

Response to Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes

Submitted to:

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

January 2017

Introduction

AMES Australia is a specialist organisation providing initial settlement, English language, vocational training and employment services to newly arrived refugees and migrants in their initial phase of settlement, and to longer term migrants who require support to gain employment. AMES also works with significant numbers of people seeking asylum in Australia. AMES provides services in Victoria and NSW, works with approximately 45,000 people a year and has over 60 years' experience.

AMES Australia works with clients who have arrived through all of the major permanent migration streams including Humanitarian entrants, Family stream and Skilled stream. A small number of clients who arrive on Business visas also access AMES English language programs.

The primary focus of AMES Australia services is to transition refugees and migrants to successful settlement in Australia. AMES delivers a number of significant federal government contracts to support these transitions. These contracts include:

- Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) in all contract regions in Victoria on behalf of the Department of Social Services
- Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in seven of the eight contract regions in Victoria on behalf of the Department of Education and Training
- *jobactive* in the 5 contract regions in Melbourne and in 1 in Sydney.
- Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program in 2 contract regions in Victoria on behalf of the Department of Education and Training
- Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) across Victoria on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP)
- Settlement Services in Nauru (until December 2016) on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP)

This response is framed in the context of four major understandings.

1. The suite of funded settlement services demonstrates a commitment that provides sound foundations for successful settlement in the initial settlement period. It has a long history of bipartisan support by successive Australian Governments and has rightly gained international recognition.
2. Those settling in Australia across all visa categories- be they Skilled, Family or Humanitarian - demonstrate an overwhelming desire to become independent as soon as possible and contribute to Australian society in both social and economic terms.

3. Employment is well understood as both an indicator and means of successful settlement and social integration¹. Much research on settlement outcomes, including AMES Australia's own research, has focussed on the critical role of employment on migrant and refugee settlement outcomes.
4. Migration is integral to Australia's economic prosperity. Particularly important in this context is the challenge faced by Australia of an ageing population, a decreasing number of people of working age in the future and the significant long term impacts on the tax burden and revenue projections. Modelling by Independent Economics indicates that by 2050 migration will be contributing \$1.65 billion to Australia's GDP, 5.9 per cent in GDP per capita growth and will have added 15.7% to our workforce participation rate.²

1. The mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants;

As noted above, Australia is a world leader in the provision of settlement services. Bipartisan support over a long period has resulted in a cohesive suite of services to support those arriving on Humanitarian and Refugee visas. A significantly smaller number of services are available for eligible migrants.

This investment is one factor that impacts substantially on the success of Australia's migration program. This investment results in support in the following areas.

- Assistance for new arrivals who have low levels of English (below ISLPR 2³) to learn English in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). It includes a user pays component for migrants who are in visa categories that do not entitle them to free English classes that is paid as a component of visa fees.
- Orientation to Australia, including mandatory units on law, culture and values, as a component of the AMEP, including specific units for young people less than 24 years of age
- Orientation to employment in Australia through the SLPET program as additional component in the AMEP (Settlement Language Pathways to Education and Training)
- More intensive settlement support for entrants who arrive as part of the Humanitarian Program through the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)⁴

¹ Galligan B., Boese M. and Phillips M. 2014 *Becoming Australian: Migration, Settlement, Citizenship MUP*

² *The Economic Impact of Migration: independent economics / Migration Council Australia*

³ AMEP eligibility ends at ILSPR 2 or "Basic Social Proficiency" which is defined as "Able to satisfy basic social needs, and routine needs pertinent to everyday commerce and to linguistically undemanding 'vocational' fields." <http://islpr.org/why-use-islpr/summary-of-islpr/>

⁴ HSS includes case management, registrations with essential services, connection to health services, initial accommodation and support to establish stable long term accommodation

This investment in initial settlement support is essential from a number of perspectives.

- It provides the required early intervention support to enable new arrivals to settle as quickly and effectively as possible and begin to make a social and economic contribution in their new country
- It allows Australia to take advantage of the skills, experience and capacity to contribute to Australia's economy as soon as possible
- It impacts on the acceptance of new arrivals into the broader Australian community where they are seen as willing and able to contribute economically and engage in mainstream activities and therefore contributes to social cohesion.

Settlement services are key points of contact for new arrivals to access essential information and links to both mainstream and specialist services which progress their settlement. Where new arrivals have access to these services they are effective and support settlement outcomes. In working with new arrivals across all visa categories AMES Australia has identified areas where targeted services have the capacity to significantly improve settlement outcomes. These are discussed in the section below.

GAPS IN SERVICES

In terms of utilising all of the assets that can result from migration to Australia there are issues particularly with respect to migrants who arrive on Partner or Spouse Visas. Within the Skilled stream, approximately half are primary applicants who must demonstrate they have 'in demand' skills and the other half are their immediate family members: partners and children. In many cases partners of primary Skilled migrants are also highly qualified professionals⁵. From an economic perspective, this could be considered a key strength of the Skilled stream but is also a resource that is significantly under-utilised.

AMES Australia undertook research for the Office for Women to investigate the employment situations of women on Partner and Spouse visas.⁶ A total of 63 women participated in this study. The findings indicate that within the group surveyed, there is significant under-utilisation of skills. They came from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria and the ACT.

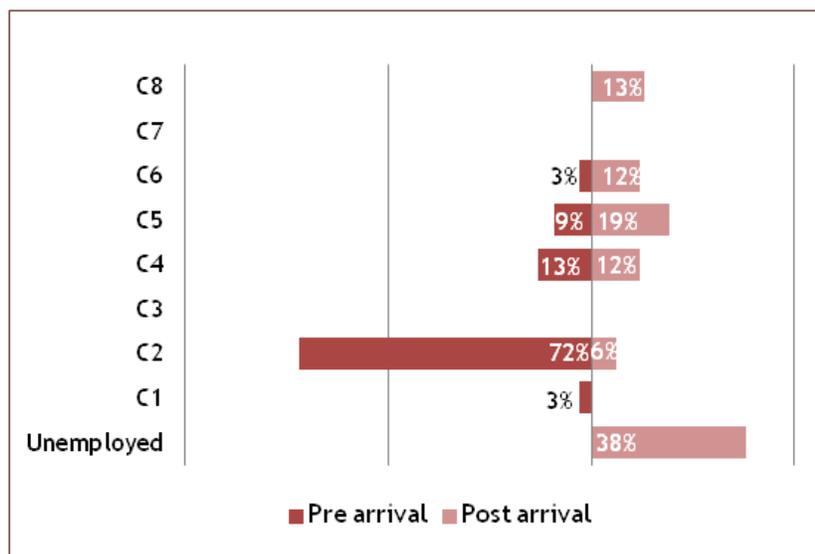
⁵ Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014c, Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants: Cohort 1 Report - August 2014, DIBP, Canberra, viewed December 2014, <http://www.immi.gov.au/pub-res/Documents/research/csam-2014-cohort-1.pdf>.
Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014d, Additional data provided to AMES from the Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants: Cohort 1 Report - August 2014, DIBP, Canberra, viewed December 2014.

⁶ *Hidden Assets: partner-migration, skilled women and the Australian workforce*
https://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/AMES%20Australia%20Hidden%20Assets_Partner%20Migration.pdf

Summary data from the report includes:

- Prior to migration all participants in this study were employed with almost three quarters of the women employed in professional occupations including 3 per cent in managerial roles and 13 per cent as community and personal service workers
- After they arrived in Australia respondents experienced a significant shift in their occupational status. More than one third (38 per cent) were unemployed. Those who were employed were working in lower skilled positions as clerical and administrative workers and labourers.

Chart 2: Occupation before vs after arriving in Australia



Notes: This is based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 2013b): C1 - Managers; C2 - Professionals; C3 - Technicians and Trades Workers; C4 - Community and Personal Service Workers; C5 - Clerical and Administrative Workers; C6 - Sales Workers; C7 - Machinery Operators and Drivers; C8 - Labourers.

(Of the 32 respondents who did one-on-one interviews, 72 per cent were professionals in the areas of Business, Human Resources and Marketing; Education; Health; IT; and Science before arriving in Australia.)

Taking into account the issues noted above in terms of investment in early settlement and gaining the maximum benefit from Australia’s migration program, there are opportunities to improve settlement outcomes for this cohort. This can result in benefits in terms of utilisation of skills for Australia and benefits to individuals.

While this study focussed on women on Partner or Spouse visas a similar situation exists for other migrants who come with skills but who are not successful in gaining employment in their previous field of employment. Employment outcomes for Skilled visa migrants are high overall, however there are groups within this cohort that are marginalised in the labour market and do not currently have access

to any services to provide early intervention to address these challenges. For example, migrants who come in the Skilled or Family stream are not eligible to receive assistance from *jobactive* for the first 104 weeks after arrival. This misses the critical early intervention phase where the likelihood of gaining employment is highest and the compounded disadvantages of long term unemployment can be avoided.

Interventions

AN INTENSIVE PROGRAM FOR MIGRANTS FROM PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS

AMES Australia has developed and delivered programs over a number of years that target this group of migrants with overseas professional skills. The Skilled Professional Migrants Program (SPMP) is a four-week intensive program that assists migrants with professional qualifications to develop job search skills in Australia. An evaluation of the program undertaken in 2013 that tracked outcomes for 239 program participants in the program from 2010 to 2012 found the following.⁷

- Participants came from a diverse range of professional backgrounds with the largest proportions having backgrounds in engineering, IT, accounting and finance.
- Before enrolling in the program less than 35% of participants had worked in Australia. Those who had worked were mostly in low skilled or non-professional jobs.
- After enrolment in the program employment situations had significantly improved; 89% had found work and of this group 64% were in a professional position
- 80% of participants rated the usefulness of the program as very high

AMES Australia has continued to track clients who undertake these programs and results continue to be positive. In summary 83% of the respondents had found employment in the twelve months since completing SPMP. Nearly 60% of them were professionally employed in positions that require a relevant undergraduate or an advanced degree qualification alongside some form of specialised experience in Engineering; IT; Accounting & Finance; Business & Management; Research & Education; and Science.

Nearly 80% of the respondents arrived in Australia on a Skilled or Business visa, while 10% were on a Family visa.

	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL INTERVIEWED	TOTAL PROFESSIONALLY EMPLOYED	TOTAL NON-PROFESSIONALLY EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED
2010	155	81	56 (69%)	22 (27%)	3 (4%)
2011	99	50	30 (59%)	17 (35%)	3 (6%)
2012	154	108	51 (47%)	37 (34%)	20 (19%)

⁷ *Securing Futures: making the most of migrants' skills* <https://www.ames.net.au/documents/research-projects/securing-futures-making-the-most-of-migrants-skills>

2013	159	131	80 (61%)	26 (20%)	25 (19%)
2014	131	95	51 (54%)	23 (24%)	21 (22%)
2015	136	67	33 (49%)	15 (22%)	17 (25%)
	834	532	301 (57%)	140 (26%)	89 (17%)

Notes:

- *Participants in 2010 and 2011 were interviewed approximately 12-24 months following the SPMP.*
- *Participants in 2012 were interviewed approximately 6-12 months following the SPMP.*
- *Participants in 2013 - 2015 were interviewed approximately 12-15 months following the SPMP.*
- *Professional work refers to positions that require a relevant undergraduate or an advanced degree qualification alongside some form of specialised experience in Engineering; IT; Accounting & Finance; Business & Management; Research & Education; and Science.*
- *Non-professional work refers to front-line or lower-level duties in Administration & Sales; Hospitality, Retail & Care; Labouring; Vocational Training; and Trades.*

It would be possible to develop payment models for these programs that were cost neutral in terms of direct costs and provided flow on benefits to the economy once these migrants were in the workforce in areas that used their skills - for example, increased tax revenue and consumer spending. Settlement outcomes would also be positively impacted given the strong nexus between employment and successful settlement. Funding options for consideration for these programs could include the following.

- Consider the introduction of a HECS style fee that would be repaid once the participant commenced employment
- Fund the program through existing funding streams based on the premise that the investment will be returned through broader economic benefits to the Australia economy as a result of increased workforce participation and skill utilisation. (SkillMax in NSW receives an annual budget from the NSW Government of \$1.9 million. It is delivered through AMES (Adult Migrant English Service) based in NSW⁸ and is available through TAFEs in the metropolitan area and regional NSW as well as some community colleges in NSW. It is free for suitably qualified migrants to attend the course).
- Offer interest free loans through corporate sponsorship with one or more banks. (In the USA this model is used with the aim of the loan being to assist skilled migrants to cover the costs of job searching courses/programs).
- A mutual obligation approach on the part of the person receiving assistance is also one option used in the USA. A program in the USA adopted this approach to ensure the long term sustainability of the program. There is an expectation that clients, who complete the program

⁸ *There is no relationship between AMES based in Victoria and AMES (Adult Migrant English Service) in NSW. Both are separate organisations and legal entities.*

and get work, then mentor new clients commencing the program to assist them to enter the workforce.

A PILOT PROGRAM FOCUSED ON HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

A pilot program for Humanitarian Entrants funded through the Department of Social Services is scheduled to commence in the first half of 2017. This *Career Pathways Pilot* provides a potential promising addition to the services available to support Humanitarian visa entrants into employment. While finding employment can be a challenge for any new migrant, Humanitarian Entrants have a number of compounding factors as a result of their refugee background and circumstances. Employment rates are therefore lower than for other visa categories.

The Pilot will provide targeted, early intervention assistance to help newly arrived humanitarian entrants who have skills and/or qualifications and vocational English language proficiency.

Pilot participants will receive assistance to develop and pursue a career pathway plan which will guide them in sourcing and securing meaningful employment opportunities appropriately suited to their pre-arrival work history, qualifications and/or skills. The targeted assistance will comprise wrap-around support focused on helping them to achieve the goals identified in their career pathways plan.⁹

Employment is one of the most fundamental building blocks in successful settlement both for economic security and mental wellbeing for individuals and families. It is equally important in providing confidence for the broader Australian community in the success of Australia's migration program and facilitating social cohesion.

Continuing to rise to the challenges of increasing opportunity for employment participation is therefore a key area is consideration of the mix, coordination and extent of settlement services available and the effectiveness of these services in promoting better settlement outcomes for migrants.

2. National and international best practice strategies for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects;

Successive Australian governments have provided initial settlement support through a range of important services such as Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). These have directly contributed to the successful settlement and independent social and economic participation of thousands of new arrivals over many years - "about 7.5 million immigrants since WWII including 825,000 under the humanitarian programme - resulting in one of the most culturally diverse, yet socially cohesive nations in the world"¹⁰.

Through these services people have found accommodation, learnt English, enrolled in vocational training, joined the workforce, learnt about Australian laws and customs and connected with local communities. These national settlement programs are unique internationally - in recent years AMES Australia has been sharing best practice from these programs with other settlement countries in our

⁹ *Settlement Services _ Career Pathways Pilot Funding Round Summary version 2.0 20 October 2016*

¹⁰ *Senator The Hon Concetta Fierravanti- Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, 21 December, 2016 calling for submissions to the Australian Government's new Foreign Policy White Paper.*

region and in Europe as they seek solutions to successfully settle large numbers of migrants and refugees.

The Skilled Professional Migrants Program SPMP program (described above) is another strategy which facilitates the employment of skilled migrants and there-by the settlement of families.

There are also examples of public / private partnership strategies internationally for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects. These include:

In Canada: *Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)*, a public / privately funded mentoring and employment brokering program which brings together recent skilled migrants and established professionals in occupation-specific mentoring relationships. The program facilitates migrants finding meaningful employment in the Toronto Region that is commensurate with their education, skills and experience and enables migrants to gain industry insights, professional contacts and job search support. It works in partnership with other agencies to provide paid internships for skilled migrants. Over the past 14 years more than 12,000 migrants have been mentored.

Also in Canada, *Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants*, funded by Citizenship & Immigration Canada assists migrant women with accounting and/or finance backgrounds to gain relevant Canadian work experience with businesses and non-profit organisations. The program provides childcare and transportation costs for participants, access to future learning grant opportunities, follow-up support after program completion and referrals to additional support services.

In Switzerland a not for profit organisation funded by government and local foundations specifically assists professional migrant women into work. Programs include information sessions, training and workshops to assist women to understand the labour market in Geneva, French language courses, resume development and assistance getting recognition of foreign qualifications.

The United States has the *Upwardly Global* program in four capital cities with high immigration numbers. The program supports skilled migrants to rebuild their professional careers in the US through professional job search training and access to a professional network of employers to enable them to make the necessary connections to get a job in the US. The program also provides a training program which includes learning how to write a resume, a cover letter, improve interview and networking skills and individual coaching and mentors to provide support during job searching.

Best practice for improving migrant settlement outcomes and prospects includes both pre-arrival information and post-arrival support.

Effective post arrival support such as the examples described above

- targets specific cohorts (e.g. skilled professionals, women)
- involves participation of mainstream / host community (e.g. employers)
- focuses strongly on securing employment.

Accurate pre-arrival information should include, for example, current information about labour market opportunities, accommodation and living costs.

3. The importance of English language ability on a migrant's, or prospective migrant's, settlement outcome;

A consistent theme in AMES Australia consultations and research with on arrival communities / clients is the importance of English language to find employment and to make social connections in mainstream community.

The Department of Education and Training also acknowledged this in the recent tender for the AMEP in which it outlined changes to the AMEP business model by including a pre-employment stream and a social participation stream. The changes to the AMEP business model “seek to help clients achieve better English language outcomes in order to find sustainable employment and participate independently in society”¹¹.

However, it is important to note that it is not only English ability that gets migrants into work. Newly arrived migrants are novices in the Australian labour market regardless of their level of English. Skilled professionals through to unskilled workers need to find out how and where to apply for work, learn about Australian workplace culture and practices and make contacts in Australia in order to start work.

For example, AMES Australia research into the employment outcomes of migrants in our Skilled Professional Migrants Program¹² shows that, although most of the 239 participants had been selected for migration to Australia on the basis of their qualifications and professional skills, and although most spoke higher level English, less than 35% had worked in Australia prior to enrolling in SPMP. Those who had worked were mostly in low skilled or non- professional work. After the program employment situations significantly improved: 89% had found work, and of this group 64% were in a professional position. The program provided a short intensive program of orientation to the labour market, job search skills and cultural advice.

¹¹ <https://www.education.gov.au/revised-business-model-adult-migrant-english-program>

¹² AMES 2013 *Securing Futures: Making the most of migrants' skills*

The composition of migration program at present with some requiring English and others not is the right balance. For example Skilled Migration applications require proof of English language ability as well as nominating an occupation from the Skilled Occupations List (Independent, Family Sponsored Points Tested visa or Temporary Graduate visa). This is designed to ensure that Australia can take advantage of migrants' skills as soon as possible after arrival and that migrants will have good prospects of employment to provide for their own settlement.

The Humanitarian Programme on the other hand is designed to ensure that Australia can respond effectively to global humanitarian situations and is an important part of our contribution to the international protection of refugees. Accordingly, granting of Humanitarian visas does not and should not take English language ability into account.

It is worth noting that Australia has conducted a successful refugee resettlement programme over many years which has included large numbers of people with little or no English. Indeed the source countries for many refugees will not be English speaking countries. Research undertaken by Professor Graeme Hugo¹³ found that the overwhelming picture, when one takes the longer term perspective over the working lifetime of Humanitarian Programme entrants and their children, is one of considerable achievement and contribution. Evidence of the social and economic contribution of refugees outlined in Hugo's research report include:

- a demographic dividend because of a low rate of settler loss, relatively high fertility rate and a high proportion of children who are likely to work the majority of their lives in Australia
- increasing refugee settlement in non-metropolitan areas which creates social and economic benefits for local communities
- capacity to meet labour shortages, including in low skill and low paid occupations
- higher than average proportion engaging in small and medium business enterprises
- a higher level of workforce participation than the Australia-born for second generation refugees

This documented level of sustained settlement success and contribution has all been possible without imposing an English language requirement on refugees and humanitarian entrants.

¹³ Hugo, G 2011, A Significant Contribution: the Economic, Civic and Social Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Report prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australia, http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/_pdf/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf.

4. Whether current migration processes adequately assess a prospective migrant's settlement prospects; and

It is essential that robust security checks are undertaken as a matter of course to preserve the integrity of all components of the migration program and to retain public support for and confidence in the program. This component of Australia's migration process is effective.

There are a number of well documented factors that provide indicators of likely successful settlement. The composition of Australia's migration program takes into account many of these known predictors while balancing the economic drivers of migration, the importance of re-uniting families and the importance of meeting Australia's responsibilities as a global citizen in terms of humanitarian obligations in a world where the refugee crisis continues to increase.

These drivers result, for example, in English levels and skills in demand being factors that are assessed for the Skilled stream and links to immediate family being factors in the Family stream. Settlement however is a complex process and will be impacted by many interacting factors. A number of these are outside of the migration processes.

The importance of the impact of the host community cannot not be discounted in the complex equation of what contributes to successful settlement. A welcoming host community, access to employment, mainstream services that are equipped to provide culturally competent services that address the issues with which new arrivals present and the ability to build bridging capital are integral to settlement. These factors are outside of any capacity to assess individuals' settlement prospects but are integral to the success.

It is also quite possible that migrants and refugees who do not have the known indicators of success demonstrate that successful settlement is within their reach.

In microcosm some of these factors and a group with few know indicators of success are outlined in the context of regional settlement in the small regional Victoria town of Nhill.¹⁴ AMES Australia and Deloitte Access Economics undertook a study of the impacts of the settlement of a group of Karen refugees. This group were all from refugee backgrounds, a significant majority came with very low

¹⁴ <https://www.ames.net.au/documents/research-projects/small-towns-big-returns-economic-and-social-impact-of-the-karen-resettlement-in-nhill>

levels of English or no English, had low levels of education and no recent work history as a result of their refugee experience. Factors that were identified in this study included:

- the availability of local ongoing employment (as a necessary but not by itself sufficient factor)
- strong leadership and support by local champions and influencers in the host community
- local preparation to ensure community, local services were prepared and accommodation was available
- support for families as well as the settlers recruited for jobs
- strong leadership in the settler community and preparation of new settlers

The ability of Humanitarian Entrants to make significant contributions to Australia in the longer term is also evidenced by the many refugee success stories since post war migration commenced after WWII. It is also documented in the Hugo research referred to previously in this response.

The importance of re-unification of families is another critical factor in contributing to successful settlement outcomes. Frequently in the consultations AMES Australia undertakes with recently arrived communities, the importance of reunification of families is stressed as a very important factor in contributing to successful settlement.

In terms of related processes, the level of information provided to prospective migrants is an important factor in facilitating settlement prospects. The process of migration can be characterized by high expectations that can be partly managed by accurate information about Australia (particularly related to employment) and a realistic understanding of how the major change of migrating requires a period of adjustment. Particularly for Humanitarian Entrants the level of information that can be provided to service provider pre arrival can also be very useful in preparing appropriate services and facilitating smoother transitions for people from refugee backgrounds.

5. Any other related matter

The Committee is giving particular consideration to social engagement of “youth migrants and involvement of youth migrants in anti-social behaviour such as gang activity.”

Certainly there is concern in the community about this behaviour, including high levels of concern amongst newly arrived migrant families. Many express anxiety that their children not become involved in anti-social behaviour, particularly families from refugee backgrounds who have escaped violent situations.

The evidence does not suggest that the young people involved in this anti-social behaviour are, in fact, new arrivals and AMES Australia experience is that new arrivals who are engaged in settlement programs are unlikely to simultaneously become engaged in anti-social activity. However, any young

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person (including newly arrived) who is dis-engaged and who doesn't feel connected to mainstream groups is vulnerable to "recruitment" into groups / gangs involved in anti-social behaviours.

The Australian community wants and expects migrants and refugees to participate in their new society and young new arrivals themselves, with energy and a strong sense of hope, want to be part of creating their own futures. New arrivals need time to build social capital and particularly need support and opportunities to bridge to broader mainstream communities. This process is not straightforward or quick and humanitarian migrants in particular have economic and social challenges to overcome during settlement. It may take several years to be fully settled and linked into mainstream life, depending on the new arrivals' starting point. Support for young people to develop, to join in and belong to the broader community, and to achieve their aspirations is crucial. Settlement services have a very important role to play in brokering these opportunities and maintaining engagement of young people throughout their settlement process.

AMES recommends three proactive strategies to progress the social engagement of newly arrived young migrants and refugees.

- Maximise engagement in settlement programs based on "active citizenship" principles, through provision of programs specifically targeting young new arrivals.
- Broker opportunities for volunteering
- Strengthen family re-union focus, particularly in the Humanitarian Programme.

Maximise engagement in settlement programs

Engagement with education, training and / or work, including volunteer work, are all significant vehicles for social connection, mitigating vulnerability to anti-social behaviour and giving young people a positive sense of purpose and progress.

Strategies to encourage social engagement and participation in local communities need to be implemented as early as possible on arrival. Primary and secondary schools provide many such opportunities for school age children and their parents. For older adolescents and young adults a learning environment such as the AMEP provides a significant opportunity to directly connect young people to mainstream learning and social opportunities.

Evidence from AMES Australia experience¹⁵ demonstrates that newly arrived young people need more than English language tuition to successfully make the transition to further education, vocational training, work and positive social engagement. AMES approach is based on the four key domains of

¹⁵ <https://www.ames.net.au/documents/research-projects/preparing-for-the-next-step-a-proposal-to-invest-in-amep-youth-programs>

active citizenship: social participation, economic participation, civic participation and personal well-being.¹⁶

AMES Australia specialist Program for Young Adults uses a broad based curriculum and an applied learning methodology, including informal learning opportunities such as sport and drama, to engage and retain young people in learning, promote active citizenship and mitigate the risks of disengagement, the consequences of which are well documented elsewhere.¹⁷

Just as employment outcomes rely on employers providing jobs, social engagement and connection to the community require mainstream organisations to welcome young refugees and migrants and actively encourage their participation. AMES works with a range of agencies and organisations, such as peak sporting organisations (e.g. AFL, Tennis Australia, Life Saving Victoria) to initially introduce young refugees and migrants to activities and opportunities for active participation.

Maintaining the engagement with education, training and / or work beyond supported settlement services is crucial to social connection. It is critical for young people to be on a realistic, sustainable and manageable pathway when they exit settlement services such as AMEP. Many drop out at this key transition point as they struggle to manage their next step due to low levels of English and, in some cases, formal education, and/or unrealistic, poorly informed choices. Being socially disengaged at this point is trigger for anti-social behaviour and mental health problems such as depression.

AMES Australia recommends a targeted, specialist approach for young refugees and migrants, coordinated nationally through the AMEP. These programs should explicitly focus on active citizenship outcomes to ensure young migrants and refugees are linked to local communities in a sustainable way and equipped to successfully transition from the AMEP to further training and/or employment.

Brokering opportunities for volunteering

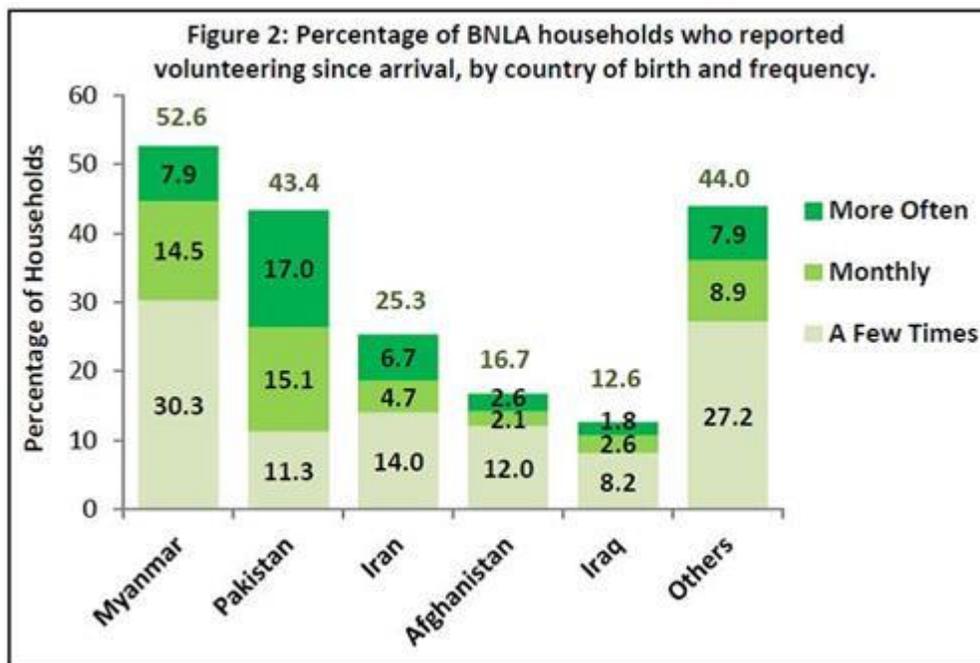
Volunteering is another important avenue for social engagement and positive contribution. Many refugees and migrants volunteer in their communities and over time many join “mainstream” volunteering organisations.

Data from Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) -a longitudinal study commissioned by the Department of Social Services (DSS) shows that volunteering by humanitarian arrivals starts very early in settlement. In Wave 1 of BNLA conducted in 2013-14, (only 6 months post arrival), participants were asked specifically about how often their family had volunteered to help their own ethnic or religious community. The data shows that “Those born in Myanmar have the highest rate with over half reporting at least some volunteering. This compares to less than 20 per cent of those born in Afghanistan or Iraq. In terms of frequency, those born in Pakistan stand out with 17 per cent reporting

¹⁶ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) March 2016 National Youth Settlement Framework

¹⁷ The on-going consequences of failing to engage young people in education, training and work are well known and documented – from poor job prospects and low income, to long term unemployment, poor health outcomes, including mental health problems, higher likelihood of entering the criminal justice system, increased reliance on welfare, social exclusion, lost potential for individuals, families and the broader community/economy.

volunteering more often than monthly, and a further 15 per cent volunteering monthly. In all other groups the most frequent response was 'a few times'. Future Waves of data from BNLA will provide insights to whether these rates change over time as the cohort becomes more settled."¹⁸



AMES Australia also conducted a survey of 386 AMEP clients in 2015 into volunteering and social connections of new arrivals.¹⁹ The findings indicate that social connection through community activities and volunteering are important to newly arrived migrants during the first few months and early years of settlement. Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) had been living in Australia for less than two years. During that time they had made significant inroads into forging social connection within their own and the broader community.

- 23% of respondents are involved in local groups and clubs
- 52% of respondents had provided help to other new migrants as a volunteer
- 44% of respondents had helped out at their children's school
- 76% had received help learning English from a volunteer
- 89% thought volunteering was a very important (57%) / important (32%) way to meet people and feel part of the community

¹⁸ <http://scoa.org.au/newsletter-articles/new-from-the-department-of-social-services>

¹⁹ <https://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/Volunteer%20and%20social%20connections%20report.pdf>

The results show that new migrants had met people outside their own immediate family and networks; just under two thirds knew their neighbours and nine out of ten felt that volunteering was an important way to meet people and feel part of the community.

These findings indicate a strong intention of the part of new arrivals for social connection and participation and a willingness on the part of their local communities to support this. A deliberate effort to build on this intent for social connection whilst young people are engaged in settlement services is recommended.

Strengthen family re-union focus

Strong, intact families are essential to settlement and mitigate against disengagement of young people. This is particularly the case for those in the Humanitarian Programme.

Family separation and its negative impact on settlement has been raised with AMES Australia over many years by both individuals and in community consultations. People are concerned for the safety of family members left behind in extremely dangerous situations and are unable to settle until their families are re united – a process which can take many years and significant resources.

The options for refugees to bring family members here are extremely limited – for example,

- Special Humanitarian Programme (SHP) has limited number of places and a restricted definition of “family”. (5,032 SHP visas were granted, 2015-16). There are also significant costs involved.
- Community Proposal Pilot (CPP) has only 1,000 places (formerly 500 places) annually and is a significantly more expensive option than SHP
- Family stream of the Migration Programme is an expensive option, with a very long waiting period and a limited number of places - 57,400 in 2015-16 out of a Migration Programme total of 190,000 planned places. Places are in very high demand.

These options are not available to refugees who arrived by boat after August 13th 2012. Those who arrived before this date are given lowest priority for processing.

Young people settling within an intact family have support, guidance and stability and thus a greater chance of settling in successfully. On the other hand, family separation increases the potential for young people to become socially dis-connected and dis-engaged from the mainstream.

AMES Australia recommends that stronger emphasis be placed on family re-union for refugees through

- Specific additional allocation of places for refugees within the family stream of the Migration Programme
- Additional places within the CPP for family re unification (ie places additional to Humanitarian Programme places)
- Piloting the Canadian Blended Visa Office-Referred model (described below), specifically for refugee family reunification. (Places in addition to existing Humanitarian Programme places)

The Blended Visa Office-Referred Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada. The Government of Canada provides up to six months of income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program (compared to 12 months for government assisted refugees). Private sponsors provide another six months of financial support and up to a year of social support.

This effectively reduces government support by 50% in the first year whilst providing additional option for refugee communities who cannot afford a full year of support to be involved in a practical way assisting refugees in their settlement.

6. Contact

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