



NSW COORDINATOR GENERAL FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

PROFESSOR PETER SHERGOLD AC

5
YEARS
IN REVIEW



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FOREWORD

In late 2015, Premier Mike Baird asked me if I would take up a new position as Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement in NSW. It remains the only such position in Australia. I was honoured to agree. I am now pleased to present a report on the five years from 2016 to 2020.

The report provides an overview of the key features of a whole-of-community and cross-sector approach to improving settlement outcomes for refugees as they begin new lives in NSW. The successes highlighted in this report are a tribute to the collective efforts of settlement sector organisations and government agencies.

People who arrive in NSW on humanitarian visas have often been through traumatic experiences. They face significant obstacles in building new lives in an unfamiliar society. Yet with the right targeted support, new arrivals can be helped to become active and engaged residents, benefiting themselves and our state. They bring valuable skills and experiences which can help to meet labour force needs. They contribute to social and economic development and the cultural enrichment of our society. They are risk takers and often entrepreneurial. Most seize the opportunity to become self-reliant, building new lives for their families.

I was appointed as the NSW Coordinator General following the Australian Government's decision to accept an additional 12,000 refugees displaced by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The Premier promised that the State would be willing to more than meet its fair share of the burden and it did. Since 2015, NSW has settled more than half of this additional intake, making us the state with the largest number of refugee recipients. Around 30,000 new refugees have made NSW their home.

Over the past five years, I have worked closely with all levels of government, community organisations and the corporate sector. Together we have trialled innovative approaches to policy and program priorities, including overseeing an additional NSW Government investment of more than \$190 million to support refugees.

I would like to thank the community organisations and Government agencies which committed their time and the individuals with whom I have had the privilege to work. I have been heartened by the compassion and care they have brought to this important work. I have been delighted by ongoing collaboration across the sector.

I am particularly grateful to my colleagues in Multicultural NSW and the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet for their continued support. With their help it has been possible to facilitate a partnership approach to creating positive public impact.

I would also like to thank NSW Premiers Mike Baird and Gladys Berejiklian for taking such a strong lead in helping refugees to rebuild their lives here. They have set the tone from the top.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank the many refugees I have met. I have benefitted from their wisdom. They have seized the opportunities that have been made available. I have been inspired by their stories of success against the odds.

It has been an honour to lend a hand in supporting them to settle in our state. I look forward to NSW continuing this valuable work in the years to come.



Professor Peter Shergold AC
NSW Coordinator General
for Refugee Resettlement

1 A COORDINATOR GENERAL FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN NSW

The conflicts occurring in Syria and Iraq are amongst the worst humanitarian disasters in recent time. In response, the Australian Government increased Australia's refugee intake by accepting 12,000 people displaced by the conflicts in these countries, in addition to the existing annual Humanitarian Program. The former NSW Premier Mike Baird publicly committed that NSW would take 'more than its fair share' of the additional intake.

In September 2015, the NSW Government appointed me as the NSW Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement (NSW CGRR). This appointment has provided an opportunity for NSW to build on the leadership shown by successive Premiers, and to think differently about how to support the settlement of refugees in NSW. As the NSW CGRR, I have worked to strengthen collaboration at all levels of government. I have sought to forge partnerships between the non-government, community, education and corporate sectors around the common goal of supporting the successful long-term settlement of refugees.

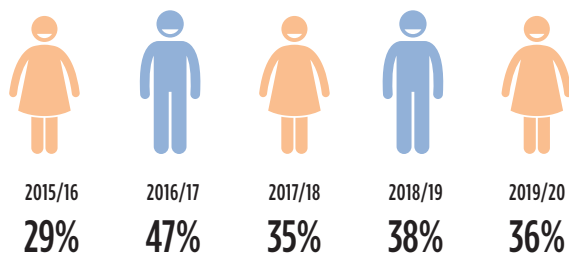
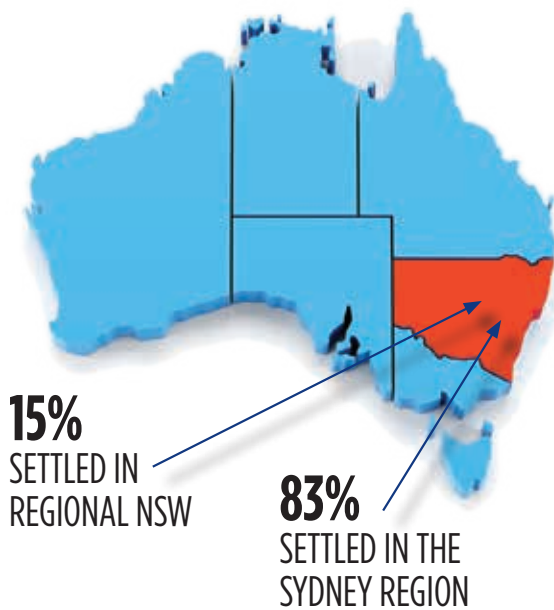
“

The appointment of the Coordinator General has provided an opportunity for NSW to build on the leadership shown by the NSW Premiers Mike Baird and Gladys Berejiklian and to think differently about how best to support the successful settlement of refugees in NSW.



2 SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN NSW¹

Between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2020 more than 79,500 humanitarian entrants settled in Australia. For many years, NSW has taken the national lead by successfully settling more than 30,000 humanitarian entrants. That is an impressive 38 per cent of the total national humanitarian intake.

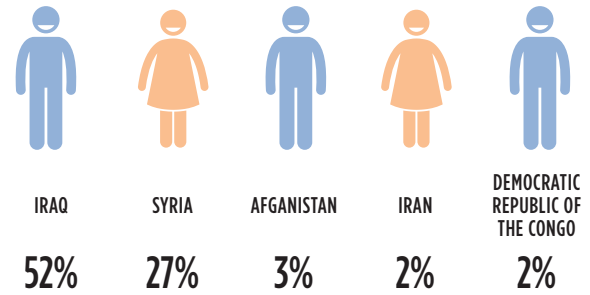


NSW CONTRIBUTION TO SETTLEMENT

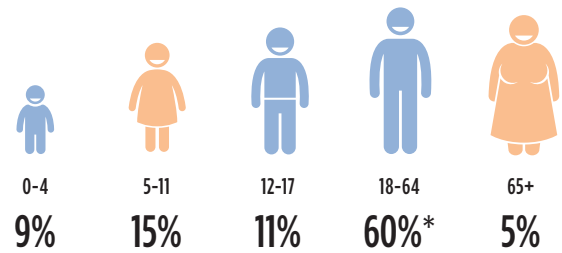
¹ Data was provided by the Australian Government on 6 October 2020 and 4 February 2021. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

* 60% of people arriving are of working age.

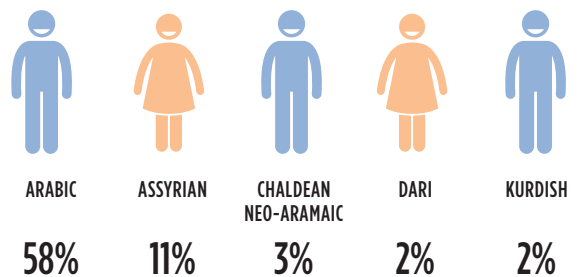
[†] 73% of refugees settling in NSW reported no English oral proficiency highlighting a clear need for English language support. Acknowledging this, the Commonwealth Government made changes to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) including lifting the cap on class hours and time limits.



MAIN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



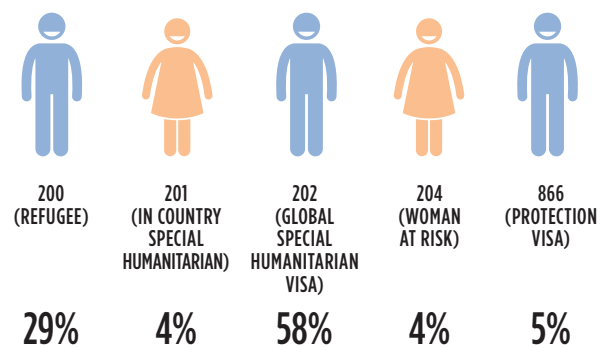
AGES ON ARRIVAL



TOP 5 MAIN LANGUAGES SPOKEN

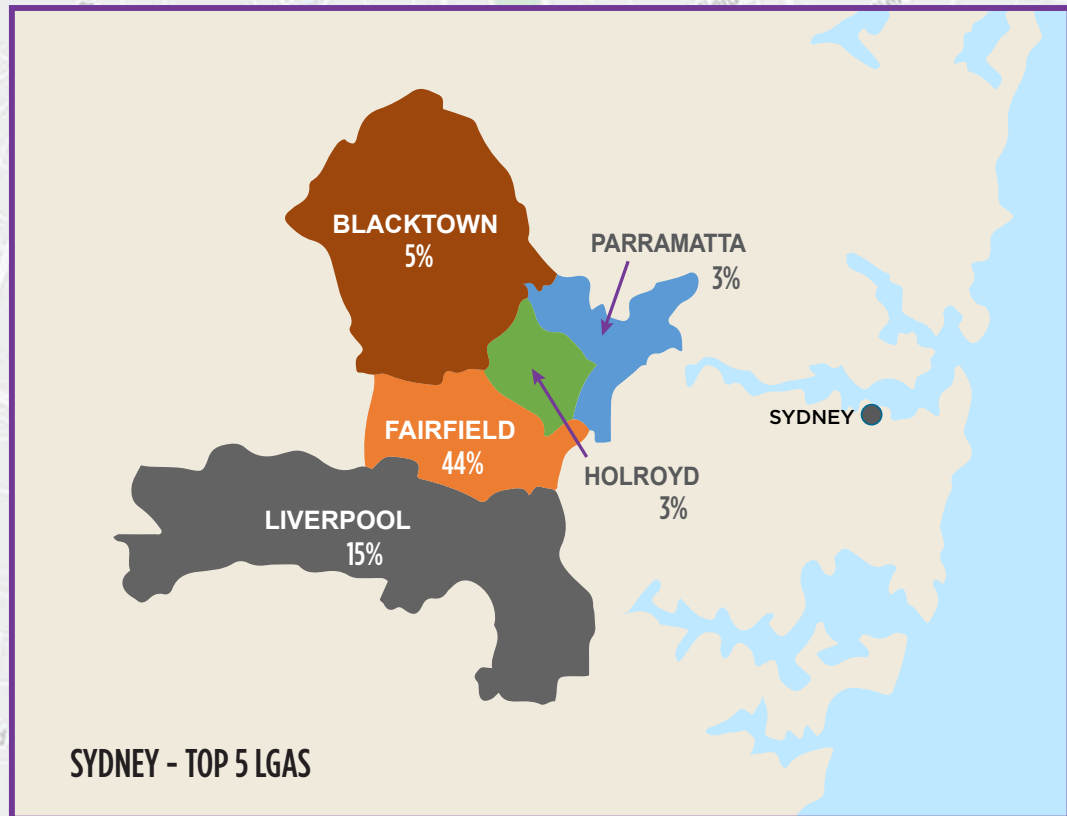
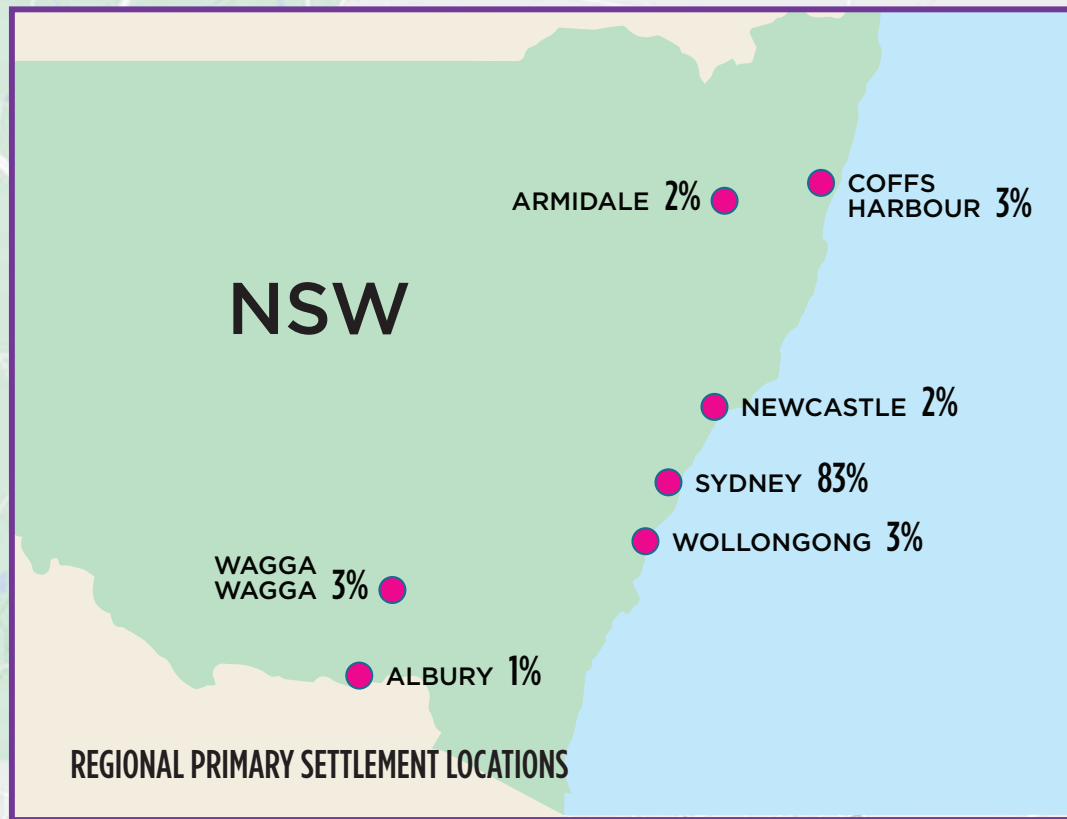


ENGLISH PROFICIENCY



VISA SUBCLASS

PRIMARY SETTLEMENT LOCATIONS²



² These are the figures for the primary settlement locations in NSW only. A full list of LGAs and percentages can be found in the Appendix.

3 A NEW APPROACH

Since my appointment in 2015, I have focused on facilitating partnership between all levels of government, together with the community and corporate sectors.

One of my first tasks was to establish the Joint Partnership Working Group on Refugee Resettlement (JPWG). It symbolised the whole of governments, cross sectoral collaboration that I wished to facilitate.

The JPWG is an advisory body comprised of senior leaders from government and non-government organisations, including humanitarian settlement service providers. It has developed new proposals to strengthen the service system for refugees across a range of areas, including youth, community engagement, health, education and legal support.

JPWG proposals became the basis for the additional \$146 million over four years allocated by the NSW Government in 2016/17. Later funded initiatives have increased that investment to about \$190 million. The JPWG has been a key mechanism to ensure continued partnership in monitoring the ongoing impact of programs and services. It has also enabled Government to keep abreast of emerging issues and for public services and community leaders to develop joint responses to these.

Connecting with refugee groups continues to be an ongoing focus of the NSW Government. I have met a wide range of ethnic and religious leaders to better understand issues facing their communities, congregations and families, and to share information about opportunities, programs and services.

I have also focused on working with key government and non-government agencies to understand how person-centred design methodologies can be embedded across policy-making and program design, delivery and evaluation. This is intended to ensure that the refugee is always front and centre

of the approach. Improvements are well under way to include the client's voice in the design of programs and policies. Innovative demonstration projects, such as the Multicultural Youth Linker Pilot have shown that refugees can take more control, exercise agency over their lives and genuinely influence the government programs that affect their day-to-day lives.

With the strong support of The Hon. Minister Geoff Lee, I have also worked on initiatives that embed a whole-of-community, collective impact approach to regional resettlement. These bring people together in a structured way to create a shared vision and achieve social change. The NSW Growing Regions of Welcome (GROW) Pilot Program provides the platform to trial this approach over the next three years. It recognises that refugees can contribute to growth opportunities in regional NSW. Careful planning and coordination are necessary to ensure people in regional towns are well supported as they prepare for and welcome the refugees. The goal is to make the newcomers part of their region's future.



An academic assessment of the new approach can be found at Carolyn Holbrook, *"Redesigning Collaborative Governance for Refugee Settlement Services"*, Australian Journal of Political Science, Volume 55, Issue 1, 2020.

4 WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

Investing in refugees' economic success.

Refugees bring with them the potential to contribute significantly to our community and economy. There is significant evidence that employment provides the bedrock for successful settlement. The NSW Government has invested in a range of innovative approach to enhance this outcome.

Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP)

RESP launched in 2017. It is a four-year, \$22 million initiative to support refugees and asylum seekers to obtain sustainable employment outcomes, more closely aligned with the skills and qualifications that they bring with them. The program is delivered by Settlement Services International (SSI). Training Services NSW, part of the NSW Department of Education (DoE), oversees the contract and works closely with SSI. DoE also provides fee-free training up to Certificate IV level under Smart and Skilled for refugees and asylum seekers.

Between 2017/18 and 2019/20:

- 7,459 participants were enrolled in the program and supported towards becoming employment-ready.
- 1,114 participants engaged in work experience.
- 3,883 participants received business skills development.
- 2,503 were helped to overcome education barriers.
- 4,764 were assisted to meet transport barriers.
- Most importantly, 2,114 participants have found employment.

CASE STUDY

Lucas is originally from Rwanda and arrived in Australia in February 2013. In Rwanda, he had completed a Bachelor of Medicine degree and worked as a doctor for more than three years.

On arriving in Australia, Lucas's goal was to gain recognition of his medical qualification and to practise his profession again in his new country. Lucas heard about the qualification recognition support offered through the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) from a friend and registered in late 2019.

RESP helped Lucas to develop a career pathway plan that would address his barriers to employment, develop work readiness and provide guidance and financial assistance through the qualification recognition process. RESP also helped him to improve his job application skills and he was able to gain employment as a Hospital Medical Assistant and register in the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Gaining recognition for his qualification enabled Lucas not only to secure a role in his field but was also personally important to him because he had spent many years completing his studies.

Lucas can now continue on his path to becoming a doctor. ~

NSW Public Service Refugee Employment Initiative

In 2016, the NSW Secretaries Board committed to employ at least 100 recently arrived refugees across the public sector. With the assistance of the NSW Public Service Commission, that initial target has been exceeded.

- To date, the NSW Government has employed 163 recent refugees and some have worked for more than one agency, resulting in 177 positions filled.
- They have been offered positions as doctors and nurses, bus drivers, engineers, IT specialists, accountants, project and policy officers, human resources advisers, administrative assistants and customer service officers.
- A key success has been the creation of ongoing internship and cadetship programs in Service NSW and Transport NSW, where cohorts of refugee interns are supported into ongoing employment in their area of expertise.

Private Rental Assistance products to refugee families

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) increased the provision of private rental products to ensure that refugees are helped to access stable, affordable and secure safe places to live. Between 2016/17 to 2019/20:

More than 15,700 refugee households have been assisted through private rental assistance products, including:

- 7,127 through Rentstart Bond Loan
- 5,345 through Advanced Rent
- 1,429 through Start Safely
- 1,840 through Private Rental Subsidy.

Empowering schools to support refugee students to reach their potential.

Young people with refugee backgrounds need time to learn English and to familiarise themselves with school settings so that they

can engage fully with the curriculum. Helping young people into schooling has a positive impact on refugee student wellbeing and provides valuable encouragement for refugee families and broader school communities.

- More than 12,000 students from refugee backgrounds are currently enrolled in NSW government schools.
- Between 2016 and 2020, more than \$13.8 million was allocated to schools to support 21,120 recently arrived refugee students by meeting their emotional, welfare and other educational support needs.

There have been a number of specific initiatives:

On-arrival intensive English support has been provided to newly arrived secondary students in metropolitan Sydney and Wollongong who need assistance. Newly arrived primary and secondary students in regional areas receive intensive English support through their schools. Between 2016 and 2020:

- More than 9,200 refugee students in Sydney and Wollongong benefitted from intensive English tuition, delivered through schools and Intensive English Centres.

A Refugee Support Leadership Strategy has been implemented to increase the capacity of NSW government schools in meeting the needs of refugee students. Between 2017 and 2019:

- 19 Specialist Refugee Support Leaders were recruited to support more than 17,000 refugee students in 140 schools.
- Leaders helped with school planning, delivered professional teaching and provided support for teachers aimed at improving the learning and wellbeing of their refugee students.

The strategy better targeted support to schools with significant numbers of refugee students and ensured they were more prepared to receive refugee students in the future.³ The program has been extended from June 2020 for a further 12 months.

³ Evaluation of the Refugee Leadership Strategy, 'Understanding the outcomes and impacts of the Refugee Leadership Strategy 2017-2019'

CASE STUDY

In February 2018, families from the internally displaced Yazidi communities of Iraq and Syria began settling in regional NSW. In one regional town, the Volunteer Home Reading Program was initiated by the Refugee Support Leader, a local community organisation and school leaders. It provided additional English language support to students whose schooling had been severely disrupted.

Volunteers provided regular one-on-one weekly support, visiting refugee families to listen to children read, help with homework and to talk to other family members. Volunteers often answered questions from families about the settlement process and life in their new community, enabling better understanding of local customs and culture.

As volunteers encouraged children to read independently, they became less dependent on their weekly visits. Many of the primary-aged refugee students have now become the most competent readers and communicators within their families. There were also positive impacts for participating families who established relationships with members of the local community. Equally important, the volunteers themselves reported feeling rewarded by the satisfaction of being able to support the settlement of newly arrived refugees. ~



NSW Service for the Treatment And Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) School Liaison Program

helped primary and secondary schools enhance their capacity both to address the special needs of refugee children through staff training and to facilitate student access to STARTTS to improve their psychological wellbeing. The program has also been extended from June 2020 for 12 months. Between 2016 and 2020:

- 4,743 refugee students were helped, including through individual counselling and therapeutic group work.
- 191 training workshops were delivered to 6,054 school and education staff.

NSW STARTTS works closely with the the **Refugee Student Counselling Support Team** of the NSW Department of Education provides psychological assistance for refugee students as well as professional support for their teachers. Between 2016 and 2020:

- The Refugee Student Counselling Support Team worked directly with 3,360 staff from 376 schools to support refugee students across NSW.



CASE STUDY

The establishment of a Refugee Education Network across South Western Sydney was a collaboration between Refugee Support Leaders, members of the Refugee Student Counselling Support Team and the STARTTS School Liaison Program.

The goal was to provide professional learning and resources to support localschools working with refugee students. Information exchange between schools and community organisations was critical to this goal, as well as sharing knowledge about how to access available services. An important outcome of the network was a stronger focus was on students' wellbeing, a deeper understanding of the additional needs of refugee students in schools, and the growth of mutual trust and respect



To promote impact and sustainability, the network focused on having representation from each school at every meeting, including at least one member of each school's executive team. High schools, primary schools and Intensive English Centres all participated

The value of the Network was demonstrated in a showcase of activities and projects at the end of 2019. This event shared schools' new practices for working together and with agencies. At the showcase, Refugee Support Leaders emphasised that leadership that had now been built in schools and as a consequence the Network coordination role could be devolved to school-based leaders, demonstrating sustainable collaboration. ~

Ensuring refugees have access to the health services they need.

Meeting the health needs of refugees soon after arrival is vital. Prevention and early intervention reduce the longer-term costs to government caused by untreated physical and mental health issues. We need to ensure that the NSW health system is accessible, easy to navigate and can accommodate a diversity of refugee communities.

In truth, NSW Health provides world-class mainstream and specialised health services to

people from refugee backgrounds. Between 2016/17 and 2019/20 NSW Health enhanced the range of targeted and specialised healthcare made available to thousands of people from refugee backgrounds. Programs have enabled early diagnosis of health issues, provided timely interventions and where necessary, referred clients to appropriate services, specialists and other government supports.

Refugee Health Nurse Program (RHNP)

services have been provided by the NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS) across metropolitan Sydney and by local refugee and multicultural health services in Hunter New England, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Mid-North Coast, Murrumbidgee and Northern Sydney Local Health Districts. Between 2016 and 2019, RHNP nurses delivered:

- On-arrival health assessments to more than 11,900 newly arrived refugees in NSW.
- Health assessments and follow-ups were delivered to 3,560 schoolchildren at schools across NSW.

An Early Childhood Refugee Nurse Program (ECNP)

began in 2017. It is Australia's first Child and Family Health program tailored to families from refugee backgrounds. Child and family health nurses visit the homes of newly arrived families with children under six and are able to identify any developmental issues early in a child's life. After a home visit, most families are linked to mainstream programs. Complex cases are seen more intensively. Between 2016 and 2019:

- ECNP saw 600 children, of whom about a third were under 12 months old at the first visit.
- 80% of children were seen within six weeks of the date of referral.

Therapy and supports for survivors of torture and trauma is delivered by STARTTS.

It provides age-appropriate specialised therapeutic interventions by psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists. Between 2016 and 2019:

- STARTTS provided therapeutic interventions to more than 10,400 clients.
- On average, each client received more than eight hours of support, 67% of clients were seen within one month of referral and all clients were seen within three months.

In 2019, STARTTS expanded services for clients living in rural and regional areas, given that about 23% of its clients came from areas such as Coffs Harbour, Armidale, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong and Albury.

Specialist refugee paediatric clinics provided clinical care to children from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, the Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick, John Hunter Children's Hospital and the Community Paediatrics clinic in Liverpool. Between 2017 and 2019:

- More than 1,500 children were provided with clinical care.

A Disability Support team was set up in 2017 to respond to an increasing number of refugees arriving with disability. In 2019:

- More than 142 people with a disability were seen by the Disability Support Team at the RHS (about 45% of clients were adults and 55% were children under 16).
- 10 two-hour disability support group sessions were attended by more than 210 people from refugee backgrounds, including families and carers.
- A new refugee autism group was established with support sessions for 14 participants.

NSW Health Care Interpreting Services (HCIS)

was funded by NSW Health in 2019 to ensure effective communication between clients and clinicians. This is an essential component of supporting patients' safety and understanding of their healthcare. In 2019:

- Interpreting support was provided on more than 35,000 occasions during almost 15,000 appointments, including in Burmese, Farsi, Karenni, Kirundi, Kurdish-Kurmanji, Nepali, Rohingya and Tigrinya.

Building the capacity and skills of NSW Health staff, the health system and community.

- NSW Health services and STARTTS trained more than 4,000 professionals from health and related service providers through more than 100 presentations at meetings, seminars and conferences. This helped to increase the capacity of health services to provide appropriate and effective care to people from refugee backgrounds.
- More than 3,500 people from refugee backgrounds attended NSW Health-run education sessions about topics such as quitting smoking, water safety, oral health, women's health, sexual health, mental health and domestic violence.

CASE STUDY

Faven⁴ was born with achondroplasia, a medical condition that causes short stature, breathing difficulties and brain and spinal complications. In Ethiopia, Faven's parents were told there was no treatment for her condition and that she was unlikely to survive.

Soon after arriving in Australia, Faven and her family were seen by a local GP, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Refugee Health Service medical staff and outreach paediatricians from the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN).



Within days Faven began to take more interest in books, toys and games and began rewarding the staff with smiles and a few new words. By the end of her two-week hospital stay she was crawling, standing and looking delightful in beautiful new clothing. Within six weeks of arrival from Ethiopia, she had undergone surgery to address her severe sleep apnoea, breathing difficulties and hearing impairment.

SCHN also helped her family to begin an application for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. A Tigrinya interpreter was present every day during this period, which enabled effective communication with Faven's mother.



During her admission, Faven's father and older sister were brought to Sydney by volunteers from Wollongong and accommodated in SCHN's Care By Parent unit to learn about her care needs. The family also met an adult with achondroplasia to help answer their questions.

Although Faven will experience many challenges in the months and years to come, her engagement with NSW Health services and these new networks will help her to live her life to her full potential. ~

⁴ Name has been altered to protect the patient's privacy. Consent has been obtained (using a Tigrinya interpreter) for release of this story and the use of the photos

The Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees (MH-CLSR) program

program was established in 2019 to provide intensive psychosocial supports to refugees and asylum seekers experiencing psychological distress, mental illness and impaired functioning. Between August 2019 and July 2020:

- 158 people (62% refugees and 38% asylum seekers) were supported through this program.

The Chronic and Complex Care program

expedited access to disability and NDIS services, assisted frail aged clients to access My Aged Care, and provided enhanced case management for vulnerable asylum seekers.

There have been many other **achievements across NSW local health districts (LHDs) and state-wide services**. These include recruiting additional allied health staff, employing doctors from refugee backgrounds, co-designing audio-visual health information in community languages, undertaking research and quality improvement projects, establishing a new child and family health nursing service, developing programs and workshops for refugee women and LGBTQI patients and developing solutions to improve GP and other healthcare access for refugees.



▲ *Two doctors from refugee backgrounds were employed by Nepean Blue Mountains LHD over 2018-2020*

Supporting refugee families to feel at home in their communities.

Family dynamics and relationships shift as people respond to new environments. The NSW Government has worked to build the resilience of families facing challenges as they adapt to their changing circumstances.

Community Hubs Australia is a program jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, individual schools and the Scanlon Foundation. It aims to reduce social isolation, particularly among migrant and refugee women and children, by encouraging new friendships and support networks.

Activities enhance opportunities for volunteering, employment and improving English language proficiency. Skills training and English classes are provided to increase job readiness and self-confidence. The Hubs also act as an important gateway for accessing local services. The program has been extended from June 2020 for a further 12 months.

CASE STUDY

The father of a refugee family participating in Community Hubs expressed his desperation at not being able to support his wife and two children. The Granville Public School Hub helped the family by providing food hampers, blankets and clothing which were donated from a partnership formed with Merrylands Youth Centre. While the Merrylands Youth Centre caters only for young people, the coordinator agreed to help the father with preparing his resume. The father has since been able to secure employment and was very thankful for the assistance provided through the network of volunteers that can be harnessed through Community Hubs. ~

Between 2016/17 – 2019/20, there were:

- 25 Community Hubs based in NSW schools, mostly in Western Sydney but including three in Illawarra.
- More than 8,500 volunteering opportunities.
- As a consequence about 441 jobs have been obtained for parents.

STARTTS Families in Cultural Transition

Program (FICT) helps newly arrived refugees develop a better understanding about key aspects of life in Australia, the settlement process and how this can affect families. The program has also been extended from June 2020 for 12 months. Between 2016/17 and 2019/20:

- More than 3,450 clients were assisted.
- 291 group sessions were delivered in community languages across NSW including in Sydney Metropolitan, Newcastle, Wollongong, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Coffs Harbour and Armidale. Some of the languages employed were Arabic, Assyrian, Armenian, Arabic (Mandaean), Kurmanji, Hazaragi, Dari, Farsi, Tamil, Tibetan, Swahili, Kirundi, Rohignya, Nepali, Pashtu, Karenni, Burmese, Tajik, Banyamulenge, Urdu, Dinka, Bosnian, Serbian and Spanish.

Ensuring refugees know their rights and responsibilities.

Breaking down the barriers faced by refugees enables them to become informed citizens of NSW. Extensive and targeted community legal education programs seek to prevent legal problems from escalating.

The **Legal Aid NSW Refugee Service** began in 2017. It is a specialist, state-wide service that provides free legal services to newly arrived refugees. The types of legal matters that the service has helped with include immigration, consumer and debt advice, housing, motor vehicle accidents, insurance, fines, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, employment, wills, human rights issues, family law and social security law. Between 2017/18 – 2019/20, there were:

- 1,993 clients were given legal help.
- 11,112 pieces of advice and minor assistance were provided to clients (this does not include representation services, in which Legal Aid NSW officers appeared in a tribunal or court for their clients).
- About 1,300 community legal education sessions were held for clients, stakeholders and community workers.

CASE STUDY

Legal Aid NSW helped a Yazidi family escaping ISIS who settled in Wagga Wagga. They have three little boys, two living in Australia and one, the eldest, living in Germany with his paternal uncle. The family had separated on their journey to seek asylum while waiting in a refugee camp in Turkey.

As the family had been separated from their son for two years, they met with a Refugee Service lawyer at an outreach in Wagga Wagga. NSW Legal Aid was able to help the family with the long and complex visa application process. In September 2020, after being separated for more than four years, their son arrived from Germany and the family reunited. ~



I am writing this letter to express my deepest feelings of gratitude and thankfulness for standing by the side of my family and I. You were always there for us whenever we needed help. We considered you as our family when we had none of our family members around us. You showed us the meaning of belonging to this country with all what you did. You were the only one who understood us when no one else did.

– Quote from a client assisted by Legal Aid NSW.

The Legal Aid NSW Refugee Service has been evaluated⁵ and has been found to be highly valued by both refugee clients and stakeholders. It is regarded as a vital service in the sector, filling a critical gap in legal support for refugees. It has already achieved all its short-term outcomes and is now working towards achieving long-term outcomes in providing an accessible, culturally appropriate and holistic service for refugees.

Meeting the needs of refugee young people to support positive settlement.

Investments are focused on client-centric delivery. A youth-centred approach ensures programs respond to the needs of young people with refugee backgrounds.

⁵ A process evaluation of the Legal Aid NSW Refugee Service was conducted by the Cultural & Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA)

Multicultural Youth Linker Pilot Program

emerged from the Refugee Youth Policy Initiative led by Multicultural NSW in partnership with Service NSW. This involved a lengthy process of co-design with young people from refugee backgrounds, community stakeholders and public servants.

The Multicultural Youth Linker Pilot Program is now being implemented successfully through Service NSW's Wetherill Park Service Centre. From October 2020 to February 2021:

- Two Multicultural Youth Linkers from refugee backgrounds were recruited and are engaging with other young people from refugee backgrounds in Fairfield to help them navigate the service system and meet their individual needs and aspirations. The Multicultural Youth Linkers also provide easy access to up-to-date information about NSW Government programs and refer young people to community-based arts and sports programs.



Refugee Youth Peer Mentoring Program

DCJ managed the Refugee Youth Peer Mentoring Program which was delivered by CORE Community Services across three years from July 2017 to June 2020. The program helped young people aged 17-25 years old from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds to become central agents of change to shape their own futures. Between February 2018 to June 2020:

- **511** mentee/mentor matches completed the program.

The program has concluded and the evaluation⁶ found that the program was successful in attracting young people from a diverse range of cultural and language backgrounds. Mentees reported high levels of satisfaction, with 97% of those surveyed indicating that they had achieved their goals.

“

- You can talk freely about relevant things like your goals. It is easy . You don't have to talk about very personal stuff. What are you doing at school? How is school going? How is life going? ... I feel I can trust my mentor.
- I think it has exceeded my expectations. The person I had as a mentor was seriously good because she's what I'm trying to be – in personality and achievements ... She encouraged me to do things that I haven't done before.
- My mentor is very supportive of my goals. She influenced me and made me stick to my plans and my dreams.
- I like most the fact that my mentor became not only my mentor, but my friend. And not just any friend that you would meet in your everyday life, but a close one. She showed that she cares and didn't act like it is her job. She acted more as someone who cares about me and that meant a lot.



⁶ The evaluation process began in July 2018 with the Sax Institute working in partnership with the NSW Multicultural Youth Affairs Network and Training for Change

Helping more refugees connect with regional opportunities.

Regional communities have so much to offer refugees. They have diverse employment opportunities, affordable housing, good-quality education and a high quality of life. Most importantly, they can offer a welcoming community where refugees feel valued that they belong. Over the past five years, the NSW Government has helped smaller regional towns to progress secondary attraction strategies and helped existing primary settlement locations to improve outcomes for refugees and, where possible, retain them.

The NSW Government has also supported the establishment of Armidale as a new primary settlement location by convening a Place-Based Task Group to coordinate services and co-design initiatives to improve refugee settlement outcomes. Armidale has overwhelmingly proved to be a welcoming community for the new Yazidi refugees. Although challenges remain, many report that they feel safe, that their children are supported at school and that they have regained a sense of humanity in their new home.

Adopting a place-based approach to support in metropolitan areas.

South-West Sydney, particularly Fairfield, overwhelmingly received the most humanitarian arrivals in NSW over the past five years. Recognising the pressure that an influx of additional people places on existing communities and infrastructure, the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan (FCSAP) was launched in 2017. Several NSW Government agencies worked together with Fairfield City Council and local community organisations to develop the plan. It sought to enable closer collaboration and understanding of challenges and opportunities facing people settling in the area.

The Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan Working Group with the support of Multicultural NSW, has provided a coordinated approach and helped grassroots organisations to escalate their community concerns through relevant government channels.

The Edmund Rice Centre was commissioned by Fairfield City Council, CORE Community Services and Multicultural NSW to evaluate the FCSAP. The evaluation will map the



▲ Refugee Youth Peer researchers with NSW Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement, representatives from Western Sydney University, Sydney Policy Lab - The University of Sydney, Department of Customer Service and Multicultural NSW

process and lessons learned from the plan's development and implementation, identify achievements and provide recommendations for future place-based and collaborative community initiatives.

The monitoring of refugee settlement in Fairfield, involved the active engagement of key stakeholders, including religious leaders, cultural and community networks, non-government service providers and frontline NSW government services, will continue to be a priority. Effective coordination significantly improves outcomes.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NSW is home to the largest population of temporary visa holders, including skilled migrants, asylum seekers, overseas students and seasonal workers. Before the advent of COVID-19 in 2020, many earned an income and made a substantial contribution to our economy. However, the onset of the pandemic forced many of them into unemployment and left them without any financial support. Most did not qualify for any Commonwealth Government income assistance. Specialist non-government organisations (NGOs) identified a sharp rise in the number of temporary visa holders experiencing homelessness, isolation and destitution and requesting emergency relief to meet their basic needs.

As a consequence, specialist migrant and settlement organisations reported mounting pressure on their services due to a reduction in staff and volunteers and a spike in the number of vulnerable clients presenting for assistance.

Multicultural NSW worked closely with key leaders from the settlement sector through monthly meetings of the Joint Partnership Working Group to design a crisis support package which would help respond to the most critical needs. In July 2020, this evidence-based advocacy culminated in the delivery of a \$10.34 million NSW Government package to provide urgent support during COVID-19.

The package included:

- **\$2.2 million** in funding to frontline community organisations providing direct emergency relief to people seeking asylum to help them access food, medical support, telecommunications, transport and essential housing.
- **\$2 million** in funding for organisations providing direct emergency relief to vulnerable temporary visa holders.
- **\$2 million** in funding for organisations to support service delivery through culturally appropriate caseworkers, community support workers, outreach transport costs for disconnected or isolated communities and the provision of interpreting and translation services.
- **\$4.14 million** in funding to support key programs which aim to reduce social isolation and help schools provide specialised care for refugee students, including the NSW STARTTS Families in Cultural Transition program and Community Hubs.



Multicultural NSW worked closely with key leaders from the settlement sector through monthly meetings of the Joint Partnership Working Group to design a crisis support package which would help respond to the most critical needs. In July 2020, this evidence-based advocacy culminated in the delivery of a \$10.34 million NSW Government package to provide urgent support during COVID-19.

5 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Settlement is multifaceted and complex. It is rarely a straightforward process. To improve and strengthen whole-of-government planning and response to settlement, my position has been extended for a further two years until June 2022. I am now the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement (CGS). This new title captures my expanded remit for newcomers including refugees, asylum seekers and other recent migrants to NSW.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, resettlement travel for refugees was temporarily suspended in March 2020 and the number of places under the Australian Refugee and Humanitarian Program reverted to 13,750 per year.

It is unlikely that many will arrive in 2021. However, it is important to emphasise that refugees bring exceptional talent, skills, new cultures and experience. Their strength, resilience, entrepreneurship and drive help to make Australia a better country and NSW a greater state. They epitomise productive diversity. As such, I will continue to work with government and community agencies to explore options for NSW to support the Commonwealth Government to safely restart the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

With the support of Multicultural NSW, the NSW Government agency responsible for leading and coordinating settlement policy, I will continue to pursue a strategic, holistic and cross-jurisdictional approach to improving service delivery and outcomes.

Over the next two years, I will focus on six priority areas:

- **Continuing to help refugees find educational and employment opportunities.** The experience of NSW's RESP has shown that specialised support for refugee jobseekers can provide far better outcomes in terms of labour market integration. That learning needs to be incorporated in the Commonwealth's employment programs as they prepare the 2022 contract for 'new employment services'.
- **Delivering place-based initiatives to create beneficial collective impact.** This includes facilitating opportunities for regional resettlement of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities in NSW, both by encouraging the goodwill that exists in many regional communities to help refugees build new lives and by ensuring that the necessary support programs are in place.
- **Engaging and supporting refugees to navigate the maze of support services available** and find the best integration pathways. The focus should be on helping refugees to take control of their own decisions. This includes supporting young people and vulnerable temporary visa holders through the Multicultural Youth Linker Pilot.
- **Enhancing, tailoring and coordinating settlement programs.** Following evaluation of the NSW Government-funded settlement initiatives introduced since 2016/2017, it is now a priority to work with NSW Government agencies to ensure continuation strategies for those programs that have proved most effective and to identify remaining gaps in service provision.
- **Strengthening coordination and collaboration between NSW public sector agencies and community organisations** in order to improve outcomes for newcomers. The strengths of the Joint Partnership Working Group (JPWG) will be crucial to that task.
- **Coordinating and overseeing NSW's contribution to the implementation of Australia's settlement and migration planning.** This includes tapping into the expertise of relevant NSW Government agencies and community organisations in order to work more

effectively with the Commonwealth. The NSW Government Immigration and Settlement Planning Committee (GISPC) needs to be repositioned to become a more strategic mechanism that focuses on place-based settlement planning, issues escalation and resource allocation.

It will be crucial for NSW to work more effectively with other jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth. This includes regularly consulting and where necessary escalating critical and emerging issues related to the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG).

I will seek to be a conduit to the newly established position of Commonwealth Coordinator General for Migrant Services.

There is now an opportunity for the NSW Government and other States and Territories to work more closely with the Commonwealth Government to drive coordinated improvements to education, employment, English language acquisition and broader settlement outcomes for recent migrants and refugees. Together, we need to plan for the future. It is the key to successful integration.

The progress recorded in this report and the initiatives under way represent important steps in helping recently arrived refugees to take control of their lives. While there is still much work to do, NSW can celebrate what has been achieved over the last five years - the provision of new programs, fresh approaches to public administration, more opportunities and, most of all, renewed hope for refugees in the future.



▲ NSW Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement and Youth Peer Researcher at the Refugee Youth Policy Initiative Policy Design Workshop

6 APPENDIX

Humanitarian settlement locations in NSW between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2020.

LGA	Percentage
Fairfield	44%
Liverpool	15%
Blacktown	5%
Parramatta	3%
Coffs Harbour	3%
Holroyd	3%
Wagga Wagga	3%
Wollongong	3%
Bankstown	3%
Newcastle	2%
Armidale	2%
Auburn	1%
Canterbury	1%
Warringah	1%
Albury	1%
Ryde	1%
Campbelltown	1%
Penrith	1%
The Hills Shire	1%
Randwick	<1%
Camden	<1%
Hornsby	<1%
Hurstville	<1%
Sydney	<1%
Rockdale	<1%
Marrickville	<1%
Ku-ring-gai	<1%
Leichhardt	<1%
Strathfield	<1%

LGA	Percentage
Burwood	<1%
Ashfield	<1%
Sutherland Shire	<1%
Canada Bay	<1%
Willoughby	<1%
North Sydney	<1%
Pittwater	<1%
Lane Cove	<1%
Shellharbour	<1%
Shoalhaven	<1%
Blue Mountains	<1%
Cowra	<1%
Lake Macquarie	<1%
Gosford	<1%
Tamworth Regional	<1%
Queanbeyan	<1%
Botany Bay	<1%
Griffith	<1%
Maitland	<1%
Port Macquarie-Hastings	<1%
Wyong	<1%
Goulburn Mulwaree	<1%
Port Stephens	<1%
Not recorded	<1%



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