Refugee Settlement in Regional Areas.

Evidence-based good practice.

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Inquiry into migration in regional Australia
Submission 7 - Attachment 1
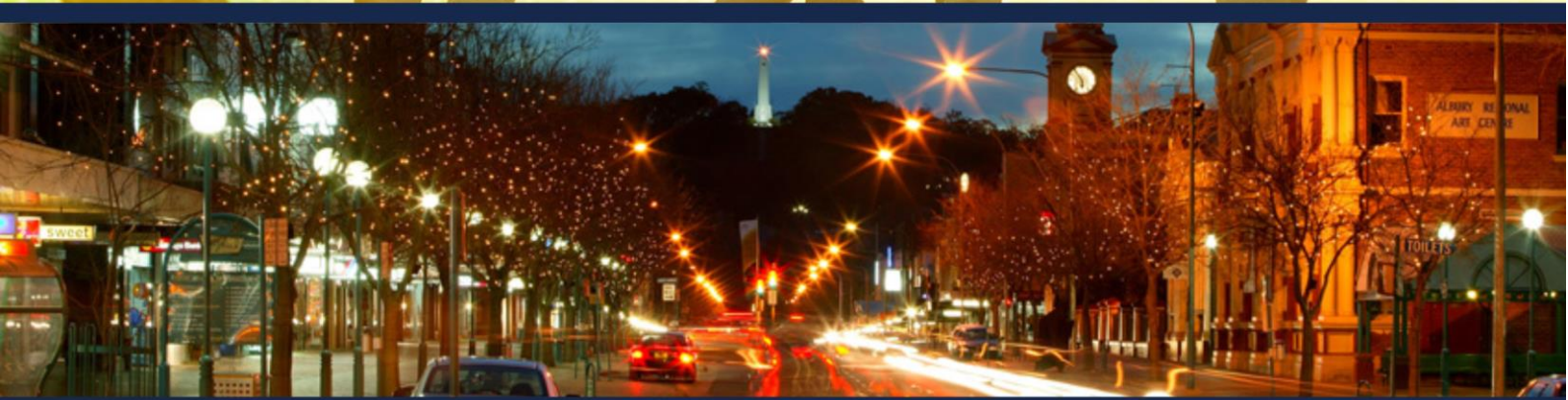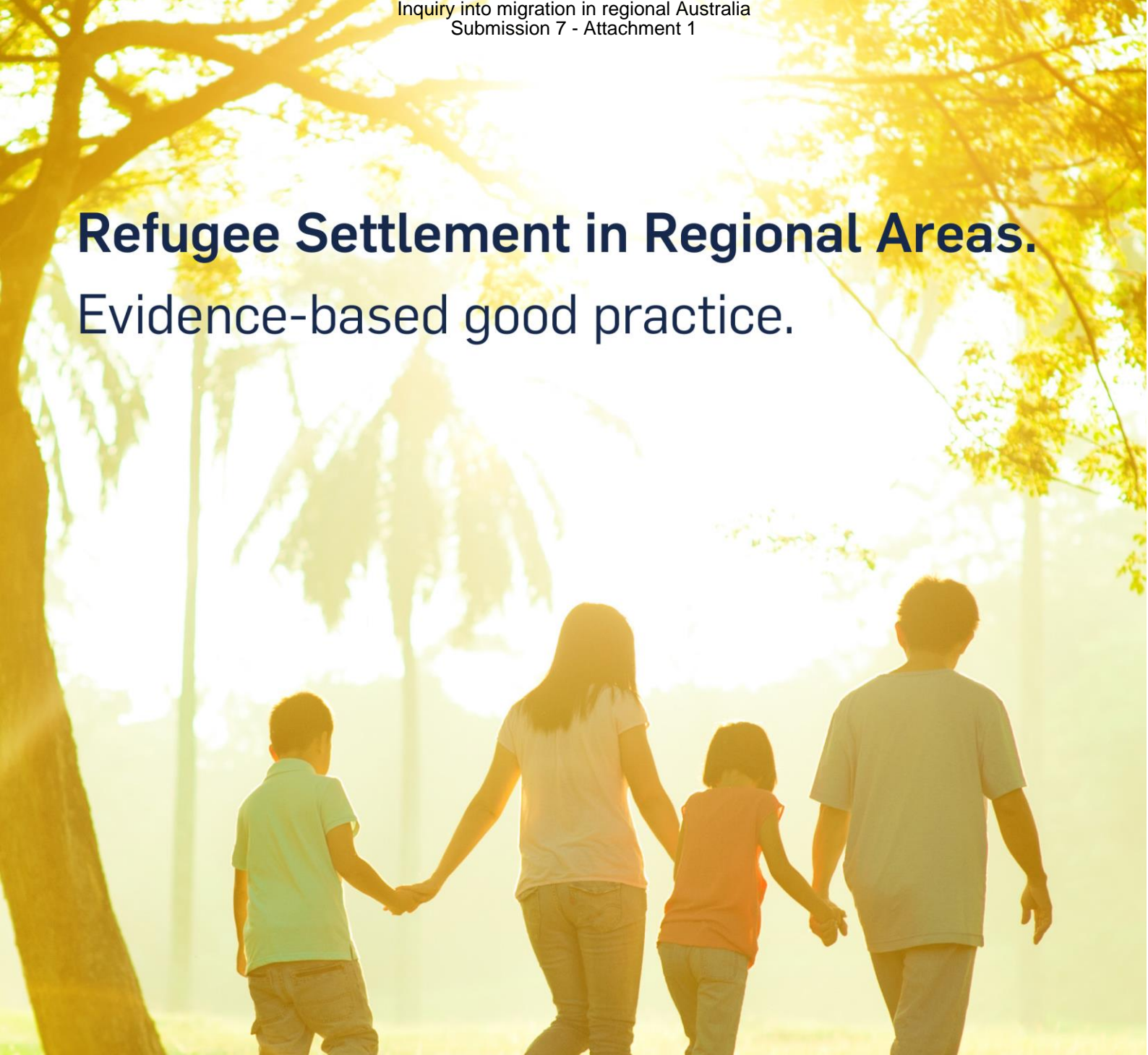Refugee Settlement in Regional Areas: Evidence-based good practice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*If it is done right, regional settlement for humanitarian entrants has the potential
to change the face of country Australia
in terms of building harmony, understanding and respect*.[1]

Communities in many towns and cities across regional Australia know that they have to change in order to survive. They need to attract new industries to their areas and with this, they need people.

This report is intended to highlight to those keen to build a sustainable and prosperous future for their community that there is a group of people willing and able to contribute to this. And by welcoming these people, the regional communities are helping them to rebuild their lives that have been shattered by war and persecution.

The report is about regional communities and refugees and about how they can each contribute to achieving the other's objectives and in so doing, creating something of benefit for all.

In order to understand how this can occur, some background is required so the report begins by setting the context. It explains how refugees come to Australia and how they come into regional areas. It then outlines the things refugees look for when they think about choosing a place to live, linking this to the targeted support they require.

The fact that refugees might need more support than others coming into a regional area should not deter those seeking to attract workers. Having been forced to flee their homes because of conflict and human rights abuses, they need help to adjust to life in Australia but they also bring skills and a strong commitment to contribute to the country that gave them a second chance.

Much has been learnt from communities that have welcomed refugees and this report seeks to capture those lessons. Drawing on evaluations of refugee settlement in regional locations in four states, it explores why regional settlement is beneficial for all, what underpins successful regional settlement, what is needed to prepare to welcome refugees and how to attract them to come to the regional centre.

Evidence shows that while each community did things in a slightly different way, there were consistent underlying factors that supported good settlement outcomes: factors such as access to employment and training opportunities, the availability of housing and the support and goodwill of the host community. Also key to success was a whole-of-community approach supported by respectful partnerships and flexibility.

Also included in the report are summary profiles of regional refugee settlement in eight locations showing the basis for the lessons outlined.

*All research and evidence post-settlement indicates that
the more prepared a community is prior to the arrival of refugees,
and the more engaged they are in the process,
the better the settlement outcomes are for new arrivals*

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[1]   Comment made by a member of the Shepparton Steering Committee. *Report of the Evaluation of
        the Shepparton Regional Settlement Pilot*. 2006

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PART 1: BACKGROUND

Before examining the lessons learnt from the various studies into regional settlement of refugees, it is important to look at the broader context. The better those seeking to attract refugees to their area or to support refugees already there understand these concepts, the more effective their work will be.

1.1.   How Refugees Come to Australia

There are two ways in which refugees come to Australia.

The majority are identified by the office United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (or an alternative avenue) as being in need of resettlement. This occurs when they are in an overseas country of first asylum and given a permanent residency visa for Australia. This is often referred to as the '**offshore**' component of the Humanitarian Program.

The second way in which refugees come to Australia is as asylum seekers. They might have arrived by plane or boat and then they apply for protection. If they meet the definition of a refugee, they are granted either a permanent or temporary protection visa. This is often referred to as the '**onshore**' component of the Humanitarian Program.

Appendix 1 provides additional information about refugee visas. There are times when knowing the visa subclass is important as there are some differences in eligibility for services.

1.2.   How Refugees Come to Regional Areas

There are three key variables to consider when looking at the movement of refugees into regional areas: when the movement occurred, who initiated it and the visa status of the refugees.

The first of these relates to the point of the settlement journey at which a refugee moves into a regional area. Broadly speaking, this is either:

- **primary settlement**: where the regional centre is the refugees' first home in Australia (as has occurred for Bhutanese going to Albury or Yezidis going to Wagga Wagga); or

- **secondary settlement**: where the refugees have initially gone elsewhere (usually to a capital city) and then moved to a regional centre at a later date, as (occurred in the case of Mingoola).

Flowing from this is a range of other issues, not least the level and nature of support required by those coming into the regional centre and the refugees' level of commitment to being there (i.e. whether they actively chose the location).

This leads on to the second variable: how the refugees came to be in the regional centre. This could be:

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- **government initiated as part of a planned settlement initiative:** the destination is chosen by a government agency (usually by the Department of Social Services) after analysis of the capacity of the location to meet entrants' needs and usually after consultation with the three levels of government. In some cases this has involved initial settlement, in others, it has involved secondary relocation. Examples include Mount Gambier, Ballarat and Corio, with Armidale being the most recent addition to the list;

- **entrant initiated:** where a refugee or group of refugees move to a regional area of their own accord because of employment opportunities, availability of affordable housing etc and then others join them later, creating a community. Orange and Toowoomba are examples of this;

- **locally initiated:** where a group of local people decide they want to assist refugees and through sponsorship, bring refugees into the local community. Sanctuary Refugee Support Groups have been very active proponents of this model and have influenced settlement patterns in places such as Coffs Harbour, Lismore and Armidale. There is also the recent example of settlement in Mingoola where the local community connected to and collaborated with GLAPD (a group representing refugees from the Great Lakes region of Africa).

In some regional centres, a mixture of driving forces can be seen. Shepparton, which was the site of a pilot project but which had previously seen spontaneous settlement is a good example of this. In other areas, such as Warnambool, the distinction between 'planned' and 'locally initiated' is less blurred.

There are positives and negatives associated with these three types of regional settlement. A non-exhaustive list of these is included as Appendix 2.

The third key variable is the visa status of those moving into regional areas. Broadly speaking there are two distinct groups:

- **permanent visa holders:** those who came to Australia under the offshore humanitarian program (with a visa subclass 200, 201, 202, 203 or 204) or were granted a permanent protection visa in Australia (visa subclass 866);

- **temporary visa holders:** those found to be refugees after arriving in Australia by boat after 2013 and granted a Temporary Protection Visa or TPV (subclass 785) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa or SHEV (subclass 790).

The relevance of this is that the two groups have different eligibility entitlements. These are included as Appendix 3. In some cases, they also have different motivations, for example:

- those with permanent visas are more likely to be thinking about finding somewhere where they can put down roots and rebuild their lives whereas those with a Temporary Protection Visa are often separated from their immediate family and are most concerned about making money to support them. They are thus more likely to be itinerant, moving from place to place following seasonal or other work opportunities;

- those on Safe Haven Enterprise Visas will be focusing on finding employment that will make them eligible to apply for a permanent visa. They will thus be more focused on the type of employment (typically skilled or employer sponsored) than refugees on other visas whose primary interest is simply getting work.

The underlying message here is that regional settlement of refugees is not one-dimensional and the variables relevant to each situation need to be identified, understood by key stakeholders and then factored into planning and implementation.

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1.3.   Indicators of Settlement

Another very relevant issue to consider is what contributes to refugees being 'settled', in other words, what makes them feel active participants part of the community in which they are living. The following table[2] provides a way of thinking about how well a person is settling in Australia.

The table includes indicators that are linked to services provided for refugees and indicators that focus on how the person feels and what they are able to do. Both sets of indicators are equally important when considering whether settlement is successful.

OUTCOME:	SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA				
SETTLEMENT DIMENSIONS:	**Social Participation**	**Economic Well-Being**	**Personal Well-Being**	**Independence**	**Life Satisfaction and being Connected to the Community**
KEY SETTLEMENT INDICATORS:	English proficiency Participation in education and training Participation in community life (e.g. school, sports) Citizenship	Employment circumstances Level of income Level of debt Job satisfaction Satisfaction with accommodation	Physical health Mental health Self-esteem Relationships	Access to transport Access and use of community and government services Source of income Ability to make life choices Gender equality	Sense of belonging in Australia Sense of being treated well by the local community Level of discrimination and cultural and religious expression
Demographic Attributes					
Country of birth, gender, age, marital status, family status, location, years of schooling, work experience, length of time in Australia					

Appendix 4 explores the issue of settlement in more detail.

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2   From *The Settlement Journey: strengthening Australia through migration* www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-services/the-settlement-journey-strengthening-australia-through-migration.

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1.4. Settlement Support

Before moving onto the lessons learnt from research into regional refugee settlement, it is important to stress that there is a network of services whose role it is to support refugees.

First 6 to 12 Months	Complementary Services	Up to 5 Years
Humanitarian Settlement Program Intensive case-managed support which includes: • orientation • linking to relevant services • securing on-arrival and long term accommodation • providing a package of furniture and white goods Each provider convenes a group that brings together key stakeholders in their area.	**Adult Migrant English Program** Provides a range of courses to build English proficiency for day-to-day living and the workforce **Translating and Interpreting** Available through every Service NSW office. **Refugee Health Service** On-arrival health assessment and support for medical practitioners **STARTTS** Provides specialist support to survivors of torture and trauma	**Settlement Services Program** Funding program that support a range of services including • Casework • Community coordination and development • Youth services There is a strong focus on supporting refugees to become self-reliant.

A detailed list of services in NSW is included as Appendix 5 (noting some eligibility restrictions as outlined in Appendix 3).

These refugee-specific services are complemented by mainstream services that are bound under Access and Equity Policies to ensure that all their clients receive services related to their needs. Refugees on permanent visas are entitled to the same services as all other permanent residents and citizens. As shown in Appendix 3, refugees on temporary visas are entitled to most services.

Government funded services relevant to refugee settlement include:

- Centrelink
- Medicare
- jobactive
- Public housing and community housing
- Family support programs
- Youth programs
- My Aged Care
- NDIS
- Primary, secondary and tertiary education
- Sport and recreation programs.

Finally it is important to stress that being eligible for services is one thing, knowing about their existence is another, as is negotiating the often complex entry pathways. Refugees who have retained links to settlement service providers are assisted with this but those who have moved away (especially into regional areas) will often need support or advocacy. This can be provided directly by willing community members, by ensuring that the refugee is linked to one of the specialist services (Appendix 5), or through the provision of local support (Appendix 6).

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PART 2: LESSONS LEARNT

The settlement of refugees in regional areas has been the subject of many research studies. The following section seeks to capture the core learnings from this research.

2.1.   Advantages of Regional Settlement

As demonstrated in the research undertaken into regional settlement and shown in the case studies that follow, if managed well regional settlement can be beneficial for all relevant stakeholders.

For **refugees** regional settlement can provide:

- affordable accommodation,
- employment opportunities,
- genuine insertion into a welcoming community,
- ease of access to services,
- plus many other advantages for the individuals and their community.

For **refugee communities** regional settlement enables:

- community members to have easier settlement pathways,
- the wider community to get to know the community,
- the refugee community to be dispersed thereby avoiding negative community attitudes fuelled by the perceived creation of 'ghettos'.

For the **host community**, regional settlement:

- supports economic growth,
- addresses labour shortages,[3]
- enriches local culture,
- enables local people to have meaningful engagement with people from different backgrounds,
- enhances the community in many other ways.

For **agencies** supporting refugees, being in a regional area can also be beneficial in so much as:

- it is easier to plan and deliver a coordinated and integrated service,
- there is less chance of clients 'falling through the cracks',
- it is easier to monitor the progress of clients,
- there is a willing pool of volunteers.

Each of these is, however, location-specific and none occur without some form of intervention.

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[3]See *Can Refugees Solve Australia's Regional Workers Shortage?*athttps://bcaraustralia.wordpress.com/2017/03/25/can-refugees-solve-australias-regional-workers-shortage-2/

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The following sections of this report will identify what has been learnt from regional settlement initiatives about what is required to maximise the potential of regional settlement for all stakeholders.

2.2. What Underpins Successful Regional Settlement

Experience has shown that each of the regional centres where refugees have settled successfully have had two things in common:

- The regional centre has been able to offer the things that attract refugees and/or contribute to them remaining there.
- The community has wanted the refugees to come and/or has embraced them when they arrived.

There is value in exploring each of these.

i.   Features of the Regional Centre

There are two things above all else that are required for successful regional settlement: **employment** and **affordable accommodation**. If either of these is missing, attracting or retaining refugees will be challenging.

Employment

Employment is fundamental to the successful settlement of refugees in regional areas.

Why is it important?

Employment has been shown to be a key stabilising factor for refugees settling in Australia. It also acts to empower people, providing them with the opportunity to make connections and feel a sense of belonging to their community.

How can it be achieved?

- Establishing partnerships between employers, the Chamber of Commerce, Regional Development Australia and community organisations to identify skilled and unskilled employment opportunities.

- Once skill shortages have been identified, working through settlement service providers and other agencies to open dialogue with groups of refugees who are interested in relocating to a regional area.

- Encouraging employers to actively seek refugees to fill job vacancies as was done in Nhill (see the case study).

- Promoting the advantages to local employers of taking on refugees as trainees or apprentices (being able to access training subsidies).

- Providing information and training for employers on humanitarian visa conditions (e.g. work rights and visa pathways) and on how to support employees from refugee / culturally diverse backgrounds within the workplace (including through work-based language programs and targeted Work Health and Safety instruction).

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- Having people within the local community willing to 'champion' refugees, e.g. by being willing to use networks to facilitate access to employment.

- Ensuring the local jobactive provider is equipped to provide informed support.

- Thinking creatively about how to address transport barriers so that refugees without their own cars can get to jobs when public transport options are not available.

- Ensuring that the local TAFE or training provider has courses directly linked to local skill shortages, especially those that are fee exempt under Smart and Skilled.

- Running work readiness and employment support programs for refugees.

- Identifying local people who are able to act as mentors for refugees new to the workforce. This is especially valuable for refugees in professional positions.

- Supporting entrepreneurship as evidence shows that refugees are more inclined to start their own business compared to other migrant groups. Social procurement policies may also encourage the establishment of social enterprises that benefit refugees.

You might also like to link to one of the specialist agencies such as Refugee Talent which specialises in linking refugees and employers (www.refugeetalent.com) or Thrive Refugee Enterprise that supports refugees to establish small businesses and provides access to micro-finance (www.thriverefugeeenterprise.org.au).

Affordable Accommodation

The availability of affordable rental accommodation is the other key requirement if refugees are to be settled in a regional area.

Why is it important?

Housing insecurity is undesirable for anyone but for refugees who have been through years – and sometimes decades – of dislocation, it can be very traumatic and can impede all other aspects of settlement. Unlike capital cities, some regional centres are able to offer affordable and secure rental accommodation and achievable pathways to home ownership.

How can it be achieved?

- Countering any resistance that local real estate agents might have to renting to refugees through targeted education.

- Providing tenancy training to newly-arrived refugees.

- Building community awareness to ensure a welcoming neighbourhood.

As important as they are, employment and affordable accommodation are not the only things refugees require. The following table shows some of the other aspects that are also important.

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Education and Training	Locally available Adult Migrant English Program classes
	Education providers familiar with (or open to) working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
	TAFE or other training institutions with suitable range of Smart and Skilled courses
	University campus (with supported places)
	Volunteer run English language classes
	Support in schools for children and young people
Health Care	General Practitioners who have space on their books and are prepared to bulk bill
	Local medical professionals with experience working with people from refugee backgrounds (e.g. refugee health nurses)
	Willingness and ability to use interpreters in health practice
	Within STARTTS outreach areas
	Major hospital in reasonable proximity
Settlement support	Local service provider with experience working with refugees
	Key service providers have some understanding of the needs of refugees and employ culturally responsive practice
	Regular contact between government and non-government providers e.g. through some form of interagency
	Ability to use interpreters (skills and cost recovery)
Lifestyle	Appropriate places of worship
	Available venues for communities to meet or celebrate cultural specific events
	Availability of culturally important food (e.g. halal)
	Resources in refugees' languages at local library
	Sporting and other recreational pursuits available and willing to include newcomers
	Public transport at weekends and in evenings

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The table above is not intended to be an exhaustive 'checklist' that communities must comply with before they can start considering attracting refugees. Rather, the issues in the table – when added to employment opportunities and affordable accommodation – are there to help communities to identify what they offer and what gaps they might need to think about filling. And when it comes to the latter, sometimes creative solutions can work well, for example if culturally appropriate food isn't available, this could represent a small business opportunity for an entrepreneurial refugee moving into the area.

It is also relevant to note that many of the factors contained in the table are relevant irrespective of whether refugees are coming directly into the regional area or are relocating after having been in Australia for some time. Others, in particular language and settlement supports are much more relevant in cases of primary settlement.

ii.   A Welcoming Community

Of equal importance to the presence of relevant services and facilities is the attitude of the local community.[4]

In this respect, the factors that lead to refugees moving into a regional area are of particular relevance:

- In cases of planned settlement (i.e. where the decision to settle a group of refugees in the particular location is made by government), it is essential to work closely with the host community to ensure that they are informed about and prepared to welcome the new arrivals.

- Where refugees move spontaneously into a regional centre, things can become more complicated as neither the community nor service providers are prepared. Success will depend on mutual goodwill and the ability of services to learn and adapt.

- Communities that have made the decision that they want to welcome refugees and have actively sought to attract them to their city or town are by far the most advanced when it comes to offering a welcoming community.

The research has shown that a welcoming community is characterised by the following:

- Local Government being willing and able to assist.[5]

- General support for diversity within the community.

- Having local 'champions' (i.e. opinion leaders in the community) who are informed and willing to counter any negative sentiments.

- Having sympathetic local media that will help to inform the community and will run 'good news stories'.

- Established volunteering networks (e.g. those linked to Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, churches etc.) being prepared to lend a hand when needed.

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[4]   The lessons outlined here are of equal relevance to a community seeking to welcome migrants.
[5]   The Welcoming Cities initiative which outlines a Standard for Local Government to benchmark their cultural diversity and inclusion policies and practices, and assess progress over time. See https://welcomingcities.org.au/

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- Local faith leaders being welcoming towards people from different faith traditions.

- The police being aware of the challenges faced by refugees and open to working closely with people in the emerging community to build mutual understanding.

- The presence of refugee support or social justice groups in the community.

When considering the creation of a welcoming community it is also relevant to think about social cohesion and the factors that contribute to it:
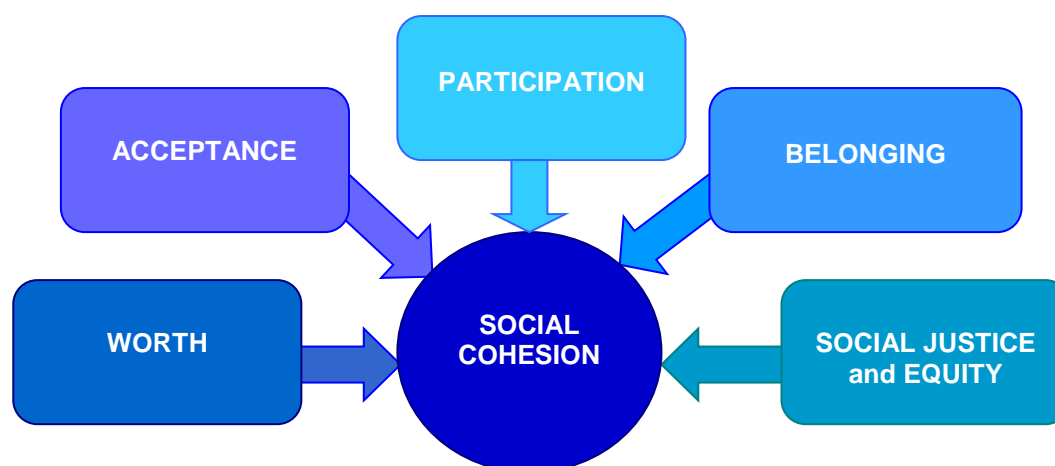
2.3. How to Build the Capacity of a Community to Welcome Refugees

The previous section focused on the lessons learnt about what needs to be in place for regional settlement of refugees to have a good chance of being successful. How to create this is the next issue that needs to be considered.

While the regional centres covered in the research into regional settlement each went about things in slightly different ways, it is possible to identify four things common to the approach of most sites. These have gone on to be widely regarded as guiding principles for those involved in supporting regional settlement.

The **four guiding principles** are as follows:

i.   Coordination

The formation of Steering Committees enables service providers and other stakeholders to plan, exchange information, develop referral pathways and monitor progress. Having a well-respected and well-connected local person to chair the committee also contributes markedly in so much as this person can open doors, promote dialogue and build a collegial working relationship between stakeholders.

Subcommittees are an effective way to ensure in-depth attention is given to key areas such as employment, education, health and housing.

Local settlement committees, if they exist, can be the nucleus for coordination but planning for new regional settlement goes beyond their traditional role and connections should be made to other areas including, but not limited to, business and regional development.

ii. Consultation

The better informed key stakeholders are about new arrivals within the community, the more successful the outcomes. The steering committee (or local settlement committee) should take the lead in this regard.

Key stakeholders differ across communities but are likely to include indigenous elders, the Mayor and members of the Council, local service providers, state government agencies, local media, local religious leaders, business leaders and others who have a strong voice within the community.

iii. Cooperation

Ensuring the best outcomes for the community and new arrivals requires service providers, local authorities and others within the community to work collaboratively and with a shared objective. For example, local employers providing job opportunities, service providers connecting refugees to the right support and community groups providing connections to the broader community, all supported by strong local leadership.

iv. Contingency Planning

No matter how good the planning is, unexpected things will always happen. Settlement locations that have been most successful are those that had undertaken risk analysis and contingency planning and have been able to respond calmly and collaboratively to issues that arise.

The four guiding principles in turn depend on a number of other factors, including:

- commitment from all three levels of government
- the support of key opinion leaders
- active involvement of the 'right' people for the role
- planning (macro and micro) and coordination
- training and support for all service providers
- recruitment and training of volunteers
- community education.

Further, given the nature and complexity of the undertaking, it is important to stress the need for **realistic expectations** and **flexibility**.

2.4. How to Harness the Good Will of the Community

Community involvement is important in the resettlement of refugees, particularly in tight-knit regional communities. Engaging communities, collaborating with them and the use of volunteers leads to the best outcomes for refugees being welcomed into the community. This rarely occurs, however, on its own accord. It requires the commitment of people within the community to make it happen, ideally using the Four Guiding Principles discussed above.

Those seeking to harness the goodwill of local communities in the regional centres that were studied used a variety of ways to do this including but not limited to the following:

- Hosting community meetings (e.g. in Mingoola) to discuss plans for attracting refugees to the community and allow those who have concerns to express these and have their fears respectfully allayed.

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- Organising events (e.g. to celebrate Harmony Day, Refugee Week or Australia Day) that bring members of the community together and provide an opportunity for 'new' and 'old' community members to meet in a positive environment.

- Actively inviting members of refugee communities to attend symbolic or iconic local events (e.g. Anzac Day, the local show etc.) and if relevant, inviting them to participate (e.g. run a food stall, perform at a concert etc.).

- Running informative and positive stories about the new entrants in the local media (e.g. Shepparton).

- The local Mayor hosting a welcoming ceremony (e.g. Mount Gambier).

- Local councils sponsoring Multicultural Ambassador Programs (e.g. Ballarat).

- Service providers running information sessions and training for their staff.

- Faith communities welcoming those from other faith communities into their places of worship, especially where there is no established facility (as happened in Mount Gambier).

- Community members supporting the refugees to establish a place of worship (e.g. the establishment of the prayer room in Colac).

- Established local groups (e.g. sporting clubs, Rotary, Lions, the Country Women's Association etc.) actively inviting refugees to join them.

- Encouraging refugees to volunteer (e.g. with a local charity, a youth program or a group like the Rural Fire Service) or to become involved in a local group (e.g. a choir or drama group).

- Schools or service clubs inviting a speaker from a refugee background to talk about their experiences.

- Organising mentors for refugees in high school.

- People in the community hosting Welcome Dinners (based on the model pioneered by Joining the Dots (www.joiningthedots.org).

- Encouraging local shop keepers to source and stock foods important to the refugee community.

- Proving opportunities for local people to interact with the refugees through volunteering.

Volunteers

Volunteers have proven to be an invaluable resource in all regional settlement locations, bringing a passion to help refugees and local knowledge government agencies may not have. They are drivers of communal spirit and social inclusion.

To ensure the best use of their generously donated time, it is important that volunteers are trained and supported. This is much easier if they are linked to an organisation with established volunteer programs such as the Red Cross or the St Vincent de Paul Society. If volunteers self-form into a group, or come from a group with little previous experience supporting refugees, there are resources on which they can draw.

On-line course materials for the *Certificate 1 in Active Volunteering with Refugees* which can be found on www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au (go to Resources → Volunteer Learning Materials)

Way2Go Volunteering: Toolkit for Volunteer Managers. Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau and FACS NSW. www.vrb.org.au/?page_id=1429.

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Giving and Volunteering in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Indigenous Communities.
Cultural & Indigenous Research Centre Australia. 2016.
www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/giving_and_volunteering_in_cald_and_indigenous_communities.pdf

These resources not only provide practical advice and background information, they also emphasise three of the most important lessons for volunteers working with refugees in regional areas:

Boundaries
Empowerment[6]
Realistic Expectations

In addition to the above there is an important aspect of 'community' that should not be overlooked. This is the need to ensure that the local Aboriginal community is informed about the new entrants and the support being provided to them. This should be done out of courtesy and respect for their custodianship of land and also to prevent any misconceptions about entitlements.

2.5. How to Attract Refugees to Regional Centres

When refugees are being resettled in Australia, their initial destination is selected by the Department of Social Services. A number of factors are taken into consideration when making this decision including any existing links the refugees might have to family or friends, the location of others from the same background and the availability of support services. For selected groups and individuals, a decision will be made to send them to regional areas but by far, the majority of refugees coming into Australia are initially sent to capital cities.

There are a number of advantages for refugees being in major centres in the first instance as this is where there is the greatest concentration of specialist services. There is easy access to language classes and health and counselling services that understand their background, their children can go to intensive language services and there are many other supports available. They can also meet with others from their own background who have been here longer and see the opportunities that life in Australia can offer.

Big cities, however, are not for everyone. Some refugees, especially those from rural backgrounds, find large cities confusing and intimidating. Others look at the cost of housing and wonder whether they will ever be able to find a home and/or begin to realise how hard it is competing for employment against so many with local experience. After the initial settlement period, such people might be very interested in exploring alternatives.

This is where the concept of secondary settlement comes in and opportunities for regional communities to actively attract refugees to move to their area open up.

Doing this effectively and in a way that is likely to lead to sustainable settlement does not happen of its own accord. It requires a range of strategies including:

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[6]   Empowering refugees requires the use of a Strengths Based Approach which focuses on identifying and building on their strengths (i.e. their knowledge, skills and attributes) and creating a safe environment in which they can learn and explore to build new knowledge and capacity. This is the opposite of a deficit model that involves identifying the things a person can't do and then doing them for them (as often happens in aged care).

- identifying opportunities for refugees in the regional centre;
- thinking carefully about how many refugees can be supported;
- linking to refugees who are open to the idea of moving to a regional area;
- finding synergies between what the regional centre can offer and what the refugees are looking for;
- providing interested refugees with enough of the right information to enable them to make an informed decision;
- enlisting the support of refugee community leaders;
- supporting refugees to maintain connections with their community.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

Identifying Opportunities

Identify employment opportunities and accommodation in the regional centre.

As previously discussed, two things are essential for sustainable settlement: employment and secure affordable accommodation. If refugees are to be attracted to an area, they need to have confidence that both will be available and those seeking to attract them need to be very clear about what they can offer.

Some employment opportunities in regional areas are obvious. The establishment of a new industry or the expansion of an existing industry can open up many job opportunities for skilled and unskilled labour. What has often happened in the past is that employers have sourced labour overseas, overlooking the fact that there might be capable workers closer to hand who have a vested interest in making a long-term commitment to their new community. Luv-a-Duck in Nhill didn't do this and their business, and the local community, benefited greatly.

Some employers in regional areas find it hard to source suitable workers locally. Many abattoirs throughout NSW and businesses such as Costas organic tomato farm in Guyra have successfully attracted refugees to fill labour shortages.

Employment opportunities don't necessarily have to 'come in bulk'. Many refugees are highly skilled and are able to fill single vacancies in a wide range of professions. Others can provide willing labour in industries and on farms.

And many refugees are highly entrepreneurial so if there is opening to set up something new in a town, encouraging and supporting a refugee to do this might well provide a mutually beneficial solution.

Sourcing suitable accommodation is the other element. For many regional centres with declining populations, this is not such an issue. In other places, some lateral thinking might be required. Some regional communities have joined forces to renovate unused farmhouses, others have provided accommodation at a peppercorn rent to refugees who are willing and able to do the renovations. Other communities are working with teams from Habitat for Humanity to make houses ready.

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Deciding How Many

Think carefully about how many refugees can be supported.

Before seeking to attract refugees to a regional area, it is important to think about how many individuals or families can be supported.

In some instances this is clear; for example the Luv-a-Duck factory in Nhill knew how many workers it needed and the community of Mingoola knew that it could only support a small number of families. In other cases it is not quite so clear cut.

Experience has shown that where exact numbers are not known, there are certain things that can guide decision making about attracting refugees to a new community:

- If there isn't an established community of people from the same background, there is merit in beginning with 3 to 5 families. One family will feel very isolated and miss contact with people who speak their language or come from their country. Having a small group of people from the same background, especially if they have collectively made the decision to relocate, means that the members are able to support each other.

- Ideally the first families should be ones who are more established in Australia (i.e. their initial settlement needs have been met) and who have members who speak good English. These early arrivals should then be encouraged to be actively involved in discussions about how many refugees should follow them and when they feel comfortable about being able to offer support.

Linking to Refugees

Establish links to refugee communities and support agencies in major centres.

Once a community has identified opportunities for refugees, links then need to be made to refugees already in the country who might be interested in moving to a regional area.

Traditional job recruitment strategies are unlikely to be effective for this group so other strategies need to be employed. In this case, two complementary pathways are recommended:

- Establishing links to the organisations providing support to refugees in major centres. A list of these is included as Appendix 5. These agencies know their clients and are best placed to identify individuals and groups who are likely to be open to having discussions about relocation.

- Establishing a relationship with refugee communities whose members are interested in moving to regional areas. The Humanitarian Settlement Program agency can provide advice and contacts in relation to this.

Support from Refugee Community Leaders

Enlist the support of refugee community leaders.

It is understandable that refugees look to the leaders of their communities for advice about important decisions. Without the support of leaders from within the refugee communities, it will be harder to encourage refugees to consider moving to regional centres.

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Regional centres keen to attract refugees should therefore not only focus on convincing those interested in moving but also the leaders of their communities of the benefits of relocation. The community leaders will be understandably keen to see what the regional location can offer and will also need to be reassured that refugees who move away do not need to sever their links to their community. Facilitated visits for leaders of refugee communities have proved valuable in building awareness and reassuring the leaders that their community members will be well supported.

Maintaining links between those supporting refugees in the regional areas and the community leaders in major centres is also important. Community leaders can be called upon to provide advice and mediation if ever there are problems.

Finding Synergies

Find synergies between what the regional centre can offer and what the refugees are looking for.

It is not enough to find refugees who want to move out of major centres. You also need to find the right match between the regional area and the refugees.

In most instances, this is primarily related to employment: identifying the refugees with the right skill match to meet labour shortages. There are, however, other dimensions.

Some of these are very practical and relate to things such as the availability of things such as schools, health services, vocational training opportunities etc. Others are often quite subjective, for example the refugees who went to Mingoola felt comfortable there because the local landscape reminded them of their former home. Others have been drawn to regional areas because of lifestyle, weather or the opportunity to grow their own vegetables.

Supporting Informed Decisions

Provide adequate information to refugees so they can make an informed decision to relocate.

Sustainable secondary settlement requires that the decision to move to a regional area is based on careful consideration of all relevant factors rather than on a whim. It also needs everyone in the family to support the decision to move (or at the very least, not actively oppose it).

Section 2.2 lists the things that are likely to be of relevance for refugees when considering whether a regional area is 'right' for them. Providing easy to interpret information about what your town can offer is a good place to start. Profiles of some regional centres[7] have already been developed to assist refugees with temporary visas to consider regional options and there is also a website[8] designed to attract people from the cities to regional areas that has more general information.

Information by itself, however, is not enough. Refugees considering moving to a regional area should be encouraged to come for a visit to see for themselves what it's like and meet local people. These visits also enable refugees to see where the town is and how far it is away from their community. Ideally such visits should be facilitated by those in the local community keen to welcome the refugees. And when the time comes to move, it is very valuable if the community can provide advice about and assistance with the many logistics of relocation.

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[7] Profiles for Albury, Armidale, Bathurst & Orange, Glen Innes, Goulburn, Leeton, Griffith, Southern Highlands, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Woolgoolga can be found on the SHEV page of the Refugee Council's website: www.refugeecouncil.org.au.

[8] Evocities: www.evocities.com.au

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Supporting Refugees to Maintain Connections

Facilitate ongoing connection to culture and community.

One of the reasons refugees move away from regional centres is that they miss being part of their community. This can be as simple as missing friends or can be linked to not being able to participate in special cultural or religious events with community members.

While being physically away from the main community does mean that things will be different, with some targeted support it should not mean that refugees must miss out on the community connections that they need to sustain their identity and sense of belonging. This is especially important if there are few people from any one group in the area or those that are there are geographically dispersed.

This support can be provided in many ways including by facilitating access to Skype, by organising transport so that refugees can go to the city for important cultural events and/or by inviting members of the refugees' broader community to events in the regional centre.

> In 2015 Albury hosted the National Bhutanese Soccer Championship. This was the first time this tournament took place outside a capital city. 16 teams from 7 cities around Australia participated.
>
> The Bhutanese community in Albury was able to show off their new home and all they have accomplished there and also build awareness amongst the people of Albury about the Bhutanese community in Australia.

* * *

Postscript

There are many instances of refugees who have initially settled in or moved to regional areas moving on. It's easy for community members who supported the refugees to feel betrayed or let down when this happens, after all, they made an investment in making the refugees feel welcome.

There is, however, another way to think of this.

The refugee experience is characterised by loss of choice. Refugees do not choose to leave their country. While in exile, they have little control over their lives. Most did not choose to come to Australia. Supporting refugee settlement is about giving back control – empowering refugees to make decisions about their lives.

If after a time living in a regional centre a refugee or refugee family decides to move on for reasons other than the failure of the community to meet their needs, this should be seen as positive. Those who have been supporting them should feel satisfied that they have played their part in giving them the confidence to make the decision.

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Refugee Voices

The best way to educate yourself and your community about refugees is to learn from them. The following films and books tell their stories.

Films and YouTube:

Australian Story: A Field of Dreams: (about the relocation of refugees to Mingoola) www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2016/s4563598.htm

Australian Story: Shooting for the Stars (about South Sudanese born Mayor Chagai's work with young people from refugee backgrounds): http://iview.abc.net.au/programs/australian-story/NC1701Q020S00

Deng Thiak Adut Unlimited – YouTube: www.youtube.com

Constance on the Edge: www.constanceontheedge.com

Mary Meets Mohammad: www.marymeetsmohammad.com

Rethink Refugees – Najeeba's Story YouTube: www.youtube.com

The most shocking second a day: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBQ-IoHfimQ

Still the most shocking second a day: /www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKDgFCojiT8

Za'atri: Thoughts from a refugee camp:www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2178SPJCKw

Aida and Majeeda: Thoughts from the Azraq Refugee Camp: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WSagdz-0Ac

The Extraordinary Story of Hussam: Teenager, Writer, and Syrian Refugee: www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDaPg3q7br4

Syria's war: Who is fighting and why: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKb9GVU8bHE

The European Refugee Crisis and Syria Explained: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvOnXh3NN9w

What they took with them: /www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS-Q2sgNjl8

Exit Syria: An interactive documentary that follows the goings on in Za'atri Refugee camp in Jordan where many thousands of Syrian refugees reside.www.sbs.com.au/exitsyria/#/

Calling Australia Home: links to stories (and film clips) of 9 refugees living in Australia: www.abc.net.au/news/2012-06-22/refugee-week-profiles-/4036618

Biographies:

Songs of War, Deng Thiak Adut
Shining: the Story of a Lucky Man, Abdi Aden with Robert Hillman
Pictures in My Heart, Fiona Hamilton

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PART 3: CASE STUDIES

Mingoola, NSW

Secondary settlement

Background

Faced with an ageing population, shortage of skills and younger generations leaving the town for metropolitan areas, Mingoola, a small town north of Tenterfield in northern NSW needed to boost their population of working age people and children.

The local community sought assistance to aid resettlement. They contacted the Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development International (GLAPD), a refugee run community organisation supporting refugees from the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, which in turn was supported by Settlement Services International.

GLAPD's Chairman, Emmanuel Musoni, facilitated a visit from refugees living in Sydney to Mingoola to meet the local community. This gave refugees an opportunity to engage with the people of the town, the landscape and to decide whether it was a place they could see themselves settling in.

While the initial settlement involved two families from Wollongong, another family relocated to Mingoola from Adelaide. The importance of choice, a collective culture, familiarity and a welcoming community were significant factors in the successful settlement of Mingoola.

Housing

Local residents of Mingoola joined forces to renovate disused farm houses for the refugee families. Given the number of refugees settling in the town, this was manageable. Mingoola now has a waiting list of potential families who would like to settle and they now face the situation where they are unable to match demand with appropriate housing and are actively exploring new areas for settlement.

Employment

The main source of employment in the region is agricultural work. Farmers have employed working age refugees settled in Mingoola. This has provided a more stable workforce, compared to backpackers who had historically undertaken these jobs temporarily during the season.

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Education

Mingoola Primary School faced closure before the arrival of refugees settling in the town, due to a lack of enrolments. Through the settlement process, primary school aged-children arrived and enrolled, keeping the school open resulting in a good outcome for local children and the local community.

Good practice:

1. Match the needs of both refugees and communities.

2. Ensure the local community is aware of what they can offer and their own limitations.

3. Provide refugees with a sense of what life is like in the regional area before they commit.

4. Ensure refugees can maintain a connection to their culture and community.

For more information about Mingoola see:

ABC News (November 2016), African refugees reinvigorating rural Mingoola in social experiment to boost ageing community, at http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-07/how-african-refugees-are-reinvigorating-mingoola/7970876.

Warrnambool, Victoria[9]

Secondary settlement

SNAPSHOT

- 11 South Sudanese families were supported to move to Warrnambool
- 2 families joined later – sponsored by family members
- 12 single adults moved for employment
- Most live in private housing
- Main employer was the meatworks
- Other jobs were as:
  - mechanics
  - hospitality workers
  - recycling workers
- All received AMEP English tuition from home or in class

Steps taken to settle the refugees

Funding

Project funded by grants and supported by Migrant Liaison Officer

Planning

between the local council and partners to work on criteria for successful resettlement

Identification

4 criteria identified - welcoming community, access to employment & services, and ability to reconnect with own community

Pilot

12 month pilot from 2003-2004 to settle at least 10 families

Planning

Planning for settlement began in 2001, with the Warrnambool Council and partners keen to promote diversity while also addressing the shortage of skilled and unskilled labourers in the region.

The planning phase of the project took about a year and involved partners including the South West Action Group for Refugees and the community. It focused on four criteria:

- Access to employment
- Access to services
- Ways to connect with the South Sudanese community
- Building a welcoming community.

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[9]   Brotherhood of St Laurence (2005), *Refugees and regional settlement: Balancing priorities*, at http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/6166/1/refugees_and_regional_settlement.pdf., p.42.

By 2004, the South Sudanese community in Warrnambool comprised of 68 people, including 11 families. While the families were relocated under the project, additional families were sponsored and other single individuals moved for employment purposes. The region successfully settled refugees and retained them. This also had the effect of attracting others in their community to join them – as the region had proved to be welcoming and full of opportunities.

Based on interviews with refugees settled in Warrnambool, the pilot was deemed a success as it achieved its criteria of establishing a local South Sudanese community and making the host community as welcoming as possible. Both were noted as being the best things about living in the region by South Sudanese refugees who were interviewed. The close community and friendliness of people were seen as advantages compared to living in a big city like Melbourne, where many had lived previously.

The access to services was also rated by settled families interviewed as being helpful, particularly the Migrant Liaison Officer (MLO). The MLO had also coordinated tours of the region for other South Sudanese refugees under the Dandenong Resource Centre to attract them to move. It was also noted that many of the refugees knew each other before being resettled in Australia.

Community Workers' Perspectives

- Employment was obtainable but limited
- Project catered better for families assisted to move than singles
- Housing was more expensive than in a city like Melbourne
- Families were integrating into the community
- Flagged that ongoing funding for the Migrant Liaison Officer was needed
- Short-term funding for projects was considered to be a problem

The region made positive progress in each of the four criteria chosen to signify success (welcoming host community, access to employment, access to services and connection with the South Sudanese community).

Good practice

1. **Planning** conducted early and evaluation throughout

2. Planned provision of **housing**

3. **Mapped and arranged** employment and other training

4. **Welcoming community and groups** e.g. South West Action Group for Refugees

5. Developed through **partnership** with community organisations and government.

Shepparton, Victoria

Primary settlement

Background

Shepparton was the first location selected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to pilot regional settlement of groups of refugees with no links in Australia. Ten families from the Democratic Republic of Congo were selected for the pilot and the first families arrived in 2015.

An evaluation of the pilot was undertaken in 2007.[10]

Planning

A key contributor to the success of the pilot was the formation of a Steering Committee which undertook careful planning in advance of the refugees' arrival, including preparing the local community, and carefully monitored how things were unfolding after the families began to arrive.

The Committee included individuals who held significant roles from within the three levels of Government and key stakeholders. The success of the work of the committee was linked to the active participation of all members and a common goal to achieve the best outcomes for arrivals.

To support the work of the Committee and bring in expertise in key areas, subcommittees were formed to focus on employment, education and health.

Housing

Affordable housing was a potential issue highlighted before settlement. Some attempts to secure affordable accommodation before arrival proved unsuccessful. Housing was eventually secured by:

- Catholic Church and Iraqi community offering housing

- GO TAFE signing leases for a month for early arrivals to deal with real estate agents reluctant to lease properties prior to arrival and to those with no rental history

- IHSS (initial settlement) providers securing accommodation (paying 4 weeks rent).

Managing expectations is an ongoing challenge that can be managed by clear and consistent communication with new arrivals. In Shepparton, refugees were told they would be provided with short-term accommodation however long-term accommodation was secured prior to their arrival by IHSS. They were therefore distrustful when asked to pay money to IHSS providers (reimbursing 3 of the 4 weeks rent IHSS had paid).

Employment was a prime focus of the pilot. An employment subcommittee was established and developed a work plan. Employment focus and outcomes changed and adapted throughout the pilot.

- The plan was to link new arrivals to employment agencies and develop a Best Practice Guide.

- Job providers originally made no changes to their processes for refugees but became more involved once a few families had arrived.

- Securing employment was a significant challenge. Even though the region suffered skill shortages, employers were reluctant to take on people who needed training.

- Overall employment outcomes are generally positive. After 12 months only 3 families out of 10 had no one working.

- It was recommended local government be more involved in exploring employment options and engaging with employers.

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[10]   Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2007), *Shepparton Regional Humanitarian Settlement Pilot,* at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/12_2013/shepparton_pilot_acces_0.pdf

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Health

Health was highlighted as a key area, particularly the capacity of local services. A subcommittee was established to specifically deal with health-related issues for refugees.

- Local GPs collaborated to overcome challenges such as a lack of advance information on the health needs of refugees (or lack of records), managing protocols for contagious disease (e.g. tuberculosis) and the number of health tests new refugees had to undertake.

- Methods of communicating information were a challenge, as refugees with limited understanding of protocols and procedures had a tendency to take all information literally. Communicating via interpreters and through the Refugee Nurse overcame this issue.

- Refugees were given two days of instruction about nutrition, hygiene, dental care, and were provided basic training in first aid.

Role of volunteers

Volunteers were essential to the success of the pilot program in Shepparton. They assisted new arrivals in many day-to-day tasks, such as driving refugees, taking their families out around the town and inviting new arrivals to community events.

Although volunteers made a substantial social impact on new arrivals, it is important there are guidelines for volunteers to follow. Some gave conflicting advice on issues or had no previous experience working with refugees. It is essential that while we harness the goodwill of the community, we ensure volunteers are trained, organised and given support.

Transport

Transport was flagged as an ongoing issue in the evaluation due to public transport not always meeting the needs of refugees and/or the reluctance of some to use it.

Efforts to mitigate this issue included:

- Caseworkers introduced refugees to public transport and encouraged its use (and in the process discovered it did not meet all their needs)
- Volunteers assisted in providing transport
- Introducing refugees to driver learning programs is a possible long-term solution.

Good practice

1. Thorough planning. Steering committees are recommended, but coordination of planning across sectors is also essential.

2. **Flexibility**. Adjusting work-plans and changing priorities to meet the needs of refugees is best practice.

3. Risk assessment. Thinking in advance about what might go wrong and planning a coordinated response means that if and when something happens, it can be dealt with collaboratively and without undermining community support.

4. Harnessing the goodwill of the community. Use of volunteers can help achieve better settlement outcomes, if coordinated effectively.

Ballarat, Victoria

Primary settlement

Snapshot

Following the success of the Shepparton pilot, Ballarat was selected because of its proximity to Melbourne, its infrastructure and its affordable housing.

12 families from the West African country of Togo began arriving in Ballarat in mid 2007. In 2017, 67 Togolese still call Ballarat home.

Employment

Employment was a challenge since Ballarat had few relevant vacancies.

There was a focus in the program to encourage further study and/or training, particularly English classes, in order to make the refugees job-ready. Managing expectations was important.

Employment outcomes for Togolese entrants in this Pilot were difficult to assess because:

- most of the Togolese had only been in Australia for less than a year when the evaluation was done
- there were unresolved issues in relation to recognition of overseas qualifications.

At the time of the evaluation, the Togolese expressed eagerness to find stable employment and utilise their existing skills. The evaluation stressed the importance of providing flexible delivery of AMEP and specialised employment support to assist refugees in regional areas.

Housing

Housing is one of the most critical factors in settlement. The evaluation found that the ease of finding affordable accommodation was a key success factor in the case of Ballarat.

Health

A Subcommittee was established to focus on responding to the health needs of the refugees, with a particular focus on preventative health care. Strategic intervention was considered essential as the area suffers from a shortage of doctors.

Success was driven by:
- involving key health services and centres in the subcommittee, alongside experts in other forms of health e.g. mental health, infectious disease, and experts in working with refugees

- the active engagement of the *Refugee Health Nurse* who made an invaluable contribution though overseeing initial health assessments, educating mainstream health professionals working closely with refugees in their homes to identify risks and ensure they were safe

- AMEP assisting the Refugee Health Nurse to develop instruction on health-related issues for the arrivals in their own language

The Subcommittee also planned ahead for refugees by mapping local service capacity, identifying what additional resources would be required and made links with refugee health providers.

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Local Government

The pilot was consistent with Ballarat City Council's *Migrant Attraction and Retention Population Strategy* which aimed to develop a coordinated and properly resourced approach to providing economic opportunities, bolstering infrastructure and ensuring the existence of a welcoming community. The plan also sought to:

- support a welcoming culture by educating citizens of Ballarat about the contributions that migrants can make to the future social, cultural, and economic prosperity
- attract migrants by actively marketing and promoting Ballarat as a migration destination
- integrate migrants into daily life by providing the settlement services necessary to help them live, work, and learn in Ballarat; and
- retain migrants by ultimately encouraging them to make Ballarat their permanent home.

The existence of the Strategy helped focus Council's commitment to the pilot and facilitate the involvement of staff.

Engagement

Engagement with the local community had begun ahead of the arrival of the refugees. The community was informed in various ways including through:

- the local newspaper
- community events
- school events.

Transport

Ballarat's poor local transport was identified as a challenge so housing was sourced close to the centre of town.

The Experience of Refugees

While the Togolese refugees were grateful for the assistance they received, those working with them noted that some were struggling. There were various reasons for this including:

- the lack of service providers' knowledge about Togo
- the complexity of the family structures
- diversity amongst the entrants and divisions between them
- some inconsistency in the way services were delivered
- the high levels of torture and trauma the entrants had experienced
- the refugees' overwhelming impatience to reclaim their lives
- the weather – especially the cold Ballarat winters.

Sensitivity and flexibility were required from service providers to respond to these challenges.

Good Practice

1. Commitment from all key stakeholders to contribute to supporting successful settlement
2. Formation of effective and well led cross-sectoral working groups
3. Close collaboration between key sectors, in particular health and education.
4. Ability to identify and respond to complex needs of the newly arrived refugees.
5. Willingness of key stakeholders to fill identified gaps.

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Nhill, Victoria

Employer led secondary settlement
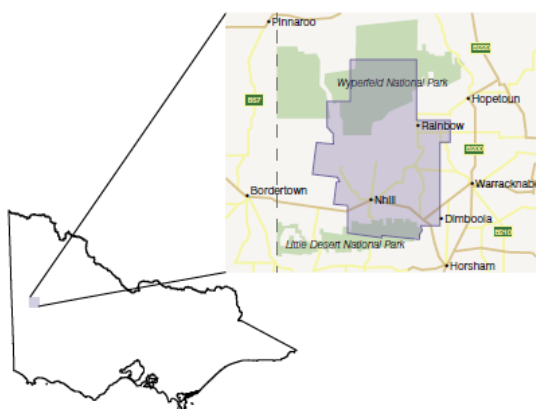
Snapshot

Nhill is a small town in North-West Victoria, with a population of less than 2,500 people. It is primarily an agricultural town, classified as 'Outer Regional Australia'. Since 2010, the town has successfully settled approximately 160 Karen refugees from Myanmar.

Background

Like many regional communities, Nhill was facing a declining population, which in turn threatened the town's economic and social development.
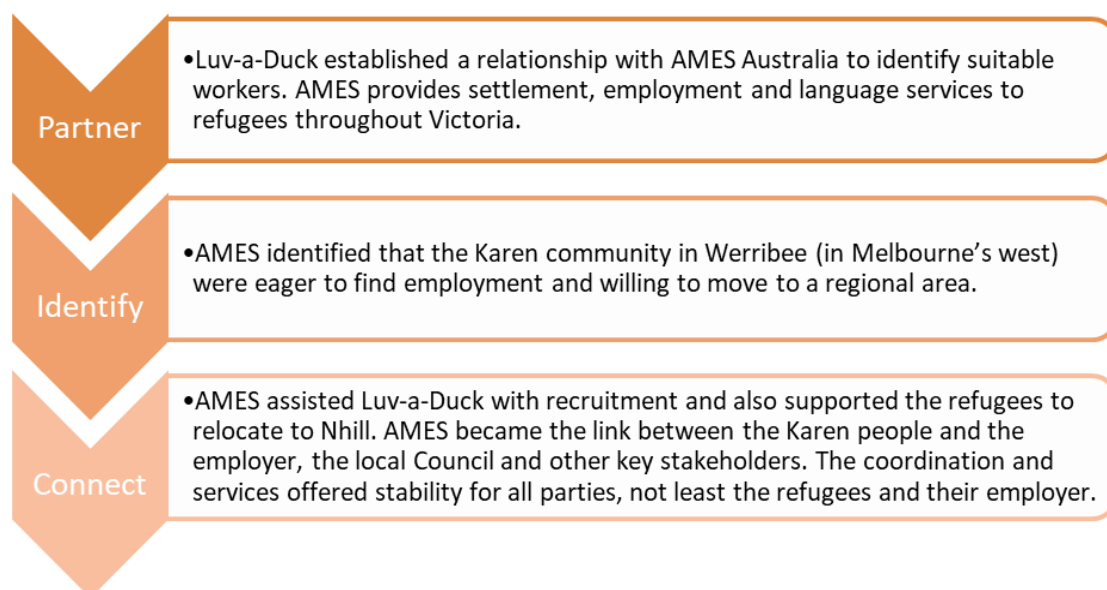
In 2009, a major local poultry producer, Luv-a-Duck, had the opportunity to expand but they needed workers. Not being able to find them locally, they attracted refugees from Myanmar.

Before the Karen refugees came to Nhill, only 136 people were born overseas (mostly skilled migrants and their families).

Employment

- Luv-a-Duck employed 54 Karen refugees and a further seven were employed by allied businesses

- A total of 70.5 full-time-equivalent positions have been added to the local economy

- The settlement of Karen people has given other employers a 'talent pool' of people available to work

- Interest from other Victorian regions in adopting the model to boost labour supply.

Process

- Partner: Luv-a-Duck established a relationship with AMES Australia to identify suitable workers. AMES provides settlement, employment and language services to refugees throughout Victoria.

- Identify: AMES identified that the Karen community in Werribee (in Melbourne's west) were eager to find employment and willing to move to a regional area.

- Connect: AMES assisted Luv-a-Duck with recruitment and also supported the refugees to relocate to Nhill. AMES became the link between the Karen people and the employer, the local Council and other key stakeholders. The coordination and services offered stability for all parties, not least the refugees and their employer.

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Economic impact of the settlement (using Deloitte Access Economics (Regional General Equilibrium Model - DAE-RGEM) has shown:

- an increase in labour supply, a direct result of the resettlement of the Karen people; and

- an increase in demand for labour

By 2015, the Karen had contributed $41.5m to the local economy.

Other Benefits

There are many other significant benefits from the settlement of refugees in Nhill. These include:

- enhanced diversity within Nhill through the presence of an established and well-integrated community of Karen people

- revitalised local services

- ability to attract government funding

- increased social capital across both communities

- less strain on the metropolitan settlement locations in Victoria

- building the population in regional Victoria, which is on the decline overall.

Support

- AMES was critical to the success of the settlement of Nhill, providing job services and assistance to Karen refugees.

- As AMES was the liaison between multiple groups, its involvement enhanced stability, the trust of the Karen people and importantly, was active in directing the employer and refugees to relevant services.

- Luv-a-Duck supported further training in the workplace and encouraged further study in local colleges.

Transport

- Volunteers (locals from within the community) assisted refugees to travel to appointments.

- Nhill is connected by public transport (trains and buses) to neighbouring towns and services running to Melbourne or Adelaide.

- Transport was not flagged as a critical issue in Nhill, although it is important to consider transport access in the initial stages of settlement planning.

Good practice

1. **Forming partnerships**. The partnership between employers, service providers and the community was essential to the success of the program. These partnerships are most effective when they are firmly established before settlement.

2. **Having clear objectives**. A shortage of skilled workers and ageing population were the key issues affecting Nhill, which could be directly addressed by encouraging working age refugees to settle in the area.

3. **Ongoing support.** Partnering with AMES to identify potential people to work and live in Nhill and assist with the settlement and training, made the settlement of Karen people in Nhill almost seamless. The ongoing support they offered, along with the employer and the community is likely a factor in their high retention rate.

For more information, please see Economic and social impact of the Karen resettlement in Nhill, by AMES and Deloitte:
https://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/19933%20AMES%20Nhill%20Report%20LR.pdf

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Limestone Coast, SA Australia

Mount Gambier, Naracoorte and Bordertown

Targeted support following primary settlement

Background

Mount Gambier was one of three sites selected by the federal government to pilot 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 struggled to find employment. This case study focuses on a project that addressed this.

The Limestone Coast Sustainable Regional Settlement Project was undertaken to support the refugees from Myanmar who had been settled in Mount Gambier. It was funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship through the *Sustainable Regional Settlement Program* and was conducted over 18 months, initially as an employment and training program engaging 10 refugees and then expanding.

Led by the Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre and working in partnership with business and other key sectors, the project aimed to:
- identify suitable employment opportunities;
- improve employment-related skills of the humanitarian entrants;
- develop a targeted program that would match job seekers with suitable employment.

Implementation and evaluation[11] of the project was overseen by a Project Steering Committee. This committee also developed a communications plan and resources for employers.

The official launch of the project was attended by employers and local industries, over 100 representatives from service providers, volunteers and other members of the community. The launch was covered in the media which in turn ensured the host community was well-informed about the project and its aims.

The first stage was so successful that, following an evaluation, a second stage was implemented. In all, 39 participants received formal training. While initially focusing on refugees from Myanmar, the expanded program assisted refugees from many backgrounds, several of whom moved to the region because of the work opportunities.

Vocational Training

Training providers were partners in the delivery of the project as training was seen as essential to improve employment outcomes. They collaborated with government and other community groups to offer targeted training that enabled the refugees to gain the skills that led to them securing employment.

Driver Education

Transport was addressed early on as the area lacked public transport. The refugees went through a comprehensive learner driver program which used volunteers to help the refugees secure licences. This then opened up opportunities for the refugees to work throughout the region.

[11] Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (2010), *Limestone Coast: Sustainable Regional Settlement Project Report,* at https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/current/2010_Limestone_SRS_report.pdf

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English

Provision for flexible English language classes was identified as important as formal participation and delivery were inhibiting for refugees who were employed or involved in work experience or other training courses.

Ongoing Training and Support

On-the-job training was also identified as key to workplace retention. This included training in Work Health and Safety and job-specific skills. Mentors added additional support.

Community

Support from community networks and the work of volunteers were rated as one of the most critical factors in securing training and employment opportunities and ensuring a high retention rate of new arrivals.

Employment Outcomes

Employment goals were achieved, with 26 people being directly linked to full time or part time employment and the remaining 13 undertaking practical work experience or volunteering that led to favourable work outcomes.

Initiatives included:

- forklift training with a 100% pass rate, all receiving licenses and able to seek employment using their newfound skills
- placements in volunteer positions to gain experience (e.g. tree planting under the Work for the Dole scheme). 6 participants were then offered employment
- 2 volunteers gained employment with the Migrant Resource Centre as bi-lingual workers
- all volunteer and work experience placements supported good long-term outcomes in terms of employment, as employers took many on for full-time and part-time work.

The success in employment was due to partnerships between employers, the settlement agency Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre and government.

Good Practice

Key success factors in the Limestone Coast pilot:

- Ongoing case management support for all participants by the Migrant Resource Centre
- Collaboration and strong relationships between all stakeholders including settlement agencies, training providers, employment service providers and industry
- Flexible delivery of language training
- Targeted vocational training that also included work-readiness and workplace English
- Ongoing support in the workplace
- Identifying and exploiting local agricultural and business opportunities
- Engagement with and support of the local community
- Creation of opportunities for the refugees to interact with the local community
- Providing access to migration agents so that the refugees could propose family members and build local communities.

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Murray Bridge, South Australia

Secondary settlement

Snapshot

Refugees from different communities began settling in Murray Bridge from the early 2000s. They were attracted by employment opportunities, affordable housing and the welcoming local community. Early arrivals were mainly from Afghanistan and many of the mid-2000 arrivals were from South Sudan.

In 2008, Lutheran Community Care was awarded a Sustainable Regional Settlement Grant to study how the South Sudanese refugees were faring.
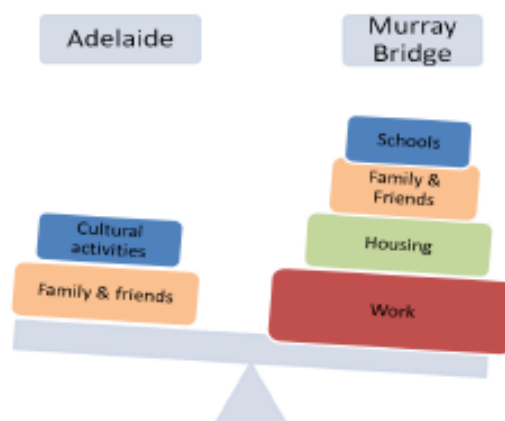
KEY SURVEY FINDINGS:[12]

Lifestyle

Respondents were lavish in their praise of Murray Bridge. They loved the river environment, the climate and the friendliness of the people. They also liked it because it was 'clean' and 'quiet' and because 'life was easier' than in the city.

Education

Education received mixed responses in the evaluation. While local schools were considered excellent, the perception of refugees was that tertiary education wasn't adequate and four participants in the evaluation travelled to Adelaide to study.

- The main reason people left the town was for higher education
- Large numbers (including school-age residents) indicated higher education may be a reason for them to leave in future
- TAFE offered only a limited number of courses.

Some of these issues have been addressed:

- The town is working towards creating an educational precinct with a small university
- Schools are looking into how ESL programs may be delivered online
- The Regional Director of TAFE noted the lack of knowledge regarding the tertiary sector in Australia and recommended refugees be taught about pathways.

Employment

A key factor for South Sudanese refugees in moving from Adelaide to Murray Bridge was availability of employment. The meat processing plant (largest local employer) became a key employer.

The evaluation found employment outcomes were generally positive. Unemployment amongst South Sudanese in Murray Bridge was zero compared to 16.7% in Adelaide. Employment rates for other ethnic groups were also high.

The lack of variety of employment options was seen as a negative, especially amongst the younger and more educated members of the community.

It was also felt that more in-workplace support (including workplace English) would help those new to the country adapt to local employment. Greater access to TIS was also identified.

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[12]   Lutheran Community Care (2009) *Sustaining Settlement in Murray Bridge South Australia,* at
http://www.rdamr.org.au/fileadmin/user_upload/docs/Major_report_Final_Version.pdf

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Housing

Affordable housing was considered another factor which attracted refugees. In Murray Bridge (2009), the median rent per week was $220 compared to $380 for Adelaide.

Community

- When asked about the town, all comments about Murray Bridge were positive.
- Support from churches and places of worship was highly important.
- The communal spirit was seen as a major advantage to regional settlement as all share common aspirations and possess a 'can-do' attitude.
- The refugees asked for expanded opening hours at the library to enable better access.

Health

While no health-specific programs were implemented, health services were perceived as adequate by the refugees.

Transport

Public transport received the most negative responses. It was considered inadequate for their needs. This included local transport and also transport to Adelaide.

Focus group discussion with students revealed they would consider staying in the town if there was a reliable service to educational precincts.

Other Benefits

In 2003, Murray Bridge was declared Refugee Friendly. Further projects to support refugees and the new diverse arrivals in the town, include:

- more English classes
- community information sessions
- 'New Settler' online learning
- building bridges to sustainable employment.

Murray Bridge is now a multicultural and thriving town. The settlement of South Sudanese refugees and the Afghans before them, and their treatment by the local community, has paved the way for more groups to settle in the town and more projects to support them.

Good Practice

1. **Leveraging the success of other programs.** Murray Bridge learned from the lessons learnt in the Limestone Coast about how to attract new refugees.

2. **Flexibility.** Issues were identified during settlement and the evaluation period, with communities working to fix those which are beyond the scope of governments.

3. **Balancing priorities.** Focusing on particular priorities, e.g. employment, does drive outcomes but it is critical to ensure there is not just one focus for settlement.

Recommended Model

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Rockhampton, Queensland

Primary and secondary settlement

Snapshot

Rockhampton is located 600km north of Brisbane, with a population of approximately 84,000 people. The town is continuing to grow, with a large proportion of its residents being born overseas and of working age (25-64).

Both newly arrived refugees and those relocating from Brisbane have been welcomed into the city and have contributed to addressing labour shortages.

Employment

Employment is a focus of settlement in Rockhampton which is suffering from a shortage of skilled labour. Local employers have begun looking to employ migrants and newly arrived refugee rather than seeking workers from overseas.

- Manufacturing and construction are prime industries in the town

- TeysAustralia, a meat-works company, has a long history of employing migrants and a major employer of refugees settling in Rockhampton

- Teys has an ongoing contract with MDA Partner, Access Community Services – specialises in resettling refugees or migrants and their families

- A Friendly Nation initiative was developed to focus on supporting refugees from Syria.

Settlement and Multicultural Services

Rockhampton has accessible settlement and multicultural services.

- MDA is one of the largest independent agencies working with refugees and assisting their resettlement (funded HSP provider)

- MDA works in partnership with other service providers and government on service delivery

- Refugees have been able to access a number of their programs including the LifeSkills program that explains the health system, education, law and finding accommodation in Australia

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APPENDIX 1: Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program Visas

	Visa Subclass	Visa Name	People to Whom it is Granted
GRANTED OVERSEAS (OFFSHORE)	200	Refugee	Identified by UNHCR and referred to Australia for resettlement. Must be a refugee and have a protection need that can only be met through resettlement.
	201	In Country Special Humanitarian	Visa is granted to people still in their country of origin (i.e. they are not refugees). Most are identified by UNHCR or DIBP. Very few of these visas are granted.
	202	Special Humanitarian Program	Holders must have suffered substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of their human rights. They are not required to be refugees but in most cases are. There must also be a link to Australia in the form of a sponsor (proposer) who will be their main supporter after arrival. Their needs are similar to refugee visa entrants.
	203	Emergency Rescue	Cases identified by UNHCR and moved because the person is in imminent danger.
	204	Women at Risk	Cases usually identified by UNHCR. Typically either single women or female headed households and their dependents. They have been selected because of their vulnerability. There is a high probability that the principle entrant (and sometimes the dependents) will have experienced significant torture/trauma.
GRANTED IN AUSTRALIA (ONSHORE)	866	Permanent Protection (onshore)	Visa issued to those recognised as refugees by the Australian government after they sought asylum in Australia. In most cases these visas are issued to asylum seekers who arrived by plane and resided in the community while their claims were being examined.
	785	Temporary Protection (TPV) (onshore)	One of two temporary visas issued to asylum seekers who arrived by boat after 2013 and determined to be a refugee. Valid for 3 years. Holder must prove ongoing need for protection to be granted a further TPV.
	790	Safe Haven Enterprise (SHEV) (onshore)	Second option for boat arrivals. Visa valid for 5 years and includes possibility of pathway to permanent residence if holder satisfies various criteria including living/working in regional area for 3½ years.

Asylum seekers waiting for a decision on their refugee status hold Bridging Visas.

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APPENDIX 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of the Different Types of Regional Settlement

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Planned Settlement	- Site selected after consideration of its capacity to meet entrants' core needs - Commitment obtained from all three levels of government - Enables key agencies to work collaboratively to plan for arrival in advance - Ensures resources are allocated - Local community can be prepared	- Often takes time (6-12 months) to plan - Requires significant investment from all stakeholders - Limitations in the number of suitable unlinked entrants - Entrants not involved in choice of destination - Location might not necessarily suit entrants (e.g. climate, topography)
Entrant Initiated Settlement	- Location selected by entrants for reasons important to them - Full commitment of entrants to building a new home in the regional area	- Services unprepared for arrival - No resources allocated in advance - Workers unfamiliar in working with humanitarian entrants - No guarantee that core needs can be met - Possibility of local backlash because they cannot draw on support from key opinion leaders
Locally Initiated Settlement	- Reflection of serious commitment by members of the local community to humanitarian settlement - Those involved can help to shape community response - Capacity to mobilise resources	Success depends on understanding of locals about humanitarian settlement and their capacity to engage effectively and in a timely manner with key service providers

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APPENDIX 3: Service Eligibility by Visa Type

OCTOBER 2017	Permanent Visa	TPV or SHEV
Initial Settlement Support[13]	Eligible[14]	Not eligible
Ongoing Settlement Support[15]	Eligible	Not eligible
Social Security	Eligible for all Centrelink services	Limited eligibility: Special Benefit, Rent Assistance, Family Assistance
English Language	Eligible	Eligible
Employment	Eligible	Eligible
Health	Eligible	Eligible
Mental Health	Eligible	Eligible
School Education	Eligible	Eligible
Tertiary Education	Eligible	Eligibility varies
Employment Assistance (jobactive)	Eligible	Eligible
Able to sponsor immediate family	Eligible	Not eligible

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[13]   Humanitarian Settlement Program funded by the Department of Social Services.
[14]   Holders of a permanent visa subclass 866 have only conditional access to initial settlement support.
[15]   Settlement Support Program funded by the Department of Social Services.

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APPENDIX 4: Settlement

Settlement Needs

While refugees have many of the same settlement needs as other migrants, for example they will need somewhere to live, some form of income etc., they also have needs that are additional to and distinct from those of voluntary migrants, not least because they are likely to:

- be traumatised by their experiences
- have had long periods when they had poor food and little medical care
- be affected by not having had any control over their lives
- fear and/or distrust of government, the military and the police because of past experiences
- lack of financial resources and belongings.

Often when people think about the needs of refugees, they think in terms of very practical things, forgetting that there is a parallel and equally important set of needs – those that relate to how the person feels, thinks and reacts:

Practical Needs	Emotional Needs
Initial information and orientation	Safety
Accommodation	Trust
Household goods	Control over the environment
Language	Ability to plan for the future
Education	Restoration of sense of dignity
Income support	Regaining a sense of self worth
Employment	Regaining a sense of belonging
Health care	Maintaining relationships within the family
Torture-trauma counselling	
Legal assistance	
Connection to their own community	
Religious expression	
Leisure and recreation	
Becoming part of the wider community	
Support for special needs groups (e.g. unaccompanied minors, sole parents, people with a disability etc.)	

Those responsible for meeting refugees' practical needs must also recognise that they also have a responsibility to recognise and meet their emotional needs.

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Indicators of Settlement

PART 1 included a table from the department of Social Services that set out the things used to determine whether a refugee has 'settled'. Another way at looking at settlement is to consider the things that assist refugees to adjust to life in Australia. In this regard, it is worth looking at two studies:

1. The Australian Institute of Family Studies is currently undertaking a longitudinal study into what helps or hinders the successful settlement of humanitarian entrants.[16] They are following 1,500 individuals and their families (close to 2,400 people) from 35 countries who arrived in 2013.

   Their first report gives some interesting insights into the experiences of new entrants. Of particular relevance here is what refugees said were the things that most helped them to start their new life in Australia:

Factors that Helped New Entrants Start a New Life in Australia
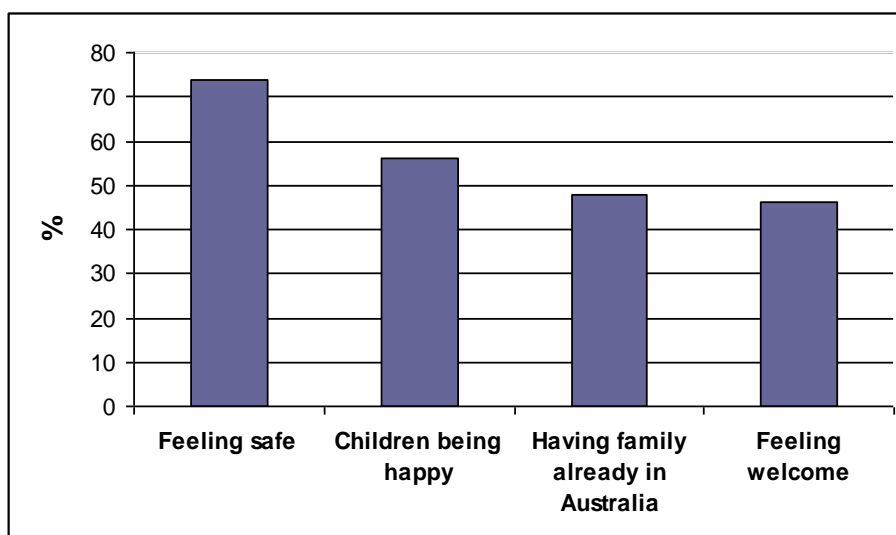
2. A study[17] which set out to explore with young people (aged 18 to 25) from a range of refugee backgrounds what 'settlement' means to them and what they considered to be the things that assisted and hindered settlement.

   In summary, the research found that young people from refugee backgrounds:

   - define 'settlement' in terms of how they feel (safe, secure, connected and empowered) rather than what they have (e.g. house or income)
   - see 'successful settlement' as having many elements which combine having the basic necessities and being able to engage confidently with the wider community
   - define 'unsuccessful settlement' in terms of isolation, inability to meet basic needs; lack of security, lack of organisation and unresolved trauma.

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[16]   Building a New Life in Australia. Australian Institute of Family Studies: www.aifs.gov.au

[17]   *Perspectives of Settlement: Views of young people from refugee backgrounds.* University of Sydney, Multicultural Development Association and Centre for Multicultural Youth. 2013.

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Stages of Settlement

It is recognised that refugees go through various stages as they adapt to life in their new country. The following graph describes the stages/ phases of adjustment in a graphical form. It highlights three important aspects of the adjustment process:

- There are broad trends in the way refugees feel about their new life and these change over time.
- The emotional journey of a refugee (as depicted by the wavy line) is much more like a roller coaster than a steady path.
- If refugees receive appropriate support in a timely manner, they will move towards integration into their new community. If they are not supported, there is a chance that they will end up being marginalised.

PHASES OF REFUGEE ADJUSTMENT
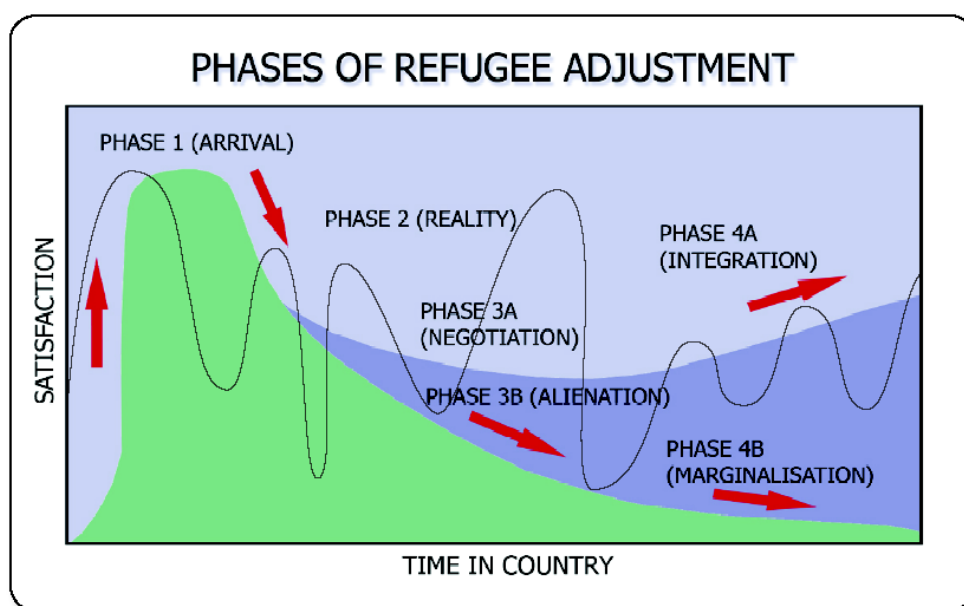
Centre for Multicultural Youth: Information Sheet No. 14. 2006

The stages are sometimes called different names however there is broad agreement that there are stages and that there is no set time frame for people to move through the stages. It is also accepted that not everyone will go through each of the stages.

One of the challenging realities of humanitarian settlement is that within one family, individuals will move through the stages at different rates. The presence or absence of members of their extended family is also likely to have an impact on ease of adjustment to life in Australia.

The film *Constance on the Edge* (www.constanceontheedge.com) depicts the stages of settlement very powerfully. Constance is one of the first refugees from Sudan to be settled in Wagga Wagga. She faces racism and one of her children struggles to find his identity. Filmed over 10 years, Constance's story traces the highs and lows of her journey, identifies the things that helped her to when things were hard and most of all, shows her remarkable resilience.

Constance on the Edge also depicts Wagga's journey to learn about and accept those coming into the community from an unfamiliar background and culture.

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APPENDIX 5: Major Settlement Service Providers in NSW

Program	Description	Provider(s)
Humanitarian Settlement Program	Intensive initial support for refuges	*Sydney, Western NSW and Northern NSW:* Settlement Services International www.ssi.org.au *ACT and Southern NSW:* Australian Red Cross www.redcross.org.au
Settlement Grants	Casework and community development support for refugees during their first five years	For a list of providers in NSW see http://serviceproviders.dss.gov.au/ and select NSW and Settlement Grants
Torture and Trauma Counselling	Specialised support for individuals and families who have experienced torture and trauma	STARTTS www.startts.org.au
Refugee Health	Initial health assessment plus support for health providers	NSW Refugee Health Service www.swslhd.nsw.gov.au/refugee/
Adult Migrant English Program	Provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to eligible humanitarian entrants to help them learn foundation English language and settlement skills to enable them to participate socially and economically in Australian society	Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) providers vary according to region. Go to the following website to find your local provider: www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-service-providers
jobactive	Specialised employment support	For local jobactive providers see https://jobsearch.gov.au/provider/help_provider.aspx

It is important to note that while Humanitarian Settlement Program providers cover the State, they often only provide outreach work to communities that are not existing settlement locations. As services are most effective when locally led, it is important the local Council play an active role in coordinating these services and encouraging information and resource sharing.

This being said, funded settlement service providers can provide valuable advice, support and training across the state and should be actively involved in all planning and coordination initiatives.

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APPENDIX 6: A Local Response to Supporting Refugees

*This is an example of how one local Council came up with a low cost solution
to helping new arrivals to feel connected and supported.*

Cumberland Council in Sydney's west recognised a need to provide information and support community members, especially those from diverse backgrounds. To do this, they established an innovative partnership with their local TAFE college (Granville TAFE).

As part of their course, community welfare students work under supervision to support refugees and migrants to understand what's available in the local community and navigate access to services.

This is done through a free drop-in service located on different days at three of the Council facilities (the library, the youth recreation centre and a community hall).

Translating and interpreting support is provided when required and in some cases, bi-lingual casework is available.

The drop-in service provides general advice about local services, referrals to specialist providers and assists people to fill in forms such as:

- Centrelink forms
- Medicare claims
- Child support forms
- School enrolment forms
- Citizenship forms etc.

Local walking tours are also conducted to familiarise new residents with local shops, services and recreational opportunities.

For more information go to www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au.

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