



**Australian Government**  
**Settlement Services Advisory Council**

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Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training

Dear Committee Secretary

With a focus on the importance of education and training pathways for migrants and refugees, the Settlement Services Advisory Council (the Council) is pleased to provide our submission to the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training.

The Council (*formerly known as the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council*) is an expert, non-statutory, ministerially-appointed body established in 1997. Council members have a strong interest and experience in settlement policy issues and collectively provide expert advice to the Government to guide policy and program innovation.

The Council's Terms of Reference include providing advice to Government on how to strengthen social cohesion and maximise the social and economic participation of migrants and refugees through specific settlement services, English language, educational and vocational programs, employment pathway programs and programs that maximise the benefits of Australia's cultural diversity and promote the importance of mutual respect, shared responsibility.

After the Government's announcement in 2015 to increase Australia's Humanitarian Program, the Council was asked to provide the Minister for Social Services with advice on improving migrant settlement outcomes.

In formulating their recommendations, the Council undertook nationwide consultations with State and Territory Government officers, services providers, community groups and faith based agencies the outcomes of which identified where changes to settlement programs and services could be made to improve the lifetime wellbeing and social and economic participation of migrants and refugees.

The Council had a particular focus on examining education, training and employment issues along with issues affecting women, children and young people.



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In undertaking this work a number of overarching principles emerged and guided the Council's findings. Some of these principles which may be of interest to the Committee include:

- An integrated Government approach to ensure that relevant programs can be better aligned and calibrated to maximise positive outcomes and minimise duplication of services.
- Service delivery models that place a stronger emphasis on achieving improved educational and economic participation outcomes.
- Recognition of the specific needs of Humanitarian children, young people and women due to their specific pre-arrival experiences.

While the Council recognised that a substantial program of settlement services was already in place for newly arrived migrants and refugees, a recurring theme throughout the consultations was an acknowledgement of the importance of better aligned government programs to achieve substantial outcomes.

In making recommendations affecting women and children it is also important to consider how to improve co-ordination across relevant Commonwealth portfolios to enable balanced and needs-based responses that support developmental pathways of children and young people and strengthen family cohesion.

It is important to acknowledge that over the past two years, the Australian Government's Humanitarian Program intake has generally comprised family groups with high numbers of infants, children and young people under the age of 25 who all require access to education and or employment pathways and the majority of whom also require access to English language support programs.

The importance of English language ability on a young person's settlement outcomes cannot be ignored and can have longer term repercussions on their future ability to access employment and or vocational pathways.

Schools are an excellent point of access for identifying and responding to needs of children and young people, and many have dedicated programs in primary and secondary schools to support children arriving under the Humanitarian program. However these schools cannot be expected to absorb such responsibilities without dedicated ongoing support. Some excellent programs operate in different states which could be drawn upon and modelled to suit local conditions and contexts in other jurisdictions. In particular initiatives such as homework programs and culturally orientated career advice and entrepreneurial opportunities.

In the early childhood sector this could include identifying and supporting successful models of playgroups and mothers groups, in primary schools it may include better and more targeted access to English as a Second Language programs.



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For youth in the 15-25 year age group, access to opportunities to experience the Australian workplace could be offered through a variety of ways including:

- place-based work experience opportunities;
- apprenticeships and or traineeships dedicated to youth from a humanitarian background; and
- incentivising employers to develop better employment strategies to get young people into the workforce.

It is also important to recognise the specific needs of children and young people due to their pre-arrival experiences. Supports must be in place that respond to the needs of children and young people. These supports may include linking school liaison programs with the services of specialist torture and trauma support under the Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) that provide services to children and young people.

All tiers of Government have a responsibility to find strategies that work to improve the responsiveness of the early childhood sector, primary schools and high schools to meet the specific needs of humanitarian children.

The Council encourages those involved in developing policies and programs to work to ensure best settlement outcomes through coordinated settlement processes, targeted networks and support systems and collaborative and innovative service delivery, programs and policies.

The Council looks forward to the opportunity to address a committee hearing to discuss its work and how it may assist the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Inquiry into School to work transition.

Yours sincerely,

Paris Aristotle  
Chair, Settlement Services Advisory Council

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