



Answer to question:

## PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

### MIGRATION, PATHWAY TO NATION BUILDING INQUIRY

**QUESTION:** What sort of mechanism is needed to ensure a whole-of government approach to migration? And what does AMES believe will be the difference in outcomes compared to the existing approach?

**ANSWER:**

A whole-of-government approach to migration needs a whole-of-government strategy – inclusive of federal, state / territory, and local government commitment and action. A shared policy-driven blueprint, connected policies, and agreed inter-government resourcing and responding will support a shared vision, consistency and adherence across Australia. This strategy would be underpinned by an outcomes-based framework to settlement in Australia.

The New Zealand Migrant and Settlement Integration Strategy provides a working example of a whole-of-government approach where multiple government players support migrant settlement outcomes. In this strategy the overarching national outcome “*Migrants make New Zealand their home, participate fully and contribute to all aspects of New Zealand life*” is supported by employment, education, English language, inclusion, and health and wellbeing outcomes. Agencies developed and implemented a collaborative settlement funding allocation process to identify funding priorities for service delivery across government; ensuring the mix of services funded would most effectively deliver results across all the strategy outcomes and success indicators; and, identifying opportunities for cross-government partnerships in service delivery.

By implementing a whole-of-government strategy to migration, AMES Australia (AMES) believes a better and faster service and support will be delivered for newly arrived people to engage in mainstream Australian society. This outcome will benefit individuals and families and the nation - economically and culturally.

The table below provides insights into what differences a whole-of-government strategy could bring to the approach to settlement in Australia.



From the current model...	to a whole-of-government strategy
<p>The settlement program is input-driven, activity based, and administratively burdensome. This has a direct impact on providers' ability to respond to the needs and aspirations of individuals and families.</p>	<p><b>Outcomes and impact driven</b> A strengths-based, trauma-informed flexible service delivery that is adaptable to specific cohorts or individuals, empowering refugees to build their self-agency.</p>
<p>Reporting against program key performance indicators (KPIs) and timelines do not recognise or account for the settlement outcomes that are specific and personal to each individual.</p>	<p><b>Agencies commit to clear, shared settlement KPIs</b> This would provide clear direction and a strong foundation for maximising the impact and efficacy of programs and interventions at the delivery level.</p>
<p>There is currently limited capacity for coordination and harmonisation between settlement services, English learning, employment, and health services, due to different, and at times conflicting, contract funding models, compliance measures and key performance indicator (KPI) reporting requirements. This creates gaps in information sharing between providers.</p>	<p><b>Integrated service delivery</b> A high-level solution that supports better collaboration and planning between federal, state/territory, and local governments, bridges the gap between various program contracts and aligns KPIs across services provided to migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.</p> <p>A high-level solution (such as a consolidated client management system platform) is considered important to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• facilitate referrals</li><li>• align program contracts and KPIs across services</li><li>• enable application of a unique client identifier number so that providers working with the same client understand where a client is in their settlement journey and can identify outstanding needs</li><li>• facilitate information sharing across programs, for example a client's visa status when appropriate; clients' engagement with other services.</li></ul>



**QUESTION:** Could you expand on the importance of family migration for successful settlement based on AMES' work with migrant and refugee communities?

**ANSWER:**

Family migration is a core component of a successful migration program. Family separation for prolonged periods due to: uncertainty, lengthy visa processing times, cost, and visa conditions as examples, is known to negatively impact on physical and mental wellbeing, and often leads to social and financial stress. Valuing and streamlining processes to expedite family reunion will contribute to the direct wellbeing and sense of belonging of newly arrived migrants.

Family members can build their knowledge 'bank' together as they settle and engage in activities including participating in the workforce; volunteering at cultural, religious and community events, and contributing to Australia's multicultural society. Extended family members e.g. grandparents can enable early participation in the workforce for job-ready family members when caring responsibilities are required. A family unit potentially has the benefit of familiarity and support for their needs which will both aid their settlement and enable early social and economic contributions.

Family separation has particularly negative effects on settlement success including ongoing trauma and prolonged uncertainty for those arriving on humanitarian visas. AMES supports many people who are still trying to arrange for their partners and children to come to Australia. AMES experience is that this process is not only costly and lengthy, it leads to mental health concerns – directly impacting a client's ability to achieve key settlement milestones.

Due to ongoing crisis situations, family separation also impacts those with their immediate family in Australia. Clients with extended family overseas, often elderly parents, constantly worry about their welfare. This has been exacerbated when local conditions, such as closing of borders during COVID-19 – and the subsequent visa backlog – is an important factor in the ongoing negative impact family separation has on the successful settlement of our clients.