

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Mayor Luke Smith
CITY OF LOGAN

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRANT SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES

As Mayor of the City of Logan, I make this submission on behalf of Logan City Council, the Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team, and the City of Logan community. We welcome the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes and offer the following information and perspective for consideration.

At some point in our lives, we all experience what it is like to be 'new'. This is a dominant experience for a significant percentage of City of Logan residents. We are part of the fast-growing South East Queensland region, where one in seven people have relocated from elsewhere, and the City of Logan itself is home to more than 300,000 people from 215 different cultural backgrounds.

In 2016, Logan was the fourth largest area for permanent humanitarian settlement nationally, and sixth over the past decade, with 5,638 permanent humanitarian migrants settling in our city in that time. I note that, in addition to permanent humanitarian migrants, many thousands of people also sought temporary asylum in Australia over the last 10 years, many of whom found themselves living in Logan.

Logan City Council has traditionally taken a strong partnership approach in welcoming new arrivals by working closely with and supporting migrant settlement service providers in the City of Logan, such as Access Community Services and Multilink Community Services. For several years, Council delivered an annual Welcome to Logan celebration and now supports the Walk Together event hosted each year in Logan by Access Community Services.

Council recognises the critical and urgent need for increased funding into our city to provide additional English language courses, trauma counselling, skills training and jobs placement to ensure the successful settlement of humanitarian refugees in our community. Experience shows that those migrants that receive these services go on to become totally engaged as Australian citizens.

We have responded to emerging needs within our capacity as a local government. We have done this through Logan: City of Choice, an initiative of Council delivered in collaboration with the Australian Government, Queensland Government and business, community and non-government sector partners. Key initiatives delivered by the Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team include:

- advocacy support in 2014 for eligible New Zealand Special Category Visa holders residing in Australia to access student loans through the Higher Education Loan Program.

LOGAN CITY COUNCIL

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- drafting an Occasional Paper in 2016 to focus on challenges and opportunities for Pacific Islander communities in Logan.

On 5 June 2015, the City of Choice Leadership Team agreed to form a Community Cohesion Working Group to address issues associated with social cohesion and perceptions around extremism in Logan City, following a request by Logan City Council (Minute No 120/2015). The working group, which includes government, non-government, community and academic representation has since expanded its mandate to address broader issues around social cohesion and inclusion, in particular relating to enhancing the sense of belonging of newly arrived migrants.

One of its first initiatives has been to develop a suite of signage artwork featuring the word 'welcome' in English and more than 40 of the other most spoken languages in our community. This artwork features at the entrance to Council's Administration Centre in Logan Central and is now displayed throughout the community in schools, businesses, non-government organisations and community centres in the form of stickers, desk cards and canvases (provided by Logan City Council free of charge, and promoted across the city to enhance community harmony).

For your information, the Australian Government is represented on the Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team by Bert van Manen MP, Member for Forde, on behalf of the Prime Minister. The Queensland Premier's representative is the Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, Minister for Communities, Women and Children, Minister for Child Safety, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. As Mayor, I represent Logan City Council. A key community leader on the Leadership Team is Gail Ker AO, CEO of Access Community Services, which is one of the largest migrant settlement service providers in Australia.

Fundamental to successful migrant settlement is the ability to gain employment, form social connections and have access to adequate health, education and social services. Logan City Council believes the Australian Government has primary responsibility in delivering wide-ranging support services to meet the needs of migrants, particularly those who arrive on humanitarian visas. We also believe other levels of government have a role to play, including local councils, in creating a welcoming environment for all new arrivals.

Council acknowledges and appreciates the collaborative approach of our government partners through City of Choice in particular. We encourage the Standing Committee to consider the value of such cross-government collaborations in driving initiatives that help ensure new arrivals are appropriately welcomed and settled.

As the local authority of a significantly culturally diverse community, Logan City Council supports the Settlement Council of Australia's assertion that Australia's leaders must promote a positive experience for all migrants and refugees.

We acknowledge that the successful settlement of refugees and migrants is a two-way process, requiring active commitment both by new arrivals and also by the Australian community. Negative experiences such as racism and discrimination can have a devastating impact on individuals and their chances of successfully settling in Australia.

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Logan City Council and the Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team are committed to strengthening the sense of belonging, cohesion and inclusion in our community. We value and respect the extensive work of settlement service providers such as Access Community Services and Multilink Community Services. We also recognise the importance of all organisations working to support people who are new to Australia, including community leaders and agencies such as the Ethnic Communities Council of Logan.

If the Standing Committee would like a more detailed briefing on Logan: City of Choice or other Logan City Council initiatives relevant to migrant settlement outcomes in our community, we would be happy to prepare additional information for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Mayor Luke Smith
City of Logan