavour that is refugee settlement in Australia (see

Figure 1). But to improve results, this network needs stronger coordination from the centre.

Figure 1: Settlement, integration and employment supports: Indicative timeline and services available to Humanitarian Entrants*



*Refugee and humanitarian visa holders (including temporary protection visas) may be eligible for the SIS component of the HSP if they are unable to independently engage with appropriate support and have complex or multiple barriers to settlement. Community Support Program (CSP) entrants are not eligible for the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP). Approved Proposing Organisations are responsible for ensuring CSP entrants receive comprehensive settlement support during their first year in Australia. All settlement support must be equivalent to that provided under the HSP to other humanitarian entrants. Australian sponsors are required to repay any working age social security payments received by CSP entrants within their first 12 months in Australia.

1.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY – ESTABLISHING A COORDINATOR-GENERAL

It is apparent, from all that we have heard and read, that the delivery of publically-funded services to refugees can be done much better than occurs now. Administrative governance can be significantly enhanced, getting better outcomes for refugees, faster. Early investment in settlement in a coordinated manner can deliver significant enhancements to labour market integration and social cohesion. There is an opportunity for improved coordination across agencies, jurisdictions and sectors to deliver better outcomes for refugees at the local level.

Despite the fact that in recent years a number of Commonwealth, state and territory governments have shown a greater willingness to 'co-design' programs, community providers generally remain contracted to deliver programs that do not sufficiently incorporate their experience. Community organisations find themselves having to deal with multiple government agencies, each of which impose separate contracting and reporting requirements.

Contracts are often based on prescription of process, rather than agreed performance based outcomes. Too rarely are programs truly 'client centred'.

The challenge is to change the structure of officialdom in a way which will make a real difference to the experience of refugees. Success must be measured by the extent to which changes can improve decision-making, break down bureaucratic barriers and enhance accountability. Merely moving programs between silos is rarely the answer to public policy problems. Something more is needed.

"The [Commonwealth Government should] consolidate governance arrangements federally and create a centre of gravity for integration, employment and settlement outcomes by ... bringing employment and language services together."

Centre for Policy Development

We have heard that programs would be enhanced through designing new government frameworks. While such views are well intentioned, we remain unconvinced. The existing National Settlement Framework already provides a high-level structural blueprint for Commonwealth, state, territories and local government to work together to effectively plan and deliver services that support the settlement of migrants and new arrivals in Australia (including refugees and asylum seekers). It provides a guide to how best make planning decisions on the provision of settlement and support services. It promotes the delivery of coordinated services, informed by research and evaluation.

In our view, it is adequate. We don't need another framework. Rather we need to find a way to make the existing framework perform better.

In considering how to do this we reflected on advice received that there would be virtue in creating a new dedicated office or position, which could provide a 'centre of gravity', or 'settlement hub'. This would enable high-level attention to be given to better coordinated design and delivery of refugee services. We have considered this proposition carefully. We do not want just to reshuffle administrative units or add new levels of bureaucratic control. To be worthwhile, public sector reorganisation needs to help drive cultural change within government agencies. It needs to increase capability, focus on outcomes and stimulate more innovative approaches. Most importantly, it needs to embed collaborative practice within and across government agencies. Coordination needs to become the normal way of working.

We are of the view that, at least in the immediate term, those goals can best be achieved by the creation of a new office committed to driving the profound change required.

Improved coordination for refugees requires strong facilitative national leadership. It involves extending collaboration beyond government agencies to the community sector organisations that deliver so many of the settlement services to refugees.

'The NSW Joint Partnership Working Group is a model built on mutual respect and with the clients at the centre of settlement planning. This inter and intra agency model where settlement services and government agencies come together to plan, respond and collaborate, could be replicated at the National level.'

Settlement Services International

It is for these reasons that the Review has come to the considered conclusion that the establishment of a Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Humanitarian Settlement would indeed add significant value to the refugee settlement process. We are persuaded that a Coordinator-General position, supported by a small administrative unit, would provide the most effective means of improving collaboration at the national level and driving partnership at the local level for place-based solutions.

THE ROLE OF A COORDINATOR-GENERAL

A Commonwealth Coordinator-General, reporting to the Prime Minister or the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, would increase the likelihood that government investments in refugee settlement are able to achieve maximum returns both for refugees and for the national economy. The Coordinator-General would provide comprehensive oversight of Commonwealth service delivery, create more cooperation between levels of government and ensure that the frontline experience of community organisations and businesses contributes more to the design and delivery of refugee programs. The Coordinator-General would also have the capacity to lead and inform public discussion of the benefits of Australia's humanitarian willingness to accept refugees.

We recommend that the Coordinator-General should have seven major responsibilities. Let us consider each of these roles in turn.

a) *Articulate publically a strong positive narrative by promoting Australia's proud record of accepting refugees and emphasising the contribution this has made to our national development and identity*

Refugees have always played an important role in enriching the Australian community and building our strong economy. Australia has benefited from the ingenuity, resourcefulness, resilience and strength of generations of refugees. Most refugees moving to Australia want nothing more than to be welcomed into their new home and build self-reliant lives for themselves and their children. To the extent that they are able to achieve this ambition, it affords significant social and economic benefits to Australia. Evidence provided to the Panel overwhelmingly supports this conclusion. National storytelling is important.

We talked to refugees about what makes them feel welcome. They indicated how much they valued positive statements from governments and national leaders about the contribution that they make to Australian society. They believe that such affirmations make a noticeable difference to how they were regarded in the broader community.

The Coordinator-General could play a significant role in this regard, by acting as a national advocate for refugees, finding opportunities to promote positive stories about refugees, helping Australians celebrate being a country of welcome, and providing a constructive framework for informed public discourse.

b) Provide performance based accountability for specialist and mainstream spending on refugees by Commonwealth Agencies

While individual agencies already manage settlement programs well, outcomes can be significantly improved. The Coordinator-General should have a clear oversight of Commonwealth spending and agree with individual agencies the key performance indicators by which success can be measured. A focus on quantifiable results would enhance public accountability for expenditure. Metrics matter.

Enhanced scrutiny of Commonwealth programs would provide better insight into the most effective areas for public investment. Performance should be assessed against improved outcomes both for refugees and for the nation. Programs should be expected to build human capital, enhance social cohesion, help to address labour market needs, reduce welfare costs and increase tax revenues. The Coordinator-General should report each year on the budgetary returns on investment in settlement services, in part by estimating the costs in the absence of government interventions.

c) Support the redesign of the Commonwealth Government's specialist and mainstream services, placing a particular focus on labour market outcomes and social integration

Australian settlement services are of a high international standard. They provide significant support to new refugees and help their social integration. Many refugees, however, often receive insufficient assistance in finding pathways to employment, even though for many this is a key indicator of their success and wellbeing. There exists a huge opportunity to improve the labour market assistance provided to refugee jobseekers and, by doing so, significantly benefiting the Australian economy.

For this to occur there needs to be much greater emphasis on helping refugees to use the skills and business experience they bring to Australia. Current specialised and mainstream programs need to be rationalised, and new programs implemented, to improve economic and social outcomes for refugees. This would bring significant benefits at a macro-economic level.

There would also be an advantage in the Coordinator-General overseeing forward planning for refugees. Our proposals to engage in better multi-year planning can be found in *Chapter 4*. As noted, a particularly important area on which to focus should be whether there are sufficient interpreters available for new cohorts. There is evidence that on recent occasions we have failed in that regard.

d) Facilitate cross-governmental and cross-sectoral collaboration to improve settlement outcomes

Many meetings occur within and across Commonwealth Government agencies. Less frequently, meetings occur between them and their state and territory counterparts, often with insufficient follow up to achieve real results. Such meetings are useful for sharing information and improving communication. Too rarely do they generate whole-of-government solutions based on day-to-day collaboration. Progress is slow and often depends on the commitment of particular individuals.

Government agencies also hold many meetings with community organisations. Often they are presented as consultation, although often the real intent is simply to let organisations know what government intends to do. Too rarely is there a meeting of minds based on mutually agreed approaches and negotiated outcomes.

There are also meetings which allow public servants to talk to providers about the contracting of government services before or after they are put out to tender. They are generally transactional in

nature. Although good working relationships between individuals are often developed over time, there are too few occasions on which genuine partnerships allow these organisations to contribute their frontline experience to program design. Providers remain providers. They are viewed as contracted third-party delivery agents rather than partners.

There also needs to be a much greater focus on facilitative leadership. The Coordinator-General can play a crucial role in ensuring that there is a commitment to whole-of-government approaches, built on cross-agency and cross-jurisdictional collaboration. Even more importantly, the Coordinator-General can help drive the creation of cross-sectoral partnerships and encourage the opportunities for genuine co-design of settlement services from the perspective of the refugees who use them.

‘Addressing the employment barriers experienced by refugees and humanitarian entrants requires ... a whole-of-government approach; requiring collaboration between the Department of Home Affairs, Department of Social Services, Department of Jobs and Small Business and the Department of Education and Training to map out settlement pathways ...’

Settlement Services International

e) *Promote and invest in community measures that foster positive relations between refugees and other Australians by engaging the goodwill of local communities*

The Coordinator-General can play a valuable role in facilitating opportunities for the many Australians who want to provide friendship to new refugee arrivals. This would help refugees feel welcome. By building social connections, it would also make a valuable contribution to the Commonwealth’s broader community cohesion objectives.

Unfortunately government interventions can inadvertently deter people from getting involved. Financial support typically comes with cumbersome rules, regulations and guidelines, even for relatively small grants. In some ways the best option for government is to just get out of the way. Too often volunteering is effectively discouraged.

The Coordinator-General should ensure that the intervention of government agencies does not overly prescribe how communities and individuals can offer support. What the Commonwealth can do usefully is to provide modest funding to support community-based initiatives and, most important, to connect refugees who seek support with those many people who would like to provide it. It is clear that the successful settlement of many refugees is attributable to chance meetings that they had with ordinary Australians. A key role of the Coordinator-General can be to help structure this serendipity in a light touch manner.

f) *Foster and support greater opportunities for regional settlement*

The development of a national population strategy will almost certainly direct attention to the challenges faced by many regional areas as their residents leave for the cities. Many areas find it hard to retain their young people. It is for that reason that many regional and rural communities across Australia have demonstrated a strong desire to attract refugees.

This has met with some success. There are well-known examples of refugee settlement revitalising economic prospects in such areas. We can learn from the experiences of Toowoomba, Shepparton and Mingoola. Refugee resettlement can add significantly to the number of working age adults and strengthen regional labour markets. It can increase the customer base for local businesses. On occasion, it can even enable the reopening of essential services such as schools and libraries.

Many refugees have come from rural communities in their home countries. For that reason they may well be attracted to the lifestyle opportunities afforded outside of Australia’s metropolitan centres.

Unfortunately, at present it is difficult for many of them to find out about the opportunities that are available and harder still to know how to go about moving their families.

The Coordinator-General could play a key role in supporting capacity building in those regional communities that express an interest in receiving more refugees. This would include working closely with the relevant state, territory and local governments to ensure success.

g) Provide regular advice to the Commonwealth Government on the implementation of Review recommendations

The proposals in this report will depend upon successful transitional arrangements being set in place. Over the next five years the Coordinator-General could play a key role in overseeing this process, and more generally ensuring the successful implementation of the Review's recommendations.

In order to be successful, it is envisaged that the Coordinator-General should be appointed at a senior level, with the necessary authority and autonomy to drive administrative change and report directly to the Prime Minister or Minister Assisting. The Coordinator-General should be supported by an administrative unit with the resources necessary to undertake the roles assigned. Further consideration should be given to whether these objectives would be most effectively achieved within the Australian Public Service or as a separate statutory office.

NSW Coordinator-General for Refugee Resettlement

The NSW Coordinator-General for Refugee Resettlement was appointed in September 2015, to make sure New South Wales was prepared for the arrival of the additional refugees from Syria and Iraq. In order to improve coordination a Joint Partnership Working Group (JPWG) was established which included senior public servants and humanitarian settlement service providers. The aim was to build a whole-of-government approach and encourage not-for-profits and businesses to work together with the NSW Government. Key budget proposals were developed collaboratively and delivered on the basis of partnership.

CHAPTER 2: BRINGING REFUGEE SERVICES TOGETHER

Recommendation 2

In order to deliver end-to-end service design that supports the economic and social participation of refugees, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) bring together adult migrant English programs and employment services for refugees with humanitarian settlement services within a single social services program;
- b) recognising that good health is vital to economic participation, ensure that refugees have good access to appropriately funded primary health care and (as necessary) torture and trauma counselling, supported by the provision of interpreter services for all allied health services; and
- c) improve coordination of those programs with other specialist and mainstream services, such as immigration, human services, housing, education and training.



2.1 OVERVIEW

In order to support refugees fulfil their aspirations, intensive and well-coordinated support in the early years of settlement is required. While the delivery of initial settlement services is generally regarded as being of a very high standard, employment and English language outcomes for refugees remain unacceptably poor.

The refugees we consulted gave us a mixed report card. They were positive about the settlement services they had received during in the first eighteen months, and even beyond, but they were adamant that the current *jobactive* arrangements were failing them. Most also believed that there is often a perceived conflict between employment opportunities and English language education. They reported being made to attend AMEP classes when they wanted to be working or, conversely, being sent for jobs before they had adequate English. Most wanted English language and employment to be better integrated, with a greater focus on the provision of workplace English. The community-based organisations and industry representatives to whom we spoke, shared many of these views. They expressed significant frustration with the bureaucratic silos which they saw as artificially dividing support for labour market integration, English language education and core settlement services. They argued that this was having a negative impact on outcomes for refugees. Almost all of them believed that refugee services need to be brought together in a much stronger fashion.

At present, the responsibility for these three crucial programs has been placed with different Commonwealth agencies. There has been no significant effort to truly integrate service delivery. This coordination failure needs to be remedied as a matter of urgency.

Refugees deserve government support that prioritises end-to-end service delivery. This should improve their experience and help them achieve better labour market outcomes. 'End-to-end' should not, however, suggest a linear process, whereby refugees simply move from one step in the settlement journey to the next. Genuine coordination across the Commonwealth should recognise that

refugees, like all people, lead complex lives and need different combinations of support over time. Programs should be delivered both concurrently and flexibly to allow refugees to reach their economic potential sooner. Programs should also be targeted to reflect gender, age and other relevant factors which can influence outcomes.

Youth Transition Support

Youth Transition Support (YTS) is a holistic program designed to improve workplace readiness, provide access to vocational opportunities and create strong social connections through education and sports engagement. The model ensures the services are delivered with a strong emphasis on participants' individual starting points, goals and the best mechanisms to support pathways to education and employment.

In Hume, the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) uses a place-based approach to deliver YTS through an integrated, end-to-end delivery model. BSL works with organisations in the broader community to facilitate one-off events or ongoing programs. In addition, the Hume Community Investment Committee provides local intelligence on youth employment issues and provides strategic oversight.

An independent evaluation, commissioned by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) indicated that YTS was showing early success in the areas of increased employability, completing vocational qualifications and building social networks for young people.

While the primary focus of our recommendation is on the need for integration of settlement, English language and employment services, it is emphasised that broader coordination is required to ensure that complementary specialist and mainstream services are fully aligned. The programs administered by the Commonwealth Departments of Home Affairs, Human Services, and Education and Training also need to be delivered in a more holistic manner. The Coordinator-General can focus on ensuring that each of these essential services is implemented in a way that contributes to a collective response.

To illustrate the importance of this approach, let us consider the role of health services. Good health is particularly crucial to the successful settlement of refugees. Participation in the labour market has a positive impact on health and wellbeing. It is often an effective means of supporting recovery from trauma. In many cases, however, physical and psychological illness present barriers to social and economic participation.

Refugee health services are primarily delivered through the states and territories and each state and territory has developed a different model of delivery, based on local needs and funding, and sometimes through the private sector. Although there are significant jurisdictional variations, these services are generally perceived to be effective and engaging well with primary health care providers.

In addition, the Commonwealth funded network of specialist torture and trauma services are comprehensive and generally viewed as world leading. The strength of the relationship between primary health services and specialist torture and trauma services suggests that these services should continue to be managed through the Commonwealth Department of Health.

The improvements to service coordination that we recommend would help provide a solid foundation of good physical and mental health for more refugees. Better health support will help refugees to be fit for work and retain their employment. Better economic participation will assist them to cope with the physical symptoms and psychological scars that they bear.

'Settlement outcomes are the responsibility of all services and are not limited to the settlement sector. We emphasise the need for further initiatives which support mainstream services to adopt a targeted approach ...'

Multicultural Youth Affairs Network New South Wales

2.2 CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

The Commonwealth Government administers a range of programs to support the economic and social participation of refugees, including initial settlement services, English programs and employment services.

Settlement services are administered by DSS and aim to enhance the skills and knowledge of refugees to become self-reliant and active members of the Australian community. There are two major Settlement Programs:

1. the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), which provides early practical assistance to refugees through on-arrival support. Providers also assist with sourcing long-term accommodation, accessing mainstream services, registering with English language learning, engaging with employment services and helping to enrol in relevant education and training, and orientation of Australian values and our way of life. The HSP is delivered by five contracted services providers over 11 contract regions until 26 July 2022; and
2. the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, which provides case coordination and capacity building to improve social participation, economic and personal well-being, independence, and community connectedness, and is delivered by 80 providers nationally.

The Commonwealth Government's mainstream employment service is *jobactive* which is administered by the Department of Jobs and Small Business. It exists to connect jobseekers with employers and is delivered by a network of *jobactive* providers in over 1,700 locations across Australia. Broadly, there are three streams of support. Only those placed in Stream C are given the highest level of intensive case management. Astonishingly, only 35 per cent of refugees are in Stream C. The current *jobactive* arrangements are expected to be in place until June 2020.

Refugee job seekers may also receive employment support through a range of complementary programs that serve specific groups or particular objectives. This includes services for youth (**Transition to Work** and **Youth Jobs PaTH**), for parents of young children (**ParentsNext**), and for people interested in starting their own business (**New Enterprise Incentive Scheme**).

AMEP is administered by the Department of Education and Training and delivers English language tuition to eligible migrants and refugees to help them learn foundation English skills. It is intended to allow them to acquire sufficient settlement skills to enable them to participate socially and economically in Australian society. Like *jobactive*, current contracts are in place until 30 June 2020.

There is a wide range of other Commonwealth programs that contribute to the successful integration of refugees, including health, income support, housing, school and vocational education and training. As indicated above, health services (including torture and trauma counselling) are a critical component of the settlement process, including labour market participation.

2.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY – CREATING A REFUGEE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Employment, English language and settlement services are administered by different Commonwealth agencies and Ministers. This fragmentation is a barrier to greater social and economic participation of refugees. It stymies progress and is a recipe for confusion.

'The current Commonwealth and state/territory policies and programs to support refugee settlement are a patchwork of support across different departments created at different points in time, with different funding and management arrangements and different priorities.'

Navitas

We read with interest the recent Review into the future of the Commonwealth Government's employment services and are in favour of the direction of many of the recommendations made by the Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel. We support more personalised services that include tailored pathways to employment, assessment that recognises strengths as well as barriers and increased investment in those job seekers who need the most help. We are pleased the Review recognises the need for cross-departmental collaboration to provide better support to job seekers with complex needs and for proactive employment engagement to match employers with suitable job seekers. We agree with the emphasis on local solutions.

Given that employment services may be poised to move to the tailored approach that refugees need, it begs the question why we would not simply endorse the recommendations of that Review. There are two major reasons. First, we do not believe that an improvement to *jobactive* services would be the best way to tailor an integrated labour market program for refugees. A consistent message from stakeholder consultations was that the current mainstream employment services are not best placed to provide the specialised support that refugees need. We remain unconvinced that even with a new contractual model for *jobactive* that the generalist employment network could deliver results as effectively as providers with experience of refugees and a targeted approach to helping them.

This is not just our view. Previous reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Refugee Council of Australia and the Centre for Policy Development all have called for targeted employment services that can address the employment barriers of refugees more effectively.

Second, economic participation is intrinsically linked to English language proficiency. This is presently a major weakness. Only 7 per cent of participants have functional English at the completion of the AMEP. Furthermore, most participants do not complete the basic 510 hours of English language available to them. The average number of hours completed is just 289. This represents a disturbing underuse of public funds.

The Review heard from many refugees, service providers and public servants that adult English tuition currently does not have a strong enough focus on vocational English. Nor is it being delivered flexibly enough to leverage the better outcomes that might be achieved if refugees were able to work and learn English at the same time.

Under the current segmentation arrangements, employment and language services are disconnected from each other and not aligned to or informed by settlement services. We think they should be brought together.

'Australian programs to support the settlement of humanitarian entrants are among the most comprehensive and best funded in the world. In our view, their effectiveness could be enhanced by strengthening the coordination and integration of programs in areas such as initial settlement services, English language development programs, programs to support families, children and young people and employment.'

Foundation House

Economic participation and English language proficiency are key indicators of integration and settlement and both are pathways to employment. While settlement services providers need to remain the main touch point for refugees in the early years, there is considerable merit in having those services fully integrated with English and employment in a single coherent program.

We are persuaded that an integrated, client-centred approach that is tailored to individual needs is most likely to be successful. We recommend one single comprehensive **Refugee Settlement Program** (RSP), focused on maximising the speed and intensity of labour market integration for those many working age refugees who seek economic participation.

The RSP should build on the strengths of existing settlement programs. It has the potential to improve the economic and social participation of refugees earlier through a well-coordinated place-based approach to settlement services, incorporating settlement support, English language learning and employment services.

As set out in *Chapter 4*, the new program structure will be most effective if it utilises results-based accountability, with measures at the program level that drive improved outcomes both at the individual and the aggregated level. Evaluation should commence at the outset to inform implementation and ensure agreed outcomes are realised.

We fully comprehend that there would need to be a staged transition to the new RSP. In our view, the first step should be to bring together existing settlement services, AMEP, and the refugee component of *jobactive* services under one portfolio. Under current administrative arrangements, the Department of Social Services would be best placed to take on this responsibility, given its focus on participation, lifetime wellbeing and social cohesion. We propose that the whole of the AMEP should be administered by DSS, with the refugee component to be fully incorporated into the new RSP.

'To support the specialist requirements of ... humanitarian entrants in their first five years, the council recommends a well-coordinated approach, with one Commonwealth agency holding key responsibility for flexible and responsive early intervention support services [including] Settlement Services, Humanitarian Settlement Program, Adult Migrant English Program [and] relevant jobactive program components.'

Settlement Services Advisory Council

It is recommended that these machinery of government changes take place as a matter of priority. With the right transitional arrangements in place, we see no reason for government to wait for the current expiry of the existing Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) in July 2022.

Under our proposal, existing HSP providers should become more than just case managers. They should be given the authority to put forward proposals for better coordinating service provision for

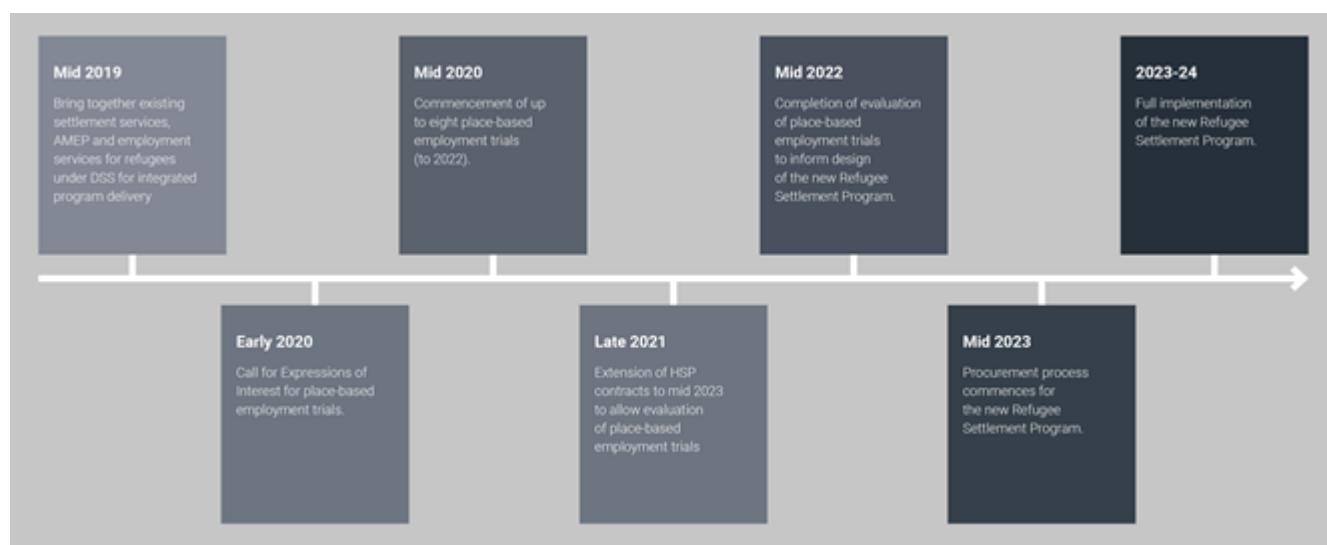
English language and employment services with their existing settlement services. They should be encouraged to link those elements to other specialist and mainstream services.

As presented in more detail in Chapter 3, HSP providers should be encouraged to trial place-based approaches that support pathways to economic and social participation. We envisage that up to eight trials could be run until mid-2022, when the current HSP contract ceases. Indeed, we believe that there would be value in using the existing contractual flexibility to extend HSP contracts until mid-2023 in order to enable sufficient time to evaluate more thoroughly the trials. At that time, the evaluation of these trials would be considered by the Coordinator-General and used to inform the overall design of the full implementation of the RSP, beginning in 2023-24.

We propose that during this transition period, if refugees reside in a settlement location where trials are not yet underway, they should continue to have access to mainstream employment and English language services. In our view, even after that date, all refugees should retain the choice of whether they wish to access mainstream employment services if they consider this better meets their needs. We do not think this is likely. Given the concentration of refugees and potential trial sites, it is anticipated that the majority of refugees would prefer to access employment services under the new RSP, given that they are likely to see the advantages of the local integrated service model over mainstream labour market support. It is considered that the placement of these programs in DSS should contribute to an increased capacity of these services to respond to the specific needs of refugees.

The key phasing of the transition to these arrangements in is set out in the chart below.

Figure 2: Refugee Settlement Program and Place-based Employment Trials



These steps should not exclude the delivery of programs in the most integrated, flexible way possible when opportunities present themselves. In the Panel's view, once the programs are located in a single department, responsible officers should develop transition strategies that move towards the reimagined integrated program as soon as practicable.

While settlement services, adult English provision and employment programs should be brought together in a single DSS program, it is our view that other specialist and mainstream services should continue to be delivered separately. These services (including the mainstream employment program) should be examined to see how they can be targeted better to the needs of refugee clients.

Many of these programs such as education, health, training and housing are jointly funded by Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The key is to ensure that these responsibilities are far better coordinated with the new Refugee Settlement Program.

As mentioned in under section 2.1, one particularly significant issue is the provision of primary and allied health support. Refugee health is a key building block for successful settlement of refugees in Australia. Without adequate management of physical and mental health issues it is difficult to achieve positive labour market integration and settlement outcomes. Academic experts such as Alastair Ager and Alison Strang have undertaken research that indicates health is not only a key indicator of integration but also serves as a potential means to support its achievement.

'Good health enables participation in a new society and is necessary to seek and maintain employment ... a person's ability to look for work and secure employment [is] dependent on their physical and mental wellbeing, English language competence, and confidence levels.'

Victorian Refugee Health Network

The Review has heard that there are opportunities to improve outcomes in other areas by fine-tuning our approach to health services for refugees. These include ensuring stronger integration and cooperation between health providers and community stakeholders, which can build on best practice and improve settlement outcomes.

There also needs to be a greater focus on addressing issues of language, culturally appropriate care, health and health system literacy by ensuring that interpreting services (including telephone services) are able to be fully utilised by general practitioners. Access to these services should also be expanded to allied health practitioners, such as psychologists and dietitians.

This being said some specific problems have been identified. We have been told that general practitioners often cannot give sufficient time to refugees because of their constraints under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

There would be value, then, in providing additional MBS incentives for general practitioners in recognition of the complexity and time it takes for interpreter use and patient education and care. This would encourage them to continue to provide ongoing care to refugees. One specific useful change would be to reinstate the MBS item for initial refugee health assessments.

CHAPTER 3: CREATING EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC PATHWAYS

Recommendation 3

To improve the social and economic participation of refugees, the Commonwealth Government should invest in labour market integration strategies by trialling a range of specialist place-based employment services, that:

- a) work with refugees to develop and implement a personal plan based on their strengths and aspirations and labour market opportunities, which can be periodically reviewed to reflect changing circumstances;
- b) engage with industry to meet employer needs;
- c) incorporate employment preparation, mentoring, work experience, skills assessment, recognition of prior learning, provision of workplace English, vocational and professional training, job placement, career development and assistance with setting up small businesses;
- d) ensure that more vulnerable groups – such as young people, full-time parents, older refugees and at-risk women – are not excluded, by tailoring English provision to their particular needs, identifying volunteer and part-time job opportunities, increasing their financial literacy and building their social capital and capabilities;
- e) use collective impact approaches to ensure strong cross-sector collaboration in the delivery of services; and
- f) identify appropriate measures of success against which performance can be assessed.



3.1 OVERVIEW

We have recommended in *Chapter 2* that three programs - settlement services, adult English provision and employment – should be brought together in a single Refugee Settlement Program (RSP) within the Department of Social Services (DSS).

The full benefits of that administrative change at the national level will however, only be achieved if providers can use the new program to deliver refugee-centred labour market support at the local level. The promise of RSP needs to be made manifest in specialist place-based employment services. Clients need to experience at first-hand the difference that a machinery of government change can make.

‘Sustainable economic participation is the bedrock for successful settlement. This is where Australia has been falling behind.’

Centre for Policy Development

The fact that the majority of refugees and humanitarian entrants settle initially in a relatively small number of urban locations is generally perceived as putting pressure on infrastructure and services in the receiving communities. So it does; but this challenge can be transformed into an opportunity to improve the targeting of interventions. This is a chance for the Commonwealth to encourage providers to experiment with bold new approaches to improving labour market outcomes of refugees.

As outlined in *Chapter 2*, we propose the progressive implementation of up to eight locally based trials, which should be evaluated from their instigation. The trials should seek to demonstrate that better economic outcomes can be delivered by specialist place-based employment services providing

refugees with culturally appropriate and integrated employment, vocational English and settlement services.

The wrong approach to these trials would be for DSS to develop hundreds of pages of guidelines to detail exactly how each should operate. Such prescription would kill initiative and stifle innovation. The focus should be on allowing each trial to develop its own approach to achieving results. There should be agreement between DSS and the trial proponent on the purpose of the new approach and, most importantly, on the outcomes against which performance will be evaluated.

That being said, there are some underlying features of the proposed specialist employment trials that we would expect to be incorporated. They should exhibit a collective impact approach in which backbone organisations (initially the existing Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) provider) bring together a range of organisations – business, social enterprises, local community organisations, educational institutions and local government – to work cooperatively around the shared goal of improving the economic integration of refugees.

There should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. We anticipate that each trial would offer a range of pathways to economic participation. Some, such as English language training and workplace experience, can be undertaken concurrently. Not all refugees would require access to the full suite of pathways nor would they necessarily want to access them only once or in the same order.

There is more to success than getting a refugee into a job, important though that is. Not all refugees want to secure paid employment at once. The new RSP could offer the opportunity for providers to focus on widening pathways to economic participation. The importance of such an approach cannot be overstated. The trials should be expected to demonstrate that the needs of women who are full-time carers, older refugees, those with a disability and other particularly vulnerable groups are addressed. Such individuals should be assisted to build their social capital and, where appropriate, to find opportunities for volunteering or part-time work. They might want to seek full-time work in the future.

For most participants, however, the end goal would be paid work. Community organisations have emphasised to us that one of the key factors to settlement success is employment. It improves all facets of integration. Where a refugee is able to participate in work, the benefits are profound. Employment provides social networks, economic independence, a sense of purpose, and the means for individuals and families to feel secure and participate in wider society. It contributes significantly to good physical and mental health. In the words of refugees themselves, the opportunity to gain employment, develop careers and establish businesses is one of best ways they can give back to Australia.

'One of the most effective ways of ensuring refugees and humanitarian cohorts are empowered ... is through meaningful, legal and sustainable employment. Beyond the obvious financial benefits, employment is linked to improved social cohesion, integration and sense of belonging, self-confidence, independence and the physical and mental health of individuals and families.'

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

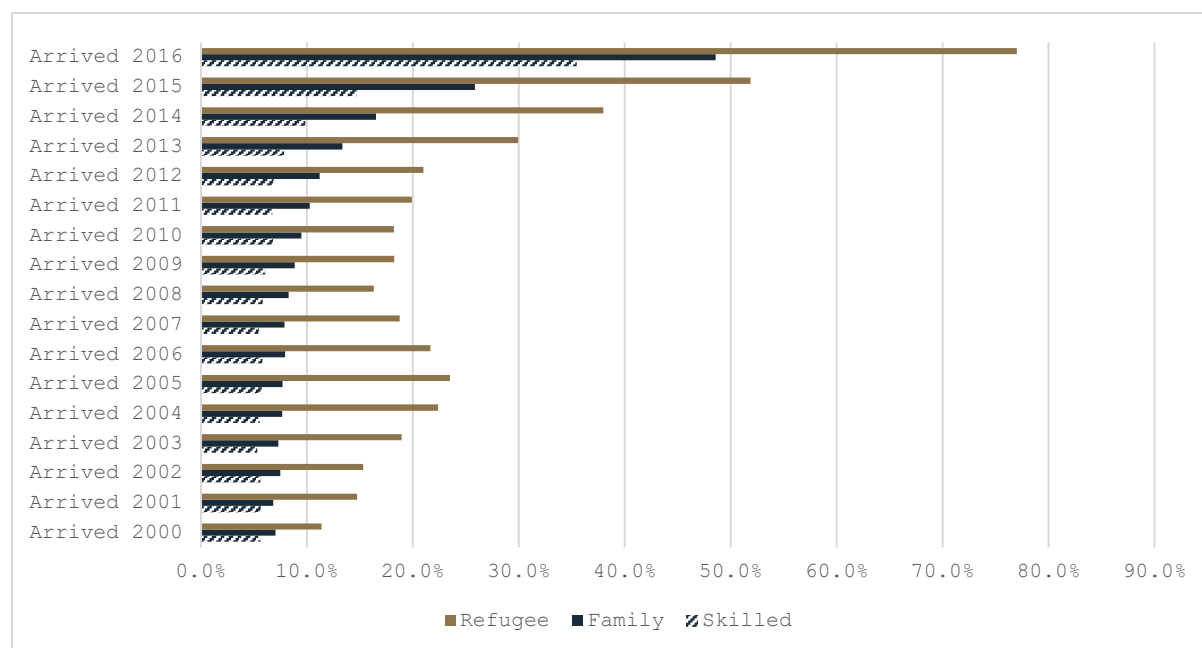
3.2 CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

At present, humanitarian entrants to Australia experience greater socio-economic disadvantage than other migrants, particularly in the labour market. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 38 per cent of humanitarian arrivals remain unemployed after three years of settlement. Graeme Hugo

found that when refugees do get jobs they often experience ‘occupational skidding’, meaning they are unable to get jobs commensurate with their qualifications and skills. To some extent, this can be attributed to various forms of formal and information discrimination. Perhaps even more important, it reflects barriers of language and lack of Australian workforce experience.

Refugees want to work and are keen to roll up their sleeves. They want to do what it takes to build a new life for themselves and their families. Evidence suggests, however, that refugees find it relatively difficult to gain a foothold in the labour market. Although employment rates do improve with time, they continue to lag behind other migrant groups (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Migrants in the labour force but unemployed by year of arrival



Source: ABS, 2016 Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset (ACMID)

The Commonwealth’s Priority Investment Approach is aimed at reducing long-term welfare dependence and improving the wellbeing of all Australians. Refugees have been identified as a priority group for investment. The failure to ensure speedy labour market integration has not only had a profoundly detrimental impact on refugees, but imposes significant costs on Australia. To illustrate, the 2016 investment approach valuation by the Department of Social Services indicates that the total future lifetime cost for refugees receiving working age payments as at 30 June 2017 is around \$21 billion, or \$344,000 per person.

‘Reducing the gaps in participation, unemployment, and income by 25 per cent relative to the average Australian jobseeker for just one annual humanitarian intake is worth \$484 million in income to those refugees and their families and a \$180 million boost to the Federal budget over ten years, not to mention the significant social and community dividends.’

Centre for Policy Development

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

With strong pre- and post-employment support delivered by specialist job providers, working closely with local business enterprises, many obstacles can be overcome. The strengths that refugees bring can be far better utilised than is presently the case.

The present *jobactive* system is simply not delivering the outcomes for refugees that it should. Many refugees to whom we have spoken bemoaned the inadequate level of personalised assistance they receive from their *jobactive* provider. Often they are expected to apply for jobs for which they are not adequately prepared. This emphasis on compliance serves to undermine the job seeker's confidence and, over time, creates a sense of hopelessness. It undermines self-esteem.

'There is a strong compliance focus in respect of clients meeting their jobactive mutual employment obligations. Due to low levels of English proficiency, literacy and life skills refugee clients are often unable to understand or meet their mutual obligations and as a result their Centrelink payments are routinely suspended. [This] causes considerable stress amongst clients who are already traumatised.'

Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Perth

Many refugees find themselves unable to obtain the government assistance that they require. On many occasions the job they are required to take fails to provide the opportunities for them to use their overseas qualifications, skills and experience. That may be a good outcome if it represents the first step on the Australian employment ladder but it is not acceptable if it becomes their last chance to access targeted support.

Unfortunately, too many refugees find themselves trapped in employment which offers no chance to use their experience and develop their capabilities.

Given the failure of *jobactive*, many refugees continue to rely on family and friends for employment opportunities. This is not unusual. Indeed, it is how many Australians get their start in a new job or career path. The problem is that in the case of refugees their networks are often not well-established and family expectations can further inhibit rather than support them realising their full potential.

Employers are equally frustrated by being sent refugee job seekers who do not yet have the functional level of English or workplace confidence required in their business. This diminishes their perception of the labour market value of refugees and may reinforce negative stereotypes. Many settlement providers are also exasperated about how difficult it is for them to develop an effective working relationship with their local *jobactive* network.

'jobactive providers generally do not bother attending meetings called by settlement service providers unless government representatives attend, causing endless frustration. Across the country, we hear that there continues to be no [or] very little support or interest in [refugee arrivals] by jobactive providers.'

Refugee Council of Australia

For too many *jobactive* providers, refugees represent a relatively small but exceedingly challenging cohort. Existing contracts do not necessarily reward them for the intensive support that is required for their clients, especially for the two-thirds of refugees who are not able to access the most intensive assistance stream (Stream C).

Too often refugees find themselves placed in the 'too hard' basket. Everybody loses.

As noted in *Chapter 2*, the recent Review of employment services highlighted that vulnerable clients in *jobactive* need more assistance. The Review argued these cohorts would benefit from more personalised service that includes tailored pathways to employment, and assessment that recognises

strengths and barriers. It recommended increased investment in those job seekers who need the most help. Our Panel has come to a similar conclusion.

Recognising the need for more specialised career guidance for refugees, in early 2017 the Commonwealth introduced the **Career Pathways Pilot** to help newly arrived humanitarian entrants use their professional or trade skills and qualifications in Australia. Humanitarian entrants who have lived in Australia for five years or less and speak English well, can see a Career Pathway Advisor, who provide career guidance, find employment or training opportunities and help refugees get their overseas qualifications recognised. The Career Pathways Pilot will be evaluated in 2018-19, and its learnings will be of great interest in the context of our recommendations. We are hopeful it will prove a success.

In part because of dissatisfaction with the ability of *jobactive* to support refugee labour market integration, Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory have introduced their own employment initiatives. In Victoria they have introduced the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN). The ACT Government has established a Multicultural Employment Service to assist migrant, refugees and asylum seekers. Most comprehensively, New South Wales has established a Refugee Employment Support Program.

Refugee Employment Support Program

The Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) is a four-year initiative by the NSW Government, managed by the NSW Department of Industry, and delivered by Settlement Services International. RESP addresses the challenges that are experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in finding long term skilled employment opportunities. The RESP will assist up to 6,000 refugees and 1,000 asylum seekers across Western Sydney and Illawarra, the areas where a majority of the refugees settle in New South Wales.

RESP helps participants to develop career plans, and links them to employers, education and training as required, to help participants gain sustainable and skilled employment. Services offered include mentoring, assistance to access language training and other courses, work experience placements, business skills development, employability skills training and support with gaining recognition of overseas skills and qualifications.

There are also an increasing number of smaller, place-based initiatives that have been implemented over recent years to support refugees into the workforce. Often they are organised by social enterprises, some with philanthropic support and often working with the support of the local business community. These small-scale social initiatives generally aim to meet the needs of refugee jobseekers in a particular location. Often they help people with a specific aspect of accessing work, such as obtaining a driver's licence; providing work attire; mentoring and coaching support; connecting refugees to employers; finding internships or providing work experience.

There are many examples of these emerging community-based approaches. **Refugee Talent**, created from a Sydney Techfugee hackathon, matches refugees looking for work with companies offering opportunities. **Career Seekers** is a non-profit organisation supporting Australia's humanitarian entrants into professional careers. **Thrive Refugee Partnership** sees refugees as Australia's next entrepreneurs, offering them education about the Australian business market, microfinance loans and post-loan mentoring. It taps in to the experience of a network of volunteers. Such initiatives should be encouraged by governments. We hope that many may find a place in the trials that we are proposing.

YOUTH

Younger refugee children usually do well in Australian schools and many progress to tertiary education. Other young people from refugee backgrounds who arrive in Australia in their teens, however, can face numerous additional challenges and barriers when it comes to accessing education and transitioning to employment. Their English language acquisition and education may have been interrupted, and they may be poorly educated when they arrive. They may have very limited, if any, Australian work experience. Refugee youth may also lack networks and social capital. Often they do not properly understand the education and employment pathways available in Australia. They may be culturally isolated.

In many instances refugee youth experience overt, covert or systemic racism. They can be made to feel hopeless and resentful. Self-esteem is undermined. At the very least, this leads to a tragic waste of skills and the potential contribution that young refugees, with targeted assistance, could make to the economy. More worryingly a lack of engagement can drive youth to anger and anti-social behaviour. Economic participation is the best investment in integrating young refugees into Australian society.

'Young people from refugee and humanitarian background can face numerous challenges when it comes to transitioning to employment. These include employment services lacking the flexibility, level of assistance and cultural responsiveness to work with this group.'

Centre for Multicultural Youth

There are a number of Commonwealth employment services which target youth. We have already noted the **Youth Transition Support** services, which helps humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants aged 15 to 25 to participate in education and find work. There is also Transition to Work which provides intensive, pre-employment support for young people aged 15 to 21; and the Youth Jobs PaTH initiative which supports young people into work by providing employability skills training, internship opportunities and a financial incentive to employers who hire eligible young job seekers.

The Panel view these services as a successful example of a more integrated approach to economic and social participation. They deliver outcomes for young refugees and other vulnerable migrants by improving workplace readiness, providing access to vocational opportunities and creating strong social connections through education and sports engagement.

Re-engaging Refugee Youth

In 2017, the Migrant Information Centre in Eastern Melbourne (MIC) was concerned about increasing numbers of young refugee men who were disengaged. These young men aligned their identities and values with African American rap culture, including some of the violent aspects of the genre, and started expressing their disappointment about life in Australia. They identified cultural differences, disempowered parents, low self-esteem, unemployment, service gaps, racism, popular media and lack of a sense of belonging as the main contributing factors to their disengagement.

MIC brought together community leaders, the police, local councils and educational institutes to develop collaborative strategies to work with these youth. It designed a flexible program that was delivered by professionals, including police, held where the young people were 'hanging out'. The workers were able to provide information to them about different services and foster stronger connections. Through the program around 70 per cent of the youth were re-engaged with education or employment.

WOMEN

Centre for Policy Development evidence shows that female refugees have lower participation and higher unemployment rates than females overall, with a gap of 20 per cent in participation rates and 17 per cent in unemployment rates. This is also true when compared to male refugees, as female refugees are less likely to be employed and more likely to have family caring responsibilities than male refugees.

Some targeted Commonwealth funded support already exists. The ParentsNext program helps parents of young children plan and prepare for employment by the time their children are in school. This program is beneficial for eligible refugee parents, particularly women, who have little or no previous work experience. Family responsibilities are considered when assisting them to identify their education and employment goals, developing a pathway to achieve their goals and referring them to appropriate local services and activities.

This being said, more employment services need to recognise the specific needs of refugee women, including, but not only, their family caring responsibilities.

ENGLISH LEARNING SERVICES

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to help them learn foundation English language and settlement skills. The 510 hours can be accessed within a five-year period. In addition, refugees can also access a number of AMEP sub-programs – Special Preparatory Program (up to 400 hours), AMEP Extend (up to 490 hours) and **Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training** (up to 200 hours). The AMEP and its sub-programs are intended to help migrants to participate socially and economically in Australian society. AMEP is delivered at around 300 locations across Australia in major cities as well as rural and regional areas. Distance learning tuition is also offered.

In recent times, this program has had unacceptably poor results, with too few participants achieving functional English at the conclusion of the program. There is also significant underutilisation of the program, with most refugees not completing their available hours. We need to understand why such a well-funded and extensive program has failed to deliver.

While AMEP attempts to address some of the demands of caring responsibilities through provision of childcare services, often these are provided at a separate location to that at which AMEP classes take place with limited public transport options available. Furthermore, childcare support may only be available for a few hours to attend AMEP, whereas families will often have to pay for a full day of childcare to access childcare services provided by mainstream providers.

One of the key criticisms from all stakeholders is the lack of flexibility in the program. While classroom-based learning may be highly valuable in some instances, for some people, there is evidence that learning languages in immersive contexts can be more effective. Further, for skilled and professional refugees who have some English proficiency, combining employment and English may garner significantly better results.

Programs such as Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) are viewed more favourably, both by participants and by providers. SLPET is a capped sub-program that assists clients in their transition to work by providing additional hours of tuition and work experience opportunities designed to help them familiarise themselves with Australian work place culture and values. Tuition delivered in SLPET prepares the client to participate in a work experience placement.

Consultations conducted by the 2015 Review of AMEP found that many clients valued SLPET. They thought it helped them to gain work experience and learn English skills in a more applied setting. A later Review of the program commissioned by AMES Australia in 2017, however, found that some

participants were still struggling to find employment even after completing the course. The reasons for their dissatisfaction included not gaining sufficient English by the conclusion of the program, not having the necessary work experience and/or not possessing the necessary support networks in Australia. Participants indicated that they thought they would benefit from longer work experience and that the work experience they were offered was often not in their preferred area of employment.

In recognition of the need for more flexible and practical English language education, Community Hubs Australia was funded in 2018 to deliver a conversational English program as part of the **National Community Hubs Program**. Complementing AMEP, the pilot has three broad program streams:

- provision of English classes (with a focus on conversational English in Hubs);
- development of a volunteer program to further support language development; and
- professional development of Hub leaders to enable them to incorporate English language across all Hub activities (to be provided by AMES Australia in the first half of 2019).

Whilst it is too early for us to give a considered assessment, early indications are that the program may be of significant value to refugees who do not want to attend classroom tuition.

3.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY – TRIALLING PLACE-BASED EMPLOYMENT

As proposed earlier, the Refugee Support Program should bring together settlement services, English language provision and employment services in a single portfolio. This provides an opportunity to undertake new **Place-based Employment Trials (PETs)** which combine those three elements. While there should be flexibility in delivery, it is expected that each should incorporate the following elements.

1. BE PLACE-BASED

The pattern of refugee settlement is quite distinctive. Between 2009-17, over 70 per cent of humanitarian migrants settled in just 25 Local Government Areas. More than half now reside in eight localities (Fairfield, Hume, Liverpool, Brisbane, Greater Dandenong, Logan, Casey and Salisbury). Although this settlement concentration often places significant short-term pressure on communities, it also presents a significant opportunity to improve the coordination of labour market services at the local level.

The PETs we are proposing should be locally based. They should be founded on the principle of collective leadership, in which strategic partnerships are established with a range of locally based organisations. Together that cross-sectoral coalition should share accountabilities for measureable outcomes across identified employment pathways.

As outlined in Section 2.3, there is much to be gained from ensuring that these trials are implemented as soon as possible. That is why, in the period before full implementation of the RSP, there should be a concerted effort to pilot the reimagined program wherever opportunities exist. We believe that current HSP providers should be invited to put forward place-based proposals for a total of up to eight co-designed employment trials.

The HSP provider would be the lead contractor, supported by partnerships with other service providers, community stakeholders, state, territory or local government, business and social enterprises.

Evaluation should be overseen by the Coordinator-General. If the place-based employment trials are successful, the government could proceed with tendering out the RSP on the basis that place-based

employment is included in the suite of offerings. It would be advantageous if existing HSP contracts were extended by a year to allow time for evaluation of the new approach. In that case, the new RSP could be tendered from 2023-24.

'Specialist services provide a unique capability underpinned by their understanding of the client needs and the local architecture, including local demographics, existing services, and infrastructure.'

Migration Council Australia

2. BE CASE-COORDINATED

Currently, a refugee undertakes assessments with a minimum of four providers – HSP, AMEP, *jobactive* and Centrelink. This represents significant duplication of resources. It often sends refugees round in circles. The goal of the new trials will be to free up service delivery time so that providers can focus on the work of implementing individual case plans for their clients, focused on the economic and social aspirations of their refugee clients.

The trials would need to demonstrate personalised, case-by-case coordination. Participants would work with providers to develop a realistic economic participation plan, which can be progressively modified as personal circumstances change. It would identify the strengths that a refugee possesses and help them to navigate the maze of specialist and mainstream services available for their support. In this way, refugees can exercise agency, taking responsibility for directing the government support that can assist them to reach their goals. This, rather than compliance testing, should be the basis of 'mutual obligation'.

Case coordinators should take a facilitative approach, helping refugee clients to make use of the government support that is available. They should be expected to bring to the table an understanding of the complex network of specialist and mainstream services that can be accessed at the Commonwealth and state or territory level and to demonstrate an appreciation of the local labour market.

3. BRING TOGETHER EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Providers will tailor support to the particular circumstances of the individual. Some clients will require help with preparing for the workplace, including preparing resumes and undertaking interview practice. Others will need help with finding job placements, including having the opportunity to gain work experience or undertake internships. For others, particularly for those who have already secured a position on the employment ladder, the focus might be on career development and accessing further training or professional education.

'Funding for settlement service providers should... be sufficiently flexible and adequate... such that [they] are empowered to deliver effective and tailored services to specific individual and community groups without being bound by a set of rigid, pre-determined outcomes.'

Settlement Council of Australia

To encourage employers to provide paid employment, consideration should be given to the option of offering subsidies to employers. Such incentives should only be provided, however, on the basis that the employer commits to providing support for the refugees in return, by allowing them time off work to improve their English or enhance their skills. Subsidies should reflect the real costs employers might face in taking on refugees who are still developing their full workplace capacity.

4. ENGAGE WITH INDUSTRY TO MEET EMPLOYER NEEDS

Overwhelmingly, it is not government that employs refugees – it is the private sector. It is our experience that many businesses have an appetite for employing refugees. This has been confirmed in our consultations with industry bodies. This provides a strong base on which to build.

Industry advocates to whom we have spoken have emphasised that the business community sees manifold benefits to employing refugees. Refugees contribute to creating diverse and inclusive workplaces. Apart from their trade, technical and professional expertise they bring valuable bilingual skills and a global perspective. They tend to have lower turnover ratio and greater loyalty to employers. They help to create new customer markets for the future and to service the needs of an ethnically diverse society. Many employers see refugees as resourceful, determined and highly motivated.

But that goodwill needs to be informed. There are distinctive challenges with refugee cohorts, about which employers need to be aware and receive support to address. As much as refugees must be prepared for the workplace, workplaces must also be made ready to receive the refugees. Even employers who are supportive are often uncertain about how appropriate it is to ask the refugee about their experience or how best to lend support. They – and their employees – need advice.

The problem is that many employers do not fully understand how to do this successfully. Research led by Betina Szkudlarek has shown that Australian employers are often eager to work with refugees but do not know where to begin. Her study of refugee labour integration also identifies that newcomers face a ‘canvas ceiling’ of systematic but invisible barriers when looking for employment. If businesses can become part of the solution through tailor-made support from a specialist provider, these obstacles can be overcome. That will require the provider to assist companies through all stages of recruitment, from finding and screening candidates to the provision of training and workplace mentoring.

Other countries are seeking to address similar challenges. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has developed a 10-point plan to engage with employers in hiring refugees. It emphasises that to ‘welcome and integrate refugees into already established teams requires preparation and everybody – corporate leadership, supervisors, co-workers – need to get on board’. Helping employers in that way would be a key role of the specialised refugee employment provider. It will be crucial to the success of the PETs.

It needs to be emphasised that the pathway to economic integration does not stop at the point at which the refugee is helped to find a job. Post-employment support for both employers and refugees would need to be a crucial element of the service provided. The program design on the PETs should incentivise providers to build strong relationships with local businesses.

In short, it is evident the workplace integration of refugees is considerably enhanced by providing the right support when they are recruited. Preparing the working environment pays dividends. We can learn from experience.

The NSW Government, for example, has gained significant insight from taking on more than 100 recently arrived refugees over the last two years. It has found that a ‘champion’ at the workplace able to mediate between the experiences of the newcomers and existing staff considerably enhances the chances of success: so, too, does providing a ‘buddy’ to give a refugee advice and assistance during the first few weeks of employment. The provision of mentoring and coaching support also increases the chances of success. The results are clear. With such workplace support the great majority of recent refugees taken into the NSW public service have done remarkably well adapting to their first

Australian job. Some have left for other employment or educational opportunities but very few have given up. They have been keen to retain the job that has been provided.

5. Focus on workplace skills assessments

In the past, there has been significant interest in the recognition of overseas qualifications. For many refugees, this represents a vital step towards employment in the refugees' field of choice. For others, however, the cost of transferring qualifications is prohibitive and the recognition is of limited help in entering the Australian job market. Many have skills that may not be certified through formal qualifications.

The recent Deloitte Access Economics research for the Queensland Government suggested that the current process of recognising overseas qualifications is expensive, complex and difficult to navigate, even for service providers. It is made more difficult by cultural and linguistic differences. In many cases it does not actually help job seekers achieve the employment outcome they desire. More needs to be done to better put in place a process that enables refugees to demonstrate their skills and knowledge rather than go through lengthy qualifications processes where it is not likely to progress their career. Employers told the Panel that it is what refugees can demonstrate that they can do that matters, not just having a piece of paper that shows the certification that they have received overseas.

The implementation of the new place-based employment trials should explore strategies that would support refugees to show evidence of their prior learning overseas. In particular, opportunities should be found to help refugees undertake skills assessment in Australia that can appropriately demonstrate their capabilities.

'There is a growing understanding that formal recognition of skills is far from synonymous with utilisation of those skills. The sometimes more intangible recognition of professional experience obtained overseas, and the importance of local networks to secure a first job in Australia is critical for optimising productivity.'

Deloitte Access Economics

6. ENSURE THE PROVISION OF WORKPLACE ENGLISH

English proficiency is a crucial requirement for skilled employment in Australia. Language learning occurs in a variety of settings and the PETS undertaken under the auspices of the Refugee Settlement Program would need to explore flexible ways to help refugees learn workplace English. This might be in the classroom, through work experience, or a combination of both, so that they can improve the English they need as quickly as possible.

Experience has shown that refugees usually begin their work journey in Australia in an entry level job, including those with skills and qualifications. In part this is because of a lack of local experience. The most significant reason, however, is because their level of workplace English is simply not adequate to exhibit the skills that they possess. Refugees who lack English proficiency, but hold a bachelor degree or higher, are often working in occupations that are not commensurate with their education because their level of functional English is inadequate.

PETs would need to be able to show that they can organise the provision of English language training for jobseekers in a manner that prepares them for the workplace and helps them to build their careers once there. Some English may be delivered in the classroom, but in a flexible manner that offers the opportunity for part-time work. Some may be delivered before or after work or, on occasion, at the workplace. For those refugees not yet aspiring to paid employment, more opportunity should be found to provide the level of conversational English they require for social integration.

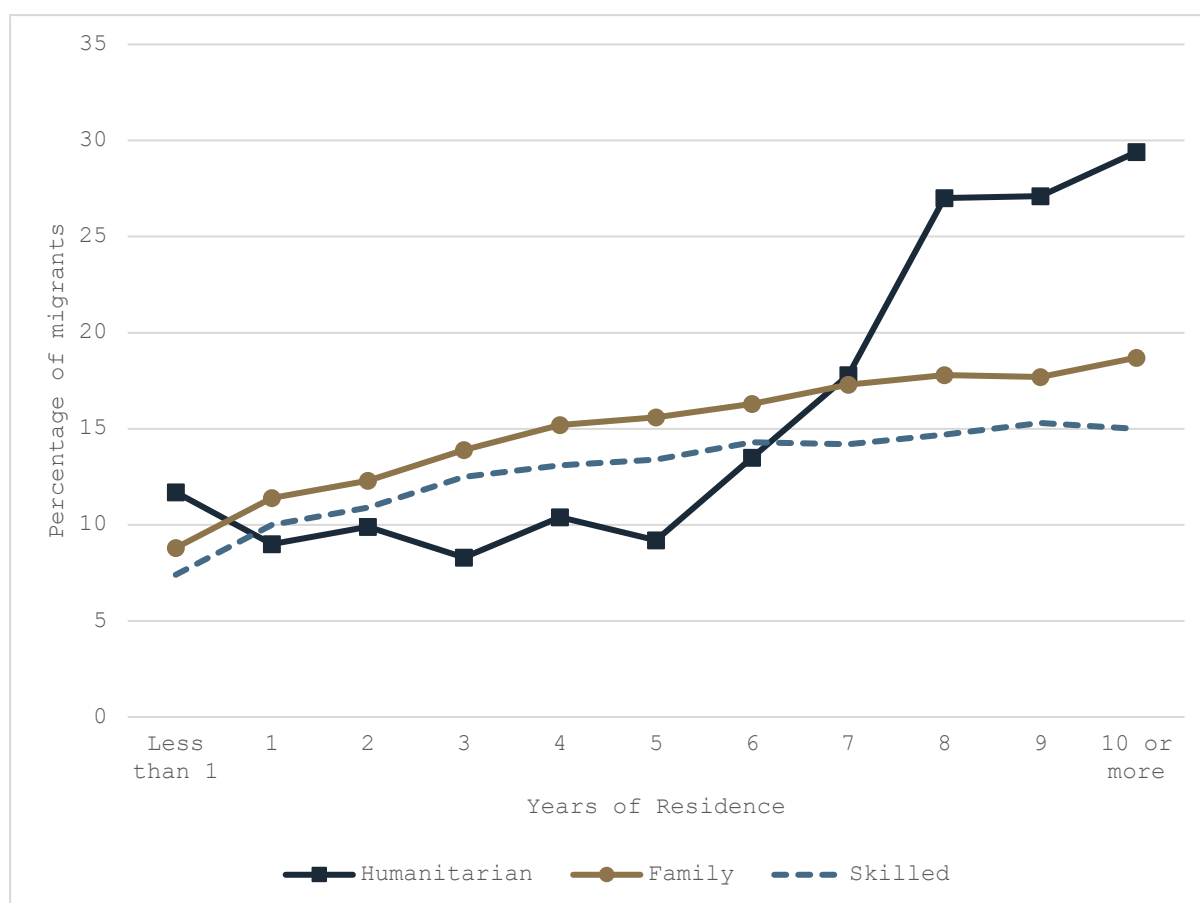
7. ASSIST WITH SETTING UP A SMALL BUSINESS

A significant minority of refugees have run businesses before arriving in Australia. Some refugees have run family enterprises as a way to work around prejudice and discrimination encountered in their home countries. Others have become informal entrepreneurs during their period of displacement. Refugees are natural risk takers. They have a high propensity to want to run businesses in Australia.

In a number of influential publications, Jock Collins has identified the 'refugee entrepreneurship paradox'. He points out that a surprisingly high proportion of refugees bring to Australia experience of running businesses yet find it difficult to gain recognition of their entrepreneurial ability once here.

ABS data tells the story. Of those who had lodged a tax return, the proportion of humanitarian migrants earning their income from their own unincorporated business is higher than for skilled or family migrants, and it increases over time (see Figure 4). It is our belief that the economic benefits to Australia from supporting refugee entrepreneurship would be increased if government is willing to invest more wisely in refugee business acumen upfront. The PETs should seize the opportunity to test that proposition.

Figure 4: Migrant income from own unincorporated business



Source: ABS, 2009-10 Personal Income Tax and Migrants Integrated Dataset (PITMID)

The starting point has to be to identify and overcome the obstacles. Collins emphasises that for all their entrepreneurial attributes and background, refugees face the highest barriers to building businesses in Australia. They usually bring no financial capital to establish a business and have no credit history, no assets to mortgage and no security. They have few social networks or established family and friends from whom to borrow. They have little knowledge of the regulatory red-tape that all small business start-ups have to work through in Australia. Their human capital is not recognised.

For over 30 years the Commonwealth Government's, New Business Assistance within the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) has been helping people not in work or study to start their own business. The focus on business planning and training, however, is not ideally suited to refugees who have already run their own enterprises. It is certainly not targeted to those who have to overcome the barriers faced by migrants. To assist more refugees and migrants to start their own business, a Highly Disadvantaged Trial is now underway to give NEIS providers greater flexibility to tailor services to their needs. The Coordinator-General should be involved in the evaluation of this trial to ensure that more of these targeted interventions, tailored to the particular circumstances of individual refugees, take place.

8. ENSURE NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND

The proposed Refugee Settlement Program is intended to focus far more directly on labour market integration. But it is also intended to maintain a wider ambit. The PETs are intended to provide options which fit with the objectives of all adult refugees, not just the near work-ready. They need to support the economic and social integration of young people, full time parents, older refugees and women. Their goals may be more about social integration and English learning at the outset, but nevertheless a clear plan must be developed with a view to achieving the form of economic or social participation to which they aspire. Plans may change over time. For example, many refugee women never aspired to study or employment in their country of origin: in Australia they may discover the chance.

Service delivery that includes tailoring English provision, facilitating access to volunteering, training, and job opportunities and meeting the child care needs of parents should be explored.

As previously discussed above, initiatives like the Community Hubs program provide a good soft entry point for refugees to build confidence, acquire English and explore possibilities in a new country. This program is mainly targeted at migrant and refugee women and their children. The Hubs use a place-based model that tailors services and utilises familiar community facilities, such as schools. They deliver a wide range of services, including conversational English-language, parenting and family assistance, homework support, training and education, pre-school and playgroup activities and nutrition, health and wellbeing programs. The Hubs facilitate access to existing Commonwealth, state or territory and local government services including medical and employment services and community services.

'Hubs demonstrate the importance of linking people to services in a way that takes their life stages into account ... For women who arrive in Australia with young children – or who have children soon after they arrive – employment and English services related to employment may not be immediately relevant – and indeed, may not be relevant ... But parenting brings other opportunities for learning language, and skills, and community connections ...'

Community Hubs Australia

The PETs should be cognisant of these varying objectives. Support for youth could be modelled on the successful **Youth Transition Support** pilot, delivered by the Department of Social Services. This initiative not only addresses employment and education outcomes, but works to improve community participation and the networks of young people. It is delivered through organisations such as Access Community Services, Multicultural Development Australia, the Community Migrant Resource Centre, the Lebanese Muslim Association, Foundation House, and the Brotherhood of St Laurence (with advice and guidance provided by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network). The approach focuses on helping those who are the most vulnerable.

CHAPTER 4: IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUTCOMES

Recommendation 4

To develop a results-based performance regime that is embedded across programs, and to measure success, ensure accountability, and improve planning, program design and service delivery, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) improve the collection and coordination of de-identified information across government agencies;
- b) capture greater information from refugees before they arrive in Australia to inform better case coordination;
- c) with the informed consent of refugees, enhance case coordination by allowing real time sharing of information on their personal circumstances with government and community service providers; and
- d) utilise technology to provide a personal digital record for refugees which would reduce the need for duplication and streamline their relationships with government agencies and service providers.



4.1 OVERVIEW

Australia has a significant investment in the settlement of refugees. It collects a lot of information about them during the settlement process (see Figure 5 overleaf). Yet, despite extensive reporting and data collection, the outcomes for refugees in Australia are unclear. As we found, it is not yet possible to quantify with accuracy the extent to which the Commonwealth Government's significant expenditure on a wide range of settlement services is effective or, more importantly, to realise the social, economic and financial returns on that investment.

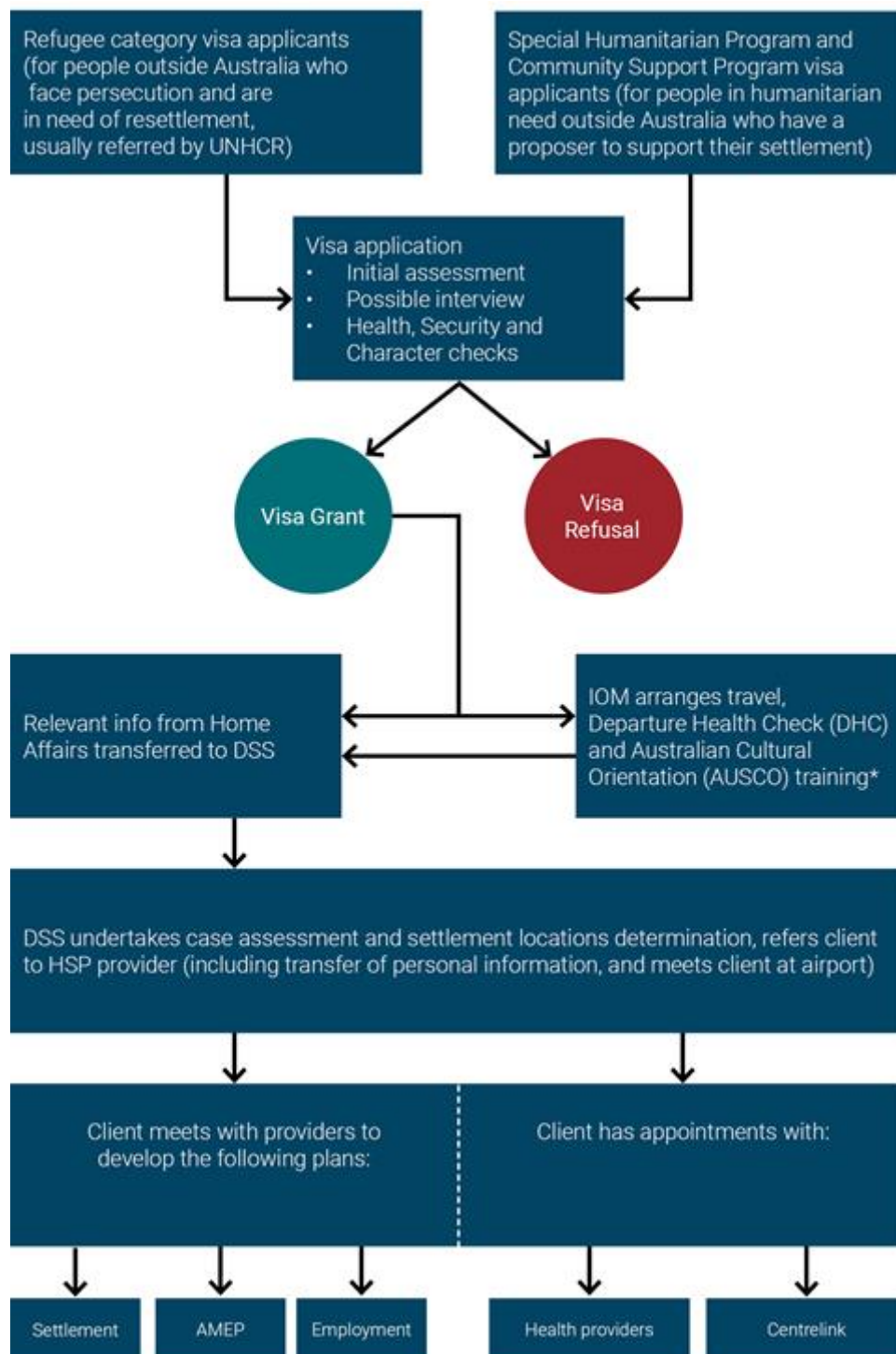
There is an urgent need to move to a results-driven approach embedded across the agencies delivering programs so that the national investment in the social and economic participation of refugees is able to be clearly articulated. An understanding of performance outcomes will enable both policy makers and service deliverers to calibrate their work to ensure activities lead to better outcomes for refugees and for Australia. It will improve public accountability. It will underpin effective evaluation.

There is an equally significant problem at present. Much data is captured by different Commonwealth agencies at different times for different purposes but it is often not shared. This weakens the effective planning that lies at the heart of the improved coordination that we have emphasised in the previous chapters. It undermines effective integration of policy design and service delivery. Refugees are the real losers.

4.2 CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Information is collected throughout the pre-arrival settlement process. De-identified data is crucial for planning purposes and improving system-wide results. There is currently a lack of centralised coordination and there is no clear understanding of what population level data on refugees is being collected by whom and for what purpose. Even in cases where useful information is available, it is not being shared across governments or with service providers in a timely fashion.

Figure 5: Process of Data Collection



More importantly, because there is little transparency about what is being collected, there is not always a clear picture of how it could be utilised to measure performance outcomes. We know that results under some programs, such as AMEP, are poor. But that should not be the end of the story. It is all very well having statistics showing how few refugees are completing their English language

education satisfactorily, but there needs to be an understanding of why this is happening and how to track which policy interventions have the most positive or negative impacts.

This is why we believe that a key role of the Coordinator-General should be to oversee the development of a rigorous, results-driven framework that would rationalise the collection and use of data across agencies and governments.

Currently, HSP providers spend a great deal of their time on activity reporting when there is no conclusive evidence that it is improving outcomes. If we can target reporting requirements to the outcome level, it would allow providers to free up more resources and spend more time doing the work that makes a difference in the lives of refugees. Performance-based accountability needs to be based on collecting and sharing information on results (and the factors which contribute to them).

‘Our analysis suggests that maturing the HSP program by shifting from individualised activity based reporting to an outcomes approach, services like AMES Australia would gain up to 25 per cent efficiency allowing us to redirect resources to direct client support and capacity building activities.’

AMES Australia

Equally important is the collection of personalised data to inform case coordination and settlement plans. At the moment, refugees have to repeat their stories to each service provider. This can be traumatic, and for some refugees, the repetition can make them feel like they are being ‘tested’. There has to be a better way of managing and sharing refugees’ personal data, with their agreement.

4.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY – A RESULTS-DRIVEN APPROACH

Results-driven framework

Although our settlement programs are largely successful in achieving immediate outcomes for refugees, we discerned considerable uncertainty from providers about the success of long-term settlement efforts.

With the implementation of the Refugee Settlement Program and better coordination with other specialised and mainstream services, there is an opportunity to focus more on longer-term outcomes and less on inputs and short-term outputs. Governments need to be able to determine how much refugees benefit from available services using a results-driven framework approach.

In our view, as a matter of priority, the Coordinator-General should oversee the development of a rigorous measurement framework to assess settlement, employment and integration outcomes, using results-driven accountability principles. Similar to those developed in the United States and successfully used in New Zealand and elsewhere in Australia, results-driven accountability can drive action to improve the quality of life of refugees. It can also be used to improve the performance of programs by planning, implementing and measuring outcomes against government objectives.

In the settlement context, this approach would involve two levels of accountability:

Population accountability – multiple stakeholders share accountability for achieving outcomes or results in relation to the wellbeing of whole populations, such as particular communities, cities, or regions.

Performance accountability – where a service provider holds accountability for achieving outcomes or results for the wellbeing of a refugee.

By adopting this approach, service providers would be expected to identify the results and performance indicators to which they make the most direct contributions, with these results contributing to population results. It would allow the Commonwealth to determine the impact that government programs make to the lives of refugees. Consideration should be given to setting targets that drive improved performance: for example, by establishing what percentage of refugees one would expect to have functional English at the conclusion of their language program, or what percentage of refugee jobseekers should be able to find work as a consequence of government interventions.

Results based accountability

Multicultural Development Australia (MDA) is implementing a results based accountability approach across five local area collaboratives in Queensland. This work was inspired by the outcomes measurement model used by the Queensland Department of Education, Early Childhood and Community Engagement. They have successfully implemented a Results Based Accountability and reduced 300 performance measures down to a handful of meaningful outcome performance measures and, most importantly, improved early childhood outcomes. The Department mentored and supported MDA to adopt outcomes focused thinking and practice.

MDA is using a data-driven, ends to means process to identify the long-term outcome first, set the baselines, and work backwards to implement solutions to best meet targets. Its vision is to one day report on significantly improved outcomes in refugee settlement.

IMPROVED PLANNING FOR THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

In the past, the Commonwealth has committed to multi-year planning in relation to some elements of the composition of the Humanitarian Program. With this in mind, there is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to adopt multi-year advance planning for the whole Humanitarian Program, while necessarily maintaining the ability to review the composition annually to respond flexibly to offshore refugee fluctuations, and to prioritise entry of the most vulnerable refugees. This would best be done in cooperation with state and territory governments. Such planning would allow all levels of government, service providers and the community to appropriately prepare for arrivals, particularly in regional areas where some services are not readily available. At a minimum, this multi-year process should include annual estimates of overall program numbers and numbers by visa subclass and nationality, including for the new complementary pathways recommended in *Chapter 6*.

The planning estimates should then be communicated to Commonwealth agencies and service providers and cascaded down to local stakeholders as appropriate. The multi-year planning process should enable a more strategic and coordinated approach to settlement planning. It should improve consultations with Commonwealth, state and territory agencies, non-government organisations and local communities to ensure that there is capacity in the sector to meet the specific needs of the cohorts identified. This approach would mitigate the risk of overburdening services and squandering the goodwill of communities who want to support refugees.

The multi-year planning process should also be supported by annual plans with earlier, more comprehensive data on the pipeline of refugee applications. It is imperative that this information is shared faster across relevant Commonwealth agencies, with state, territory and local governments, and with settlement service providers. It is hard for state and territory governments or community-based organisations to plan effectively for refugee arrivals if the information it receives is sparse or late. Too often that is the situation that prevails at the moment, putting particular pressure on areas such as interpreter services.

BETTER COLLECTION AND USE OF GOVERNMENT DATA

There is a multitude of government and non-government data sets which provide insight into the lives of refugees in Australia. This includes census data, specifically, the Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset, and the **Building a New Life in Australia** longitudinal study.

The Coordinator-General, possibly in conjunction with the National Data Commissioner, should review the refugee data currently being collected by government agencies to ensure it is well-targeted, adequate and easily accessible. Statistical information, combined with the richer data that would come from the accountability framework outlined above, can provide the evidence base to inform more effective and innovative program design. By helping to understand better the characteristics of individual refugees (at the micro level) and their collective journey in Australia (at the macro level), it should prove possible to improve the efficiency by which public funding is allocated, and to measure better the investment returns on government expenditure.

IMPROVED INDIVIDUAL CASE MANAGEMENT

As emphasised above, a fundamental feature of our proposed Refugee Settlement Program is the streamlining of case coordination, through holistic assessments and the use of a personal digital record. The Commonwealth Government should minimise the number of initial contact points for refugee arrivals and encourage comprehensive information gathering that, with the agreement of refugees, can be shared across the agencies and organisations that support them. The goal should be to collect the data at a single source, update it as necessary, and share it with all those who need to use it.

Privacy is important. Often, however, that goal can actually worsen the experience and outcomes of those who are supported by government programs, so it is with refugees.

We recommend investment in the development of a digital record for Refugee Settlement Program participants. The initial collection of personal information should be based on a comprehensive assessment of their background and abilities, identifying their immediate needs and their strengths. Refugees would take control of this record. It would enable them to share personal information with the Government departments and service providers that assist them. This would alleviate much of the burden placed on refugees to repeat their story. It would make for more efficient engagement with service providers.

The process of collecting the personal information of refugees should begin offshore, after the grant of visas but prior to arrival in Australia. It has been suggested that this should at least include information at the individual/family level relating to skills, education level, work history, talents, goals, and prior living experiences, in addition to the current health assessment. With the informed consent of individuals, this information would be added to the refugee's digital record. To alleviate any privacy concerns and contribute to refugee ownership of their plans, the information contained in the digital record should be held and controlled by the refugee. They can identify the agencies and organisations with whom they are willing to share it. Prior to arrival in Australia, service providers (including government agencies) could seek access to the digital record. It could also be provided to other specialists, such as health professionals.

'Collecting data on refugee skills and capabilities is fundamental to making good decisions about settlement location, wraparound services and employment/training options. Yet generally the data collected on refugees focusses on vulnerabilities and needs, rather than strengths. This is a missed opportunity. We should be aiming to support refugees to use their skills and talents as quickly as possible on arrival in Australia. To do this, we need to know well ahead of arrival what their skills and talents are.'

Talent Beyond Boundaries

CHAPTER 5: PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL RESETTLEMENT

Recommendation 5

In order to support and assist regional communities to develop locally-led approaches to attract and retain refugees, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) promote the benefits of regional settlement and encourage communities to explore its potential;
- b) oversee a national strategy that supports regional settlement opportunities; and
- c) facilitate stronger planning, coordination and evaluation of regional settlement by bringing together all levels of government, community, and business.



5.1 OVERVIEW

Australia is one of the world's most urbanised countries. About 80 per cent of Australians live in urban and regional cities of over 80,000 people. Indeed around 10 million of the country's 25 million people live in just two cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Most migrants, and an even higher proportion of refugees, settle in metropolitan centres.

The trend towards urbanisation has resulted in a loss of working age people in many Australian regional towns, which has hindered their opportunities for economic growth. According to John Daley of the Grattan Institute, government efforts have had limited effect in countering this trend.

In recent years, undeterred by such pessimism, a growing number of regional and rural communities have sought to take matters into their own hands. They have demonstrated a strong willingness to try to attract and retain the population necessary for their economic and social prosperity. That impulse, along with a genuine sense of humanitarianism, helps to explain why many regional towns have sought to welcome refugees and their families.

By actively pursuing resettlement options for refugees, regional cities and towns hope to fill skill shortages and create new economic opportunities, while promoting their population growth and ensuring their sustainability. At the same time, refugees are offered the opportunity to settle in communities which can provide the economic opportunities, social support and quality of life that align with their aspirations. Regional settlement of refugees has the potential to become a win-win initiative.

When considering regional settlement of refugees, it is relevant to note that there are two broad categories: primary settlement, by which the regional centre becomes the refugees' first home in

Australia; and secondary settlement, when the refugees have initially settled elsewhere (usually in a capital city) and then moved to a regional area some time (often some years) later.

We are of the view that primary settlement of refugees in regional areas can be complemented by secondary settlement. We see this as an area with enormous potential for growth, and that there exist untapped opportunities for communities to exercise their goodwill. For Australia to fully realise the potential benefits of regional resettlement, however, greater effort is required at the Commonwealth level. There is a need to work closely with state, territory and local governments to promote and facilitate regional settlement opportunities. Most importantly, there needs to be a concerted effort to work in partnership with local and refugee community leaders who would deliver help and organise support on the ground.

'Encouraging migrants to move to regional Australia is often portrayed as a 'win-win' for receiving communities, local economies, and migrants themselves. Migration has the potential to revitalise regional towns and bring new life to local economies, adding cultural richness and diversity to regional communities, while easing pressure on urban infrastructure and services.'

Welcoming Australia

5.2 CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Primary settlement of refugees currently occurs in 25 designated settlement locations across Australia, 19 of which are considered regional locations, though some of these are the capital cities of less populous states and territories, such as Hobart or Darwin. Decisions about initial destinations for refugees entering Australia are made by the Department of Social Services, taking into account the refugees' stated preferences.

Although the proportion of refugees being settled in regional areas is slowly growing, the vast majority of refugees are initially settled in major capital cities in part due to the refugees' family or social ties. Since 2014-15, more than 70 per cent of refugees have been settled in metropolitan areas.

This has some advantages. Major cities are able to provide valuable support to newly arrived refugees because of the ready availability of a broad range of specialist and mainstream services. Over time, however, some refugees come to realise that city living does not match their economic and/or social aspirations. Regional communities provide a valuable alternative for such refugees to explore, once their initial settlement needs have been met.

This is particularly the case for refugees who came from rural backgrounds or have been used to living in villages or small towns. Relocating to a regional area might offer them more attractive employment and lifestyle options, together with the opportunity to connect to a welcoming community. This being said, regional settlement should not only be considered an option for refugees with past connections to rural life. Regional communities need skilled workers too; and refugees, just like other Australians, may decide that a 'tree-change' is attractive.

For regional communities, refugees contribute to their long-term sustainability. They help to fill labour shortages and stimulate the local economy, alleviate population decline and revitalise local services. Refugees can also enrich the social and cultural diversity of communities.

In the past decade, a number of regional towns across Australia have been revitalised by the resettlement of refugees. The economic and social benefits of sustained resettlement of Karen refugees in Nhill and Bendigo are persuasive examples.

Recent reports by AMES and Deloitte Access Economics have found that the successful resettlement of 160 Karen refugees and migrants in Nhill is estimated to have contributed \$41.5 million to the local economy, and 70.5 full-time equivalent positions in five years. In just five years, the Karen community comprised approximately 10 per cent of the Nhill population, including significant numbers of working age adults and families with young children.

Likewise, in Bendigo, the resettlement of the Karen population is estimated to have created a \$67.1 million benefit over a 10 year period, with 177 full-time equivalent positions added to the economy. Compared to Melbourne, Bendigo has an affordable housing market and there are good employment opportunities. As a result, many of the young people moving to Bendigo have been able to purchase a property and start a family.

We have been left in no doubt that there is an unmet appetite for greater numbers of refugees to live in regional and rural Australia. We do not wish, however, to suggest that regional settlement represents an easy panacea. Community organisations have told us that if the considerable potential is to be realised, careful planning and coordination are required. This is necessary to ensure that regional centres are able to attract and retain refugees by offering what they most need to reach their goals. It would also help create a community that is welcoming and culturally responsive.

We have received submissions from several regional organisations that express concern that these elements are not yet in place. They identified the fact that there is still no coordinated approach to the settlement of refugees in regional communities. They argued strongly for more government support to encourage refugees to settle in regional Australia, and to help ensure that communities are able to provide the services that are necessary to make settlement a long-term success.

'Adding regional and rural refugee settlement will add further complexity unless there is a deliberate effort to apply better data (including regional development data), funding models and coordination mechanisms.'

Rural Australians for Refugees

This is not to say that positive things are not happening across Australia to increase regional settlement. We are encouraged to see that a number of initiatives have been developed that aim to encourage and support communities to welcome refugees (and other migrants). Many are targeted at local government.

The Regional Australia Institute's *Steps to Settlement Success* is one such initiative. It is an information toolkit for rural and regional communities seeking to settle migrants locally. It helps to answer many of the questions that towns have as they consider whether they can attract refugees.

Another is the *Welcoming Cities* initiative. Based upon a growing network of 135 municipalities around the world, the movement promotes knowledge sharing, celebrates success and develops partnerships. The recently released *Australian Standard for Welcoming Cities* sets a National Standard by which local governments can benchmark their cultural diversity and inclusion policies and practices, and to assess progress over time.

Resettlement of Refugees in Mount Gambier

Mount Gambier was one of three sites selected by the Commonwealth Government to pilot the regional settlement of refugees. In 2007 and 2008, 10 families from Myanmar were welcomed into the community. While their initial settlement was positive, many of the refugees initially struggled to find employment. It looked like the trial might fail.

Consequently, the Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre worked in partnership with business to identify suitable employment opportunities, improve employment-related skills of the humanitarian entrants, and develop a targeted program that would match job seekers with suitable employment. Support from community networks and the work of volunteers was rated as two of the most critical factors in securing training and employment opportunities and ensuring a high retention rate of new arrivals.

The Refugee Welcome Zones instigated by the Refugee Council of Australia also support local engagement. The Zones commit local governments to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding their human rights, demonstrating compassion and enhancing cultural and religious diversity. Presently 160 local government authorities and the Australian Capital Territory Government have declared themselves Refugee Welcome Zones.

All of these initiatives are useful. They share the goal of fostering cultural inclusion and social harmony by equipping councils with the tools and resources to better support and integrate refugee communities into their local area. The problem is that they are happening in isolation, rather than as part of a coordinated strategy.

5.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

One thing is clear: as with so much of refugee settlement, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to refugee settlement in regional communities does not work. Rather, it is vital to invest in genuine cross-jurisdictional and cross-sectoral partnerships that enable decisions about the future of refugee settlement in regional communities to be driven by local people and organisations. Past experience shows that successful regional resettlement is often driven by individuals of goodwill who themselves initiate the links between local government, business and community organisations and service providers. Until now, much of the success of regional settlement has been 'hero-driven'.

That being said, Commonwealth, state and territory governments have an important role to play. We are convinced that in order for communities to successfully settle more refugees, they will require the coordinated support of all three levels of government. Governments can contribute in a variety of ways, including through data provision, capacity building and financial assistance. This can help to organise an effective regional settlement network. What happens on the ground, however, must continue to be initiated, coordinated and delivered at a local level with the support of governments.

There is also an important role for national leadership to ensure that the benefits of regional settlement are fully realised. Attracting newcomers to regional areas requires strong public messaging. A positive but realistic image of regional communities may help refugees to consider regional areas as places of opportunity and address any misconceptions about life in regional areas. It may also help persuade regional communities that refugees can be an important part of their future. The Regional Australia Institute believes that endorsements of the economic and social contributions that refugees make may encourage more regional communities to investigate the mutual benefits of regional resettlement.

‘Expand the regional settlement network by supporting more communities to create community-led migration initiatives that can support humanitarian settlement as well as other migration.’

Regional Australia Institute

THE ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR-GENERAL

With the recent commitment of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to improve population planning and management in Australia, it is evident that all governments now share an interest and responsibility in boosting regional settlement.

To ensure local efforts for enhancing regional settlement have every chance to succeed, the Coordinator-General could play a valuable facilitative planning role at a national level. In addition, the Coordinator-General could also develop targeted information and awareness campaigns to refugees and regional communities. The creation of an online hub would also allow regional communities to market the economic and social opportunities of resettling in their regions. More broadly, as part of their role in improving refugee settlement policy coordination across all levels of government, the Coordinator-General should oversee a national strategy for expanding regional settlement opportunities in a strategic manner.

In considering key priority areas for the strategy, the Coordinator-General should consider, but not be limited to:

- endorsing best-practice, place-based planning principles for regional communities;
- establishing mechanisms to connect regional opportunities with potential refugee cohorts;
- improving coordination of existing regional-based settlement programs; and
- developing new programs to support regional communities in building their capacity to settle refugees.

The Coordinator-General could fulfil this role by calling for expressions of interest (EOIs) from regional communities that want to be considered and assessed as primary or secondary settlement locations, as part of a place-based approach to supporting regional refugee migration. Acknowledging the importance of whole-of-community approaches to regional settlement, EOIs would need to demonstrate local commitment and support.

As part of developing an EOI, regional communities could be asked to demonstrate consideration of a range of key factors, including:

- **a focus on social and cultural inclusion** to ensure that all refugees have the opportunity to participate in the wider community, feel safe and be able to stay connected with their own ethnic and religious community;
- **an assessment of the community’s infrastructure and services** to determine what changes may be required to meet the needs of refugees;
- **initiatives to promote the benefits and opportunities for refugees relocating to the regions**, building on locally led initiatives and discussion with community proponents;
- **alignment with regional development strategies**, including through consultation with their Regional Development Australia Committee, to ensure that local employers can harness the labour market strengths that refugees can offer; and
- **input from local stakeholders**, including politicians, service providers, employers, health professionals, educational institutions, community groups, advocacy organisations, the local

indigenous community and – too often forgotten – refugees already resident in the community.

Successful EOIs would be progressed for discussion with Commonwealth and state or territory governments, with the possibility of attracting public funding and resources to build the regional communities' capacity to attract and retain refugees. Modest funding should be allocated to support planning and allow refugees currently residing in major urban centres to visit suitable regional communities, and to assess for themselves if relocation would be an attractive option.

The Commonwealth Government already uses a range of incentives to attract and retain permanent and temporary migrants to regional Australia, including working holidaymakers, international students and skilled visa entrants. The Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) provides an incentive for holders to work or study in a SHEV regional area in order to meet pathway requirements.

There may be other incentives that could be persuasive to refugees to settle in regional communities, such as expedited family reunion. Whilst we do not at this stage recommend such an approach, we do believe that it is worthy of careful consideration.

Welcoming Communities Pilot, New Zealand

Welcoming Communities commenced in mid-2017 as a two-year pilot that supports and encourages councils and their communities to take a greater role in ensuring newcomers are welcomed into their community.

Each Welcoming Communities pilot region develops a welcoming plan detailing each council's objectives, the actions that need to be undertaken, and the outcomes they wish to achieve. These objectives focus on increasing participation and engagement and supporting collaboration. There is an emphasis on strengthening and building relationships between newcomers and local communities, improved access to resources and services, and improved communication and leadership.

Through the plans, councils and their communities work towards meeting the Welcoming Communities Standards in order to become accredited as a 'Welcoming Community'.

CHAPTER 6: ADDING COMPLEMENTARY VISA PATHWAYS

Recommendation 6

In addition to the current Humanitarian Program, the Commonwealth Government should introduce three complementary permanent visa pathways for refugees, based on a shared cost model:

- a) a place-based community sponsored visa which harnesses the collective strength of whole communities partnering with their local governments, service providers and community organisations;
- b) an employer sponsored visa offering immediate employment opportunities to suitably skilled refugees; and
- c) a university sponsored visa offering post-graduate or post-doctoral places to academically qualified refugees.



6.1 OVERVIEW

We have already emphasised Australia's proud record in contributing to the protection of the world's most vulnerable refugees through the provision of resettlement places.

Communities and community based organisations, businesses and universities have shown significant willingness to help refugees make homes in Australia. Unfortunately, within the current Humanitarian Program, there are limited opportunities for potential sponsors.

Complementary visa pathways are a means to capture this interest. If we can do this successfully, we can provide settlement opportunities to refugees over and above traditional humanitarian routes. Such programs have had success internationally and are supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. We think that they can work here.

In an Australian context, establishing complementary visa pathways could act as a way to harness the goodwill of Australians towards refugees, without compromising our current commitments. There would be many benefits both for Australia and for the refugees selected through these additional means.

There are many skilled and highly educated individuals awaiting humanitarian resettlement. As emphasised throughout this report, even though refugees have been selected solely on the basis of vulnerability, they have made major contributions to Australia's social fabric and economic growth. With better coordination of government efforts they can do even better in the future. Providing additional, targeted visa pathways for employers who are able to get skilled and professional refugees working immediately, and for universities to attract highly educated refugees to academic research, would provide immediate economic benefits over and above the current program.

Properly functioning visa sponsorships can also tap into the community's desire to be involved. It can build on the momentum of current regional initiatives and open up more opportunities, not just in regional areas but across the nation. Communities can be given opportunities to play an active role in settling refugees.

Complementary visa pathways are also likely to aid faster integration. They would ensure that refugees are provided with connections to supportive communities, employers and educational institutions from the day of their arrival. We recommend that this sponsorship be based on a cost-share model, which combines the government service provision and some settlement services with sponsor provision of other supports.

The Panel is of the strong opinion that the principle of additionality must not be compromised: the proposed visa pathways should complement existing programs. As generous as our Humanitarian Program is, there remains a significant gap between the need for resettlement places and the number available. Shifting global priorities and increased humanitarian need mean the imperative to provide more resettlement places is greater than ever before (see Appendix D – Overview of the Humanitarian Program). As such, complementary pathways can operate as a means of increasing Australia's humanitarian intake, in a manner which enhances opportunities for economic and social integration.

'We urge the review panel ... to emphasise at the outset that the purpose of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program is to protect the most vulnerable. ... It is important that, in trying to improve settlement outcomes, we do not undermine this central purpose by selecting refugees for their 'settlement potential.'

Refugee Council of Australia

6.2 STATE OF PLAY

The Government has already considered and implemented the **Community Support Program (CSP)**. This is a private sponsorship program, initially piloted as the Community Proposal Pilot (CPP). The CSP is designed to provide a sustainable model of private sponsorship for refugees that complements existing humanitarian resettlement pathways. It was intended to enable Australian individuals, community organisations and businesses to propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and support them to settle in Australia.

Priority in the CSP is given to refugees with good settlement prospects who are between 18 and 50 years of age and who have an offer of employment or personal attributes that would enable them to become financially self-sufficient within 12 months of arrival. Additional priority is given to applicants willing to live and work in regional Australia.

CSP applications have been able to be lodged since March 2018, following the appointment of 12 Approved Proposing Organisations (APOs). APOs are organisations that have entered into a deed of agreement with the Department of Home Affairs. They are responsible for liaising with their local communities to identify people to propose for a humanitarian visa. They coordinate screening of applicants and Australian supporters, link refugees to employment opportunities, coordinate the visa application process and provide assurance over the provision of settlement services.

APOs are also required to oversee support of successful applicants for up to 12 months after arrival. They may work independently or with the assistance of a supporting community organisation.

They also liaise with reputable and suitable businesses and employers to identify relevant employment opportunities for prospective applicants in order to increase their financial independence within the first 12 months following arrival.

We, like many of the organisations to whom we spoke, believe that the establishment of the CSP was a welcome initiative. It has good intentions and reflects the expressed motivation of the Commonwealth Government and Australian communities to partner in providing resettlement opportunities for refugees.

Nevertheless we have heard considerable doubts about whether the new CSP can shift the dial. Concerns have been expressed that the cost of the program – and, in particular, the visa application charges – are too high. It distorts the intent of the program. Smaller and regional communities do not have the resources to meet the requirements of the program. As a result, the program has in effect become a refugee family reunification stream.

There has also been criticism of the lack of additionality. The fact that refugees under the CSP are included in the existing ceiling for the Humanitarian Program means that it is often perceived more as a cost-shifting measure than as a means of expanding the number of humanitarian entrants accepted. Partly as a consequence, there has not as yet been sufficient engagement from community organisations and take up by employers has been slow.

We think that it is possible, in part learning from this early experience, to design a better, community-focused sponsorship program.

'A sub category of the Humanitarian Program – the Community Sponsorship Program (CSP) – misses out in its failure to engage the goodwill and contribution of community players. Country Australia has a long-held tradition of good neighbourliness. Country people have participated in sponsorship programs in the past and ...there is considerable potential to ignite a groundswell of more general community support through a revised CSP.'

Rural Australians for Refugees

Quite separate to the CSP, there are some other non-traditional pathways through which refugees come to Australia. Small numbers of refugees are granted skilled or student visas. Currently there is no way of establishing how many enter this way. And those that do are excluded from targeted settlement support. We believe that there is a better way of sponsoring refugee skilled workers and students.

6.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY – COMPLEMENTARY VISA PATHWAYS

There is significant appetite amongst diverse groups within the Australian community to play an active role in supporting refugees to come to Australia. Many community organisations and employers refer favourably to overseas experience from which we can learn. In particular, there is clear evidence from Canada about the additional contribution community engagement can make.

Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in Canada

Since it began in 1978, iterations of the *Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program* have been used to successfully resettle approximately 300,000 refugees in Canada. The program allows Canadians to get involved in refugee resettlement and offer protection places over and above what is provided directly by the government.

Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) are sponsored by permanent residents or Canadian citizens through:

- a Sponsorship Agreement Holder that is an incorporated organisation that has signed a sponsorship agreement for the purpose of submitting sponsorship cases on a regular basis;
- a group of five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents that will sponsor one or a few cases and will act as guarantors; or
- Community Sponsors with the intention to sponsor only once or twice.

Sponsors provide financial support or a combination of financial and in-kind supports to the PSR for twelve months after arrival, or until refugees are able to support themselves.

After careful consideration, we believe that there would be benefit in introducing three new complementary and hybrid visas. The first would enable communities to sponsor a refugee or refugee family. The second would encourage employers to identify and sponsor a suitably skilled refugee for a designated position in their workplace. The third would be available to universities to attract postgraduate or post-doctoral students, or appoint academic staff.

We have identified six elements which should be considered in the design of the new visa pathways:

- refugees entering through these pathways would first and foremost have an identified need for humanitarian resettlement;
- sponsored entrants and their dependent family members would be granted permanent visas;
- the complementary visas would be in addition to the number of visas granted within the Humanitarian Program, not counted within it;
- each of the complementary visa pathways would require sponsors to:
 - a. demonstrate how they are going to link to relevant services and engage the support of the community;
 - b. contribute to some settlement related costs; and
 - c. play an active role in supporting their sponsored refugees to integrate into Australian life;
- APOs, or similar expert bodies, should continue to be responsible for identifying and screening refugee applicants, working with receiving organisations or communities and overseeing the support provided; and
- consistent with the Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202), and recognising that nominating APOs do much of the vetting of applications, there should be no visa application charge.

It is envisaged that these complementary pathways would initially have a modest intake. As their success is demonstrated, however, it would be easy to increase numbers. Government agencies and service providers have already demonstrated their capacity to handle an increased caseload when they were called upon to accommodate the additional intake of refugees from Syria in 2016-17.

These three complementary visa pathways add value in many ways, not least by enabling Australia to assist more refugees than can be accommodated in the current Humanitarian Program. There are also other profound benefits. The new visa pathways would provide a greater opportunity for communities to play an active role in supporting refugees. The visas would help:

- create stronger connections between refugees and the wider community;
- enable employers to fill vacancies, while at the same time reaping the benefits of building a diverse workforce;
- build expertise within academic institutions; and
- streamline pathways for refugees with in-demand skills or research capacity.

Whilst premised on a cost-sharing basis, the new complementary visa pathways must not diminish government responsibility to provide a safety net of support. It is not intended to transfer full responsibility from the state to the community.

Within the framework outlined, the three new visas proposed to complement and enhance the existing visa categories are a place-based community pathway, an employer pathway and an academic pathway. They are set out below.

Place-based community sponsorship

The Panel proposes restructuring the current CSP to adopt a supported place-based approach to community sponsorship. The goal should be to establish a partnership between local governments, service providers and community based organisations, harnessing collective strength to support refugees to resettle and integrate successfully.

The proposed new arrangements would link communities with an interest in sponsoring refugees to organisations that can help facilitate that outcome. These organisations would:

- provide support and guidance to build their understanding of the requirements of sponsoring and hosting refugees and assess their capacity to do this;
- guide the community sponsors to establish effective coordination across relevant government agencies (at all levels), settlement service providers and relevant community-based agencies;
- support the community sponsors to consult with and prepare the broader community to welcome the new arrivals and engage their assistance to help them integrate into the local community;
- be available to engage with both sponsors and the refugee(s) post arrival to enhance communication between the two parties;
- monitor the settlement process and intervene to support the refugee(s) should the relationship deteriorate; and
- ensure refugees and their families are linked to pre- and post-arrival settlement support consistent with those settled through traditional pathways.

‘Invest in place-based approaches at a local level to provide integrated support for refugees and humanitarian entrants ...’

Centre for Policy Development

It is important to recognise that a revised community pathway does not preclude refugee families and ethnic communities from sponsoring arrivals. It would, however, require them to collaborate with place-based communities. This would ensure sponsors are given greater support and enhance the integration of those sponsored into the wider community.

The revised pathway would also allow mainstream community members to engage in ways which are presently too expensive. There are many communities with a demonstrated capacity to support refugees that would be suitable targets for such a scheme, including, but not only, in rural and regional areas.

Employer sponsorship

There are many highly skilled refugees across the world awaiting resettlement. There also already exist mechanisms to help Australian employers find out where they are located. Australia has an opportunity to capitalise on this economic resource by offering an employment pathway for refugees with in-demand or professional skills.

An employer-sponsored visa would provide opportunities for both Australia and those afforded protection. By commencing employment soon after arrival, refugees have the ability to support themselves and their families, achieve the economic stability they need to plan for their future, use and develop their skills and integrate more quickly into the broader community.

Under this program, employers could be matched with refugees who possess the skills and experience that cannot be sourced locally. This would have particular benefits in regional areas where many employers face difficulties attracting workers.

While this new visa would be open to all employers, it is noted that it might be of value to settlement service providers preparing to welcome a new cohort of refugees. They could sponsor refugees with relevant language and cultural skills to help them prepare for new arrivals.

Connecting Refugees to Australian Job Opportunities

Organisations such as Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) have pioneered innovative ways to connect refugees to international job opportunities, opening labour mobility as a complementary solution to traditional refugee resettlement. TBB works with refugees to provide them with the opportunity and support needed to obtain international employment and rebuild their lives and careers. They connect employers with the talent they need while also giving them the opportunity to contribute to a significant social cause.

TBB have created a mobile-friendly platform which refugees can use to upload their skills, qualifications and CV data. The data is searchable on the TBB 'Talent Catalogue', which now has over 10,000 refugees registered. TBB is able to share this data with relevant third party digital job-search platforms such as Refugee Talent, to enable employers to search for de-identified refugees with particular skills.

Like community sponsors, employers interested in utilising this program should be expected to demonstrate the value of the role they are offering and how they propose to assist the refugee to integrate into the workplace and the local community. And, of course, refugees entering the workplace would need to be carefully monitored to ensure that they are treated in accordance with Australia's workplace laws and protected from economic exploitation.

University sponsorship

Overseas education has now become Australia's major service export. In 2016-17 a record 548,000 international students were studying in Australia, with the majority enrolled at universities. They inject around \$32 billion into Australia's economy each year, directly boosting jobs and wages. These overseas students pay fees to study at our universities, significantly enhancing the financial strength of those institutions. There is an opportunity, on the basis of shared costs, for the Commonwealth Government and universities to give a little back. This is likely to be welcomed by many universities. Indeed, many already provide scholarships to refugees or asylum seekers who are resident in Australia.

An academic complementary visa pathway would enable Australian universities to welcome highly educated refugees and in so doing, give Australia the opportunity for 'brain gain'. Those targeted for these humanitarian visas should be refugees who would be eligible for post-graduate or post-doctoral scholarships offered by an Australian university. Some may even be sufficiently qualified to be recruited onto the academic staff.

This pathway should operate in the same way as the other complementary visa pathways in that there would be an onus on the university sponsor to contribute to the refugee's settlement. This might be through the provision of accommodation support and/or employment such as part-time tutoring.

Engagement with the academic and research community could provide refugees with the opportunity to be fully engaged with their colleagues. Involvement in their areas of expertise and the potential for secondary activities associated with being in an academic institution amongst people who share their interests, would significantly enhance integration.

CHAPTER 7: BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Recommendation 7

In order to harness the goodwill of many Australians who want to offer friendship and support to refugees, the Commonwealth Government should:

- a) utilise and increase existing Commonwealth grant funding to establish a small 'Bringing the Community Together' grants program to encourage communities to develop innovative approaches at the local level; and
- b) sponsor the development of digital approaches that will connect refugees who require assistance and practical support with members of the broader Australian community who are willing to provide it.



7.1 OVERVIEW

Australia is a multicultural nation. For more than 60,000 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have cared for this continent. Their extraordinary cultures need to be acknowledged. They are a living part of our history.

Since 1788, wave after wave of migrants have arrived here. They continue to come in large numbers, attracted by the possibilities to build new lives. Today Australia is a nation in which a remarkably high proportion of its people have come from overseas (28 per cent) or have one or both parents who were born overseas (21 per cent). This is a higher proportion than other 'migrant' countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Spain or Italy. Many of our newcomers are refugees.

As a nation we speak more than 300 languages. One in five Australians speak a language other than English when they go home at night; that rises to two in five of those born overseas. In the 2016 Census just one-third of Australians indicated that their ancestry was Australian. Despite this diversity we enjoy high levels of social cohesion in which there is a strong sense of belonging to a nation built on democratic values, the rule of law and a deep belief in fairness and opportunity. It is a remarkable achievement.

We are also a friendly nation by international standards. Our ethos of neighbourliness is based on people helping each other. And we do. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index reveals that Australia rates highly in terms of the strength of its social networks. In Australia, 94 per cent of people believe that they know someone they could rely on at a time of need. That is higher than most countries in the OECD.

The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion 2018 report confirms that picture. It indicates that most Australians would not want to live anywhere else and are happy and satisfied with our lifestyle and sense of belonging. Most importantly, it also indicates our willingness to help each other

out. Some 81 per cent of respondents indicated that they were 'willing to help their neighbours'. Around 44 per cent of Australians indicated that they had participated in voluntary work in the past twelve months. And, according to Giving Australia, around 80 per cent of Australians donate money to their chosen charitable organisation each year.

Such goodwill extends to refugees. Indeed, many sections of the Australian community have repeatedly demonstrated support for and generosity to refugees. The announcement by the Commonwealth Government of its intention to resettle an additional 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 2015 saw a flood of offers of support from individuals and communities across Australia who wanted to lend a hand. In New South Wales an 'I Want to Help' website had to be established to assist the many people who sought to volunteer with community organisations that could use their commitment.

This goodwill needs to be harnessed. Successful integration cannot just depend on government programs. It happens at the individual and local level. It occurs family by family and community by community. It starts by saying 'hello'. It develops into individual friendships. Welcoming and supportive communities are also essential to the successful settlement of refugees. They can provide assistance with refugees settling and participating in the full range of community activities.

'All Australians benefit when [refugees] are fully welcomed into our workplaces, economies and communities.'

Centre for Policy Development

During this Review, we have heard from refugees about the importance they attach to making friends in the wider Australian community. Many do so initially through the assistance they receive through settlement service providers. They build on those connections at the shopping mall, in the workplace, by participating in community programs or joining in sporting activities. Some begin by volunteering and assisting in their own communities but, in doing so, they build relationships with the wider society. There have been instances of refugee communities volunteering their time and financial support during times of bushfire, flood and drought.

This being said, we have also learnt that there is scope to increase the connections between refugees and the wider community. The longitudinal study, **Building a New Life in Australia (BLNA)**, tracks how refugees' trust in the community increases over time. Shortly after arrival, 85 per cent of respondents report having friends in Australia. Two years later this had increased to 93 per cent. Many friendships, however, are built within their own ethnic communities. After living in Australia for about two and a half years, only about half of arrivals found it easy to make Australian friends or talk to Australian neighbours. The figures are lower for women, indicating that the settlement needs of women, many of whom find themselves more isolated from the wider community, is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Figure 6: Trust, friendship and neighbourliness

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS	3-6 months after arrival (%)	27-30 months after arrival (%)
Found it 'very easy' or 'easy' to understand Australian ways and culture	47.3	59.4
Found it 'very easy' or 'easy' to make friends in Australia	44.9	55.0
Found it 'very easy' or 'easy' to talk to Australian neighbours	30.5	48.5
Had 'a lot' or 'some' trust in people in their neighbourhood	55.4	67.3

Source: Department of Social Services, Building a New Life in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants Findings from the First Three Waves

Integration is a two way process involving both refugees and the broader community. Governments can play a useful role in helping to create an environment where opportunities for connections and friendship flourish. They can facilitate volunteering and the creation of community networks.

7.2 CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

The Commonwealth Government already offers a range of programs that support the integration and settlement of migrants and refugees and seek to build social cohesion. The Department of Home Affairs administers the **Fostering Integration Grants Program**. The program is designed to help local groups assist migrants to integrate into Australian economic, social and civic life, in part by promoting employment and participation in the broader community. The Department is also responsible for Harmony Day, which promotes the celebration of Australia's cultural diversity.

The Department of Social Services also delivers funding through a range of community and settlement grants. The **Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)** grant program helps humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants to improve social participation, economic and personal well-being, independence and community connectedness. The Department's **Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC)** Activity, includes three grant programs directed toward community resilience, inclusive communities and national research. These grants are intended to foster community cohesion by increasing people's sense of belonging and engagement. They also strengthen the capacity of communities to become more self-reliant in addressing local issues.

State, territory and local governments are also extensively engaged in activities that promote social cohesion. They offer a wide range of generally small community grant programs. They also invest widely in increasing cohesion and supporting the integration of refugees into their communities. Some, with varying degrees of success, are framed around the task of 'countering violent extremism'.

Other important programs are funded by a coalition of governments, philanthropic organisations and the community. A very good example of this is the Community Hubs program, previously discussed.

Of course, many valuable initiatives come from the community without any government assistance. A good example is the Welcome Dinner Project, which is based on individual contributions and local partnerships. In every community there are similar grassroots initiatives. These are an important part of Australian society.

The Welcome Dinner Project

Social isolation can be a significant challenge for newly arrived migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum. Social capital - a shared sense of reciprocity, trust and understanding - is built through community connection and relationship. A practical mechanism for building social capital is through community or 'welcome' dinners.

The dinners provide a powerful way to build trust, belonging and connection between people and help them to break through barriers of misunderstanding through sharing food and stories. For some refugees and people seeking asylum, welcome dinners can be one of their first genuine points of connection with community life.

7.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER GRANTS PROGRAM

Having examined the existing programs, we have come to the conclusion that as part of a whole-of-government approach, the Commonwealth should bring together and supplement its agency grants programs that support integration. They would increase their effectiveness by being delivered through a single coordinated approach. A **Bringing the Community Together** grants program would encourage community-based initiatives specifically targeted at refugee settlement.

The grants should actively encourage innovative approaches to building a sense of community. Prescriptive guidelines should be kept to a minimum. It would be best if this was coordinated with state and territory grant programs (something that happens far too rarely). The goal is to encourage a myriad of small projects which together would increase support for the integration of refugees into the wider community. Given the evidence that isolated women, refugee youth and older persons are those most likely to find it harder to make friends in Australia, we would recommend that there be a particular focus on these groups.

'Invest in receiving communities and encourage local communities to volunteer and assist with settlement of families, and building a wider sense of welcome for new arrivals.'

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

MAKING LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Small grants to community based organisations can stimulate a wealth of grassroots activity. Perhaps the most useful role for governments in this would be to connect refugees who would like some help with Australians who would like to offer it. Conversely, Australians who want to offer assistance or friendship need to be able to promote that willingness.

Currently, there are a number of initiatives that connect volunteers either directly with refugees or with community organisations. **Good Neighbour** helps bring together local people with refugees and asylum seekers who are new to an area. **Go Volunteer**, an initiative of Volunteering Australia, matches people with volunteering opportunities. It emphasises that the *'greatest gift you can give someone is your time'*. There are many such examples.

The Commonwealth Government can help this process of connection by funding the development of a digital platform to help refugees connect directly with volunteers who are offering assistance and

practical support. Some may offer conversational English or study support to a university student. Others may offer household items, books or clothes. Others may provide transport assistance or driving lessons. Others, again, may offer shopping excursions or a trip to the zoo. The range of possibilities is limitless.

The platform could be developed by or in collaboration with refugees. Once established, it should be hosted by a social enterprise, harnessing the IT skills that refugees possess. The site would need to ensure there are appropriate protections for users, particularly for vulnerable groups. The site would also need to be accessible for people who have limited English.

The goal is to have an accessible and easy to use platform that links the goodwill of the Australian community with refugees who need it. Government intervention should be kept to a minimum.

Mobile Apps to Help Refugees

Ankommen is a mobile application designed for newly arrived migrants and refugees in Germany. It was developed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the Federal Employment Agency, the Goethe Institute, and Bayerischer Rundfunk, a public radio and TV channel. Available since 2016 in five languages – Arabic, Farsi, English, French and German – it offers advice on life and culture in Germany and accessing education and jobs. The application also provides resources for learning German.



CONCLUSION

Australia has over 880,000 refugee stories. Some are still being lived. Others are remembered with pride by the millions of us who are their descendants. Each of these narratives is different, although each begins with fear of persecution, traumatic experience and displacement. Their opening chapters interweave despair and hope.

Some stories are better known than others. Because of their success in business, medicine, the arts or sport some refugees' names are familiar to us. Many others, recognised only by their families, made a good life in their new home and (importantly) saw their children and grandchildren flourish. Others failed to be what they could have been, scarred by their past and unable to find the means to build a new future.

Each tale is about individuals. To a very large extent their success or failure is down to them, but we know that public policy, made manifest in government programs, can have a significant positive impact. The services delivered by community organisations – some funded by government, some not – can be the difference between refugees building new lives in Australia or struggling to hold their lives together.

As a nation we recognise that the humanitarian hand of friendship which we extend to refugees should not be withdrawn when they reach our shores. For all of us, as for them, the process of settlement is important. It is not simply a matter of doing things for refugees. Successful integration depends on doing things with them, recognising their formidable strengths and aspirations. There exists a mutual obligation. In return for government support in navigating the settlement process, refugees will be empowered to take responsibility for seizing the opportunities provided for economic and social participation. That balance is the key to allowing refugees to take back control of their lives in a new land.

For many refugees success will be judged not by the government services they receive but by the economic pathways they can walk. For many of them labour market participation – learning workplace English, having their skills recognised, receiving training, gaining work experience, getting their first Australian job, developing a career or building a business – is the mark of their achievements.

The more that government expenditure can be framed as an investment, the better it can be directed to helping newcomers achieve their goals. That is what refugees want from government. And, to the extent that we are successful, that is what will benefit our nation in terms of increasing economic benefits, social cohesion and lowering future budget expenditure.

That is the central premise upon which our Review has been based. We hope that the principles we have set, the recommendations that we have made and the arguments we have presented will help contribute to its achievement.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

We are grateful for the contributions from the following individuals and organisations:

A

- ACCESS Community Services
- ACT Government
- AMES Australia
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Australian Industry Group
- Australian Red Cross

B

- Brotherhood of St Lawrence
- Business Council of Australia
- Dr Sally Baker (University of New South Wales)
- Dr Karen Block (University of Melbourne)

C

- CareerSeekers
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Centre for Policy Development
- Dr Val Colic-Peisker (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology)
- Professor Jock Collins (University of Technology Sydney)
- Commonwealth Department of Education and Training
- Commonwealth Department of Health
- Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs
- Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities
- Commonwealth Department of Jobs and Small Business
- Commonwealth Department of Social Services
- Commonwealth Department of the Treasury
- Community Corporate
- Community Hubs Australia

F

- Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia

H

- Harmony Alliance
- Dr Kiros Hiruy (Swinburne University of Technology)

I

- Inala Primary Care

M

- Dr Karin Mackay (Western Sydney University)
- MatchWorks
- Mater

- Melaleuca Refugee Centre Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the NT
- Metro Assist
- Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania
- Migration Council Australia
- Multicultural Development Australia
- Multicultural NSW
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network

N

- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
- Navitas
- NT Office of Multicultural Affairs
- NSW Department of Industry
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Refugee Health Service
- NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors

P

- Dr Georgia Paxton (The Royal Children's Hospital)

Q

- Queensland Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs
- Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma

R

- Refugee Talent
- Regional Australia Institute
- Professor Carol Reid (Western Sydney University)
- Rural Australians for Refugees

S

- Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group
- Settlement Services Advisory Council
- Settlement Services International
- South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Suncorp
- SydWest Multicultural Services

T

- TAFE NSW
- Talent Beyond Boundaries
- Tasmanian Department of Communities
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

V

- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet

W

- Welcoming Australia
- Western Australian Office of Multicultural Interests
- Western Sydney MRC
- Workskil Australia
- World Wellness Group
- Dr Sue Watt (University of New England)

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APPENDIX B – STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSIONS, DOCUMENTS AND CASE STUDIES

We are grateful for the contributions from the following individuals and organisations:

A

- AMES Australia
- Amnesty International Australia
- Dr Joel Anderson (Australian Catholic University)
- Assyrian Resource Centre
- Australian College of Nursing
- Australian Migrant Resource Centre
- Australian Red Cross

B

- Dr Sally Baker (University of New South Wales)
- Bendigo Friends and Mentors
- Brisbane South Primary Health Network
- Brotherhood of St Laurence

C

- Cabrini Outreach
- Cameron Foundation
- CareerSeekers
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Centre for Policy Development
- Professor Jock Collins (University of Technology Sydney)
- Community Corporate
- Community Hubs Australia
- Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative
- Councillor Brian Crook (Colac Otway Shire)

F

- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)
- Foundation House
- Friendly Nation Initiative

G

- Dr Joanne Gardiner (Cohealth Collingwood)

H

- Harmony Alliance

J

- Jesuit Social Services

M

- Migrant & Refugee Women's Health Partnership
- Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)
- Migration Council Australia
- Multicultural Communities Council of SA

- Multicultural Development Australia
- Multicultural Employment Service
- Multicultural NSW
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
- Multicultural Youth Affairs Network NSW

N

- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
- Navitas
- NSW Refugee Health Service
- NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors

Q

- Queanbeyan Multicultural Centre

P

- Dr Georgia Paxton (The Royal Children's Hospital)

R

- Professor Carol Reid (Western Sydney University)
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Refugee Health Network of Australia
- Refugee Health Partnership Advisory Group QLD
- Refugee Talent
- Regional Australia Institute
- Royal Melbourne Hospital
- Rural Australians for Refugees

S

- Settlement Council of Australia
- Settlement Services Advisory Council
- Settlement Services International
- Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)
- Spectrum

T

- TAFE NSW
- Talent Beyond Boundaries
- Tasmanian Department of Communities
- Dr Judith Thomas

V

- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Victorian Refugee Health Network
- Victorian Regional Network Consortium

W

- Dr Susan Watt (University of New England)
- Welcoming Australia
- Wesley Asylum Seeker Welcome Place
- Western Australian Office of Multicultural Interests
- World Wellness Group

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APPENDIX D – OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

Australia is one of a small number of countries that operate an annual permanent resettlement program, and consistently ranks among the top three permanent resettlement countries, along with Canada and the United States, which have traditionally offered around 80 per cent of the world's resettlement places each year.

Australia's Humanitarian Program aims to:

- provide permanent resettlement to those most in need, who are in desperate situations overseas, including in refugee camps and protracted refugee situations;
- reunite refugees and people who are in refugee-like situations overseas with their family in Australia;
- be flexible and responsive to changing global resettlement needs and emerging humanitarian situations to ensure Australia's approach remains comprehensive and high-quality;
- use resettlement to help stabilise refugee populations, reduce the prospect of irregular movement from source countries and countries of first asylum, and support broader international protection; and
- meet Australia's international protection obligations.

Each year, the Commonwealth Government sets the number of visas that may be granted under the Program. In 2016-17, the Program had 13,750 places, increasing to 16,250 places in 2017-18 and 18,750 places in 2018-19. In recent years, the Commonwealth Government also provided an additional 12,000 places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.

PROGRAM PLANNING

The Humanitarian Program composition is determined on an annual basis, informed by broad consultations and consideration of Australia's capacity to facilitate settlement and to ensure successful integration. While flexibility remains a fundamental principle, the basic premises of the Humanitarian Program have not changed significantly in recent years.

Priority regions for the offshore Humanitarian Program over the last five years have been:

- the Middle East: around 50 per cent of places;
- Asia: 20-40 per cent of places; and
- Africa: 10-20 per cent of places.

Within these regional allocations, the specific caseloads included and the number of people resettled from each caseload varies each year. The Humanitarian Program has both an offshore component and an onshore component.

OFFSHORE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

The offshore component of the Program has two categories:

- the **refugee category** assists people who are subject to persecution in their home country, have generally fled their home country, and for whom resettlement in Australia is the best durable solution. Australia works closely with United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR), which refers many of the successful applicants for resettlement in Australia under this category. Refugee visas include:

- Refugee (Subclass 200)
- In-country Special Humanitarian (Subclass 201)
- Emergency Rescue Visa (Subclass 203)
- Woman at Risk (Subclass 204)
- the **Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)** category (subclass 202) is for people outside their home country, subject to discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights and with family or community ties to Australia. The SHP stream also includes the Community Support Program (CSP).

ONSHORE PROTECTION

Since September 2013, the onshore component of the Humanitarian Program has been reserved for people who arrive lawfully in Australia and are found to engage Australia's protection obligations because they are either found to be a refugee, or meet the complimentary protection criteria and meet other visa criteria (health, character and security) for permanent stay in Australia.

NEED FOR HUMANITARIAN PLACES

In recent years, UNHCR has significantly enhanced its capacity to identify highly vulnerable refugees for whom resettlement is the only durable solution. UNHCR estimates that 1.4 million persons will be in need of resettlement globally in 2019, a 17 per cent increase over 2018. Meanwhile the overall number of places offered by the major resettlement countries is declining. In 2017 (the last year for which figures are available), only 65,109 of the 1.19 million refugees identified as being in need of resettlement found new homes.