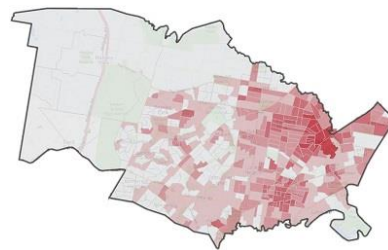


Fairfield LGA Settlement Action Plan | November 2016

MINI ISSUE PAPER

Fairfield LGA Settlement Symposium

ISSUE: Safety and Crime Prevention



Fairfield Local Area Command (LAC) and local service providers are concerned about the increasing trend in the recruitment of refugee and CALD youth into organised criminal activities and gangs.

The NSW Police Force acknowledges a history of organised crime groups in the Fairfield local government area (LGA)/ LAC. These are ethnic based groups that continually seek young people to increase their numbers and activities.

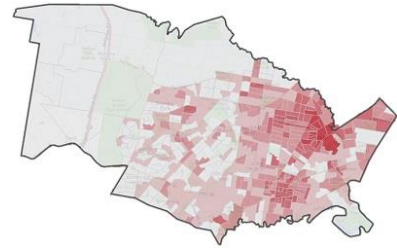
Newly arrived migrant and refugee youth are particularly vulnerable:

Their vulnerability is based on a number of factors including:

- Separation from extended family and friends and the need to rebuild new social networks and a sense of belonging. This is complicated by language barriers as young people are still in the process of learning English and tend to gravitate towards groups that speak their language which can increase their vulnerability. Many of the refugee and CALD communities arriving to Fairfield are from well-established collectivist cultures. The desire to be part of a bigger group or community can be strong.
- Youth from a refugee background are likely to be dealing with trauma symptoms which can increase their vulnerability to negative influences while they are negotiating a new culture, systems and language.
- Recommencing school – based on a different language – after extended periods of disruption during the refugee process can also be frustrating and lead to truancy that can drive them into contact with gangs. Gang members who may share cultural and/or language ties with newly arrived youth can represent a sense of familiarity and acceptance that school does not.
- Difficulties finding employment: A large proportion of refugee youth have spent time in refugee situations working to support their families. They are looking for working in Australia to continue contributing to their family finances. However other factors are posing a barrier to their ability to access work, exacerbating their vulnerability and risk of being lured into gangs.
- Housing: A lack of secure, stable affordable and appropriate housing. Housing in Fairfield is particularly expensive due to demand and limited availability. Many newly arrived refugees want to live close to their family members or sponsors and so spend a large proportion of their income on housing, which creates financial stress.
- Intergenerational dissonance can occur due to alterations in the family configuration and dynamics. This can further increase the vulnerability of young people.
- Families may have been fragmented due to war and while escaping conflict. There may be a lack of positive role models (particularly male role models).

These young people report feeling lost in a new environment and finding people who speak their language and promise to show them ‘the ropes’ can be a soft entry into the gang.

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Question:

1. What support/networks/diversion programs *currently exist* to encourage safe and healthy settlement amongst youth and decrease their vulnerability to being recruited into gangs?
2. What support/networks/diversion programs *should* be in place to encourage safe and healthy settlement and decrease vulnerability to being recruited into gangs? (Summary of initiative, brief timeline, rough budget etc.)
 - Who (individuals, groups, services, agencies etc.) should be part of this?
 - What should their role be?
 - Who should be the lead agency driving the project?