



Answer to question:

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

MIGRATION, PATHWAY TO NATION BUILDING INQUIRY

QUESTION: Dr WEBSTER: I could talk to you all day. It seems that Toowoomba, therefore, have come up with a housing solution. I would be very interested if you have the data on how many of those Yazidis are actually part of the workforce—that would be good—and on how many may be on welfare. It's a story, and Australians are great with stories. If that story were known—today is the first day I've heard about it. ... It's a really good story because it's warts and all. It's very important, particularly for regional communities— because we are known for being pretty pragmatic—to face the challenges and have the courage of our convictions that this is a good way to go. But there are barriers such as housing and jobs. Are there enough jobs? Are they making jobs? Are they thriving businesses? There's a whole bunch I'd like to know.

ANSWER:

[**Note:** there are variants to the spelling of Yazidi/Yezidi - and Multicultural Australia uses the term Ezidi through this document].

Multicultural Australia does not have clear sight on disaggregated data for community members (including the Ezidi community) as part of the workforce or on welfare. Our regional teams and employment services refer information sources like regional labour market summary, to understand local industry profiles, employer needs and recruitment trends – including information on residents on job seeker income support payments¹.

Our work with communities, however, informs us about their enormous appetite to secure work and sustainable employment. Multicultural Australia works with local partners to find employment opportunities for refugee and humanitarian entrants. For example, after establishing a relationship with Multicultural Australia to address workforce issues, local employer Tambo Teddies now employs several newly arrived refugees². Ezidi community members are also highly entrepreneurial in their approach towards settlement. This is evidenced by the recent setting up of cultural grocery stores and supermarkets, kebab and barber shops, and fashion stores in the region. Many new arrivals in the Ezidi community have successfully completed the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) through the local TAFE Queensland and moved into other areas of study at TAFE like childcare, barbering, beauty, and house painting. There are examples of community members excelling in their chosen fields. For example, a community member who completed a Diploma in Beauty is now a Salon Manager at a reputable salon in Toowoomba. Another community member transitioned from

¹ <https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/regions/employment-region-dashboards-and-profiles/>

² [Meet the Tambo Teddies Toowoomba Team - Tambo Teddies](#)

TAFE Queensland into University and has now Graduated with a Bachelor of Art majoring in International Relations and Social Justice Studies.

These examples of successful employment and placement for community members, while significant – do not provide the full picture. There are barriers in terms of community members' readiness for work, their placement into employment, as well as post-placement supports. For individual community members, readiness for work issues could include gaining functional level literacy and proficiency in English, understanding workplace expectations, sustaining workplace communication etc. Upon arrival, community members are impatient to get into work – and our staff and employment teams need to provide a lot of 'scene setting' to assist them. Refugee and humanitarian entrants receive Settlement Life Skills Information early in their settlement (through the Humanitarian Settlement Program - HSP). This covers important information relevant to life in Australia and an opportunity for new arrivals to learn more about Australian culture, customs and behavioural norms. This also includes important information relevant to interactions with government, mainstream and community services, understanding forms/ written correspondence, understanding local employment expectations etc. This information included in early settlement is not resourced for provision in the later settlement programs like the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program. Our SETS staff work individually with clients undertaking appropriate assessments and providing appropriate information and supports. Clients with any relevant prior business skills or interest are referred to Thrive Refugee Enterprise to assist and motivate them towards their own business. There are successful examples of clients supported through Thrive, going on to open and own their own local business.

Securing sustainable and meaningful employment is recognised as a significant contributor to settlement success for refugees and humanitarian entrants. However, refugee and humanitarian entrants can often face intersecting structural disadvantages – complex cultural transitions, disrupted education pathways, traumatic past experiences, and systemic biases in the labour markets. Familiarity or confidence with written or spoken English, the non-recognition of skills and work experience obtained overseas, a lack of local work experience, interpersonal or institutional/systemic racism and discrimination can contribute in different ways to exclude individuals from participating in the Australian workforce. These can result in failure to secure sustainable work leading to long-term unemployment and loss of motivation. Multicultural Australia strongly supports employment programs that understand the refugee and forced migration experience, and support individuals in a trauma and culturally informed manner. We seek employment services that support individuals with building confidence and skills – while assisting them to address barriers or entrenched disadvantage and work towards meaningful aspirations for their future.

Multicultural Australia would note that with the roll-out of the Workforce Australia model in 2022, not many 'Refugee' or 'CALD' licenses were issued nationally. In Queensland, there are no specialist refugee licenses issued. There is significant need in Toowoomba – as the 2021 Census demonstrated. Toowoomba is now home to the largest group of Ezidi people in Australia, and Kurdish Kurmanji – their traditional language is the second most spoken language in Toowoomba, behind English. Multicultural Australia would welcome a reconsideration of employment supports and models for locations with significant CALD/refugee populations – including, Toowoomba. Here we would note the ongoing inquiries

into Workforce Australia Employment Services as well as ParentsNext services. Multicultural Australia has provided submissions to these two Inquiries, and also appeared at the Public Hearing for the Workforce Australia Employment Services Inquiry. We would be happy to provide these submissions upon request.

Multicultural Australia SETS team also work with employers and local providers to address economic participation barriers for our clients. At the employer level, we do not find many local employers willing to provide some flexibility in employing refugee and humanitarian entrants. Employers may view refugees as an available, local worker pool and want them to be ready for immediate placement. Most employers are not trauma-informed or ready to engage in flexible workplace practices. An example of a flexible workplace practice can be the hiring people with low English proficiency and providing them with essential information and support in language. This model allows the new employee to become familiar with the work and critical information necessary for work – while learning English and developing other skills on the job.

Post-placement support is a critical feature in ensuring refugees and humanitarian migrants are able to retain their employment. Equally, post-placement support also ensures employers are assisted with information and supports to address any barriers and retain a reliable workforce in the longer-term.

Here we would like to share our experience in delivering a bespoke employment program - *Work and Welcome*. Since 2010, Multicultural Australia has coordinated the *Work and Welcome* Program to support migrants and refugees address structural barriers to employment in Australia. The Program provides participants with a 12-week paid internship with an organisation, with their wages funded through a workplace giving scheme (supported either by the organisation, by regular donations from employee wages, or by fundraising). Our experience delivering this program demonstrates the broad benefits for the intern and the workplace and its staff. The intern is supported to develop skills and experience in an Australian workplace and gain insight into the work of a particular organisation. The organisation benefits from the experience of hiring a refugee, with employees given the opportunity to engage in a direct cross-cultural experience, which helps break down cultural barriers and stereotypes and broaden perspectives. There has been a demonstrable success rate in interns securing employment following this placement, either at the workplace or in another organisation (with 80% of participants finding secure employment after their placement). Equally, host employers have felt enabled to access new customers, think and engage differently, and innovate new services and products. Over 40 organisations are now recognised as *Work and Welcome* partners with Multicultural Australia³.

QUESTION: Dr WEBSTER: Could I give you a question on notice? We don't have time now; I understand that. I would be interested in your secondary migration piece and how that should

³ https://www.multiculturalaustralia.org.au/work_and_welcome2023

be funded, because there is no funding for that after the five years. I would love to get some intel on what you think would be beneficial. Thank you for your time.

ANSWER: Multicultural Australia response to this question is based on our experience supporting secondary settlement across regional areas in Queensland – Rockhampton, Toowoomba, and surrounds.

At the Brisbane Public Hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration (18 May 2023), Multicultural Australia noted the significant secondary settlement and movement into Toowoomba by the Ezidi community members. At that time, we noted that the continuing success of Toowoomba as a secondary settlement location was based on years of work delivering settlement supports through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program as well as working intensively and collaboratively with several local partners. The growth of Toowoomba as a secondary settlement location brought many challenges which we continue to address collaboratively with local partners. The attached document – *Toowoomba Regional Settlement*, documents some of our challenges and efforts to address these.

Rockhampton is also a long-standing secondary settlement location in Queensland. The voluntary relocation of refugees to Rockhampton, began well over 12 years ago due to critical labour shortages in regional areas. In 2010-11 around 350 individuals, mostly single male Tamil, Rohingya and Sudanese humanitarian entrants, relocated to Rockhampton to work in the local abattoirs. Since then, many hundreds of refugees travelled to Rockhampton to secure employment. The location is also seen as a success story of regional settlement. In addition to the strong drivers for work, there are other key ingredients that contributed to successful settlement outcomes in Rockhampton.

Rockhampton has a long history of welcoming migrant workers to the region. Local services, communities, businesses and most individuals positively embraced the new arrivals. Information about work opportunities was readily shared across national networks of newly arrived refugees. These networks in turn, spread the word of the positive work experiences and the acceptance of the Rockhampton community. The attached document – *Settlement Works*, is a historic and early record from Multicultural Australia (then MDA) of how new arrivals found welcome and acceptance in Rockhampton.

In responding to the specific question around funding secondary settlement, Multicultural Australia would note the following:

- Secondary settlement requires the development of a ‘holistic’ model.
- Successful secondary settlement is contingent on effective assessment, planning, coordination and collaboration of key stakeholders and service providers.
- It requires client choice and participation at every stage of the process.
- Community and local support are critical to this process.

The following factors will be critical to the success of secondary settlement:

- Appropriately matched local community and refugee community needs

- A ready and welcoming local community
- Tailored settlement services
- Appropriate infrastructure and services, and
- Capacity for economic integration.

In the two examples of Rockhampton and Toowoomba, secondary settlement happened as a result of clients and communities choosing to relocate. In potentially identifying new locations and sites for primary and secondary settlement, Multicultural Australia would apply the following criteria:

- A *critical mass* of migrants in the location
- Ideally have proximity to current settlement locations (e.g., Brisbane, Toowoomba, or Rockhampton)
- Local infrastructure - Transport, Commerce, Government Services, Local institutions, Communal spaces, Places of Worship
- Local area and environment
- A ready and welcoming and culturally informed local community
- Housing stock and availability
- Employment opportunities
- Education and Training opportunities – including, school and availability and flexibility of English classes.
- Healthcare – including mental health services.
- Access to specialist CALD or refugee services (i.e., face to face, telephone, video).

Appropriate funding of secondary settlement would depend on the settlement location, the readiness/ability of local community to welcome and support new arrivals, the level of support available locally as well as the kinds and types of services that may need to be provided to refugees and migrants (direct delivery, remote services or occasional service delivery).

Settlement related supports would need to be provided across all secondary settlement locations. These support services would in turn, determine the basis for funding secondary settlement. The following services and supports would need to be considered:

- Identified settlement support for the duration required (including Case Management support).
 - This (settlement) support would be ‘needs based’ and could vary from ‘light-touch’ to more intensive support based on need.
 - It would necessarily include:
 - Referral and links with essential services – including, health, mental health and torture and trauma services.
 - Orientation and information supports.
 - Establishing connections with community of identity – including, own cultural and faith community.
 - Employment supports – including, placement and post-placement supports.

- Support to source affordable, appropriate housing – including, tenancy management.
- Community development and engagement support.
- Child and Youth support programs.
- Other essential supports would include:
 - English language support; and
 - Community led welcome (Council, faith groups, volunteers, school, local businesses and real estate).

Multicultural Australia is committed to understanding humanitarian settlement across different regional sites in Australia. Towards this, we are Industry Partners in an ARC-Linkage Project '*Settling well: a longitudinal study of refugees in regional Australia*'. The project will provide the first longitudinal assessment of the impacts of regional settlement (primary and secondary), within Australia, for humanitarian migrants and destination communities⁴. It is expected the research will generate new knowledge of the opportunities and challenges for sustainable regional settlement and improve community, organisational and government decision-making capacity relating to regional settlement of humanitarian migrants within Australia. This evidence-based research will be key to inform Multicultural Australia's own service delivery – to ensure the settlement success of humanitarian entrants across diverse locations in Queensland; as well as supporting host/ receiving communities and locations in Queensland.

Note on changes to SETS program eligibility:

Multicultural Australia welcomes the recent announcement around changes to SETS program eligibility ensuring that refugee and humanitarian entrants and other migrants assessed for SETS support would be supported beyond the five-year mark from arrival in Australia. This will support some client and community groups that may require assistance with circumstance-specific vulnerabilities (like a significant life event, family violence, homelessness etc.) There may also be other individuals and community groups with significant trauma and settlement lifeskills barriers that would require support beyond the five-year mark. The experiences of the Ezidi community in Toowoomba fall within this category.

Recognising that a time-limited linear settlement model directly disadvantages many individuals and community groups, Multicultural Australia has assisted community members beyond the five-year mark (even before the announcement to change SETS program eligibility settings). For example, our SETS program extended support to 262 medium intensity clients in the 2021-22 FY, who reached the five-year mark at a time when they were only mid-way through achieving an intervention plan action with their Case Manager. In such instances, Multicultural Australia always continues with the provision of support (though unfunded).

In welcoming the removal of the 'five-year cap' for eligibility to receive settlement support, we would note the need for resourcing and funding SETS services appropriately. Multicultural Australia recognises that the settlement sector may need to prepare itself for increased client

⁴ <https://www.uow.edu.au/the-arts-social-sciences-humanities/research/access/research/nes/settling-well/>

presentations – especially clients with vulnerabilities or clients newly/recently moved into secondary settlement locations requiring local orientation and linkages support. Multicultural Australia would be happy to assist further with detailing funding considerations around Secondary Settlement – if consultations were to occur around design and models to support secondary settlement.

As a final matter, we would note that secondary migration decisions are completely within the choice and control of clients. The role for services like Multicultural Australia is to provide information resources, support and assistance to clients (informing them about appropriate support structures available; community support as well as opportunities for employment and education – including, English language learning).

Enclosed:

- Toowoomba Regional Settlement
- Settlement Works