

Revision 1, 2024



# NSW Settlement Strategy

Improving settlement outcomes for people from  
refugee and refugee-like backgrounds living in NSW



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**Honourable Steve Kamper MP**

**NSW Minister for Multiculturalism**

**As the NSW Minister for Multiculturalism, it is my honour to present the revised NSW Settlement Strategy on behalf of the NSW Government. The Strategy was first launched in February 2023, with the intention that regular updates would be made to ensure it is responsive to both the needs of refugees in NSW and to changes in NSW and Commonwealth policy.**

The context in which the Strategy is being delivered has changed significantly since the initial launch in February 2023, making this revision timely. The NSW Labor Party formed government in March 2023 on a platform of putting the people of NSW at the heart of all decision making. This revised Strategy reflects the issues that are most critical to the people of NSW –including cost-of-living and housing –and important changes to how government delivers on these priorities. At a national level, in November 2023 the Commonwealth Government announced an increase to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and additional places for community sponsorship, making strong coordination on settlement between state and commonwealth jurisdictions more important than ever.

I am particularly pleased that this revised Strategy makes an expanded commitment to unlock the potential for refugees to participate fully in the NSW economy. As the NSW Minister for Small Business, and a former small business owner myself, I recognise the important contribution that refugees make to a vibrant NSW economy; as entrepreneurs, employees, and consumers. New actions have been added to the Strategy to support refugees to start businesses in NSW and to find employment in key sectors, including childcare, health, and emergency services. The new actions provide pathways to sustainable livelihoods for individuals, but they also provide essential services that benefit the whole of NSW.

I am immensely proud to endorse this Strategy and look forward to stewarding its next phase with the resounding commitment of the NSW Government to implement the actions and deliver outcomes for those seeking safety and a new life in NSW. I would like to acknowledge the former Premier, Dominic Perrottet MP, and former Minister for Multiculturalism, Mark Coure MP, who endorsed the initial Strategy. Successful settlement transcends politics, and the NSW Government is committed to implementing the NSW Settlement Strategy, keeping the people we serve at the heart.

I am grateful to everyone involved in the development and update of the Strategy: the team at Multicultural NSW, led by CEO, Joseph La Posta, and including former Advisory Board Member, Margaret Piper; the outstanding NSW Coordinator General for Settlement, Professor Peter Shergold AC, whose vision and experience drove the Strategy; and the numerous community organisations, settlement service providers, and community members who contributed to the Strategy and work tirelessly every day to support refugees to settle in our great state.

Most of all, I extend my gratitude to the many people with lived experience of displacement who have contributed –and continue to contribute –their expertise to the development and delivery of the Strategy.

Together, we can make a difference for refugees in NSW, supporting every individual and family to thrive, while also realising the many benefits that settlement brings to NSW communities.



**Professor Peter Shergold AC**

**NSW Coordinator General for Settlement**

**During my term as NSW Coordinator General for Settlement, I have encouraged strong collaboration between government agencies and civil society organisations. Through mutually respectful partnership, we have been able to significantly improve settlement outcomes for refugees beginning new lives in NSW.**

With strong support from Multicultural NSW, I have coordinated whole-of-community and cross-sector approaches in order to strengthen service systems, invest in social welfare, and design and trial innovative policies and programs. This includes delivering crisis-support packages to families in need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

More recently, we have worked closely with the heads of ethnic and religious communities in responding to global conflicts. I recognise the efforts of all those leaders who continue to work with the NSW Government to address challenging issues. Your contribution is invaluable.

Through compassionate collaboration we have achieved much. But we are not about to rest on our laurels. NSW is in a position to build on the achievements of the past five years and, learning from our experience, to deliver a collaborative approach to even more effective settlement policy.

This Settlement Strategy, in my view, is vital to that goal. It is our most important planning accomplishment to date. It represents a significant step forward.

I have drawn on my personal experience in listening to government agencies, communities and – most importantly – people with lived experience.

I have had the opportunity to test new ideas and approaches with them. Together we have sought to ensure that this Strategy reflects the current situation in NSW, identifies emerging challenges and strives to improve settlement outcomes.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of the Strategy. My sincere gratitude, especially, to the many refugees, evacuees, people seeking asylum and all other displaced people who generously shared their life journeys. I am moved by your resilience and bravery, and by your willingness to support each other.

By investing in better settlement processes now, we can improve refugee integration into the labour market and speed up the ability of newcomers to become full and active participants in civil society. By taking a strength-based approach, we can help them to navigate their way through a new world, allowing them the agency to rebuild shattered lives.

Together, we can work towards a society in which everyone benefits: refugees are able to realise their potential and aspirations, no matter what their circumstances, or where they decide to live in NSW; and the state benefits from their skills, drive and entrepreneurial ambition.

It has been an honour to lend a hand in supporting refugees to settle successfully in our state.

It is with pleasure that I am able to participate in the launch of the path-breaking NSW Settlement Strategy.

It is now time to ensure that its well-targeted rhetoric is turned into action.



**Joseph La Posta**

**CEO, Multicultural NSW**

**On behalf of Multicultural NSW, I am privileged to present this exciting and innovative Strategy – the first of its kind in the state and in Australia.**

**The NSW Settlement Strategy brings together existing and new NSW Government efforts to improve settlement outcomes for people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds living in NSW.**

The NSW Settlement Strategy has been informed by the lived experience of many people who have come to NSW through the humanitarian program, and also by government and non-government partners we have worked with over the past several years. It provides a framework for the NSW Government to have a shared understanding of what successful settlement means, continue to deliver services and programs that are working well, collaboratively address identified areas for attention, and to evaluate and apply learnings to improve settlement outcomes in NSW.

This landmark document comprises three parts: the NSW Settlement Strategy, an Action Plan and an Evaluation Framework.

The NSW Settlement Strategy explores the current settlement landscape, while recognising that each settlement journey is unique and diverse.

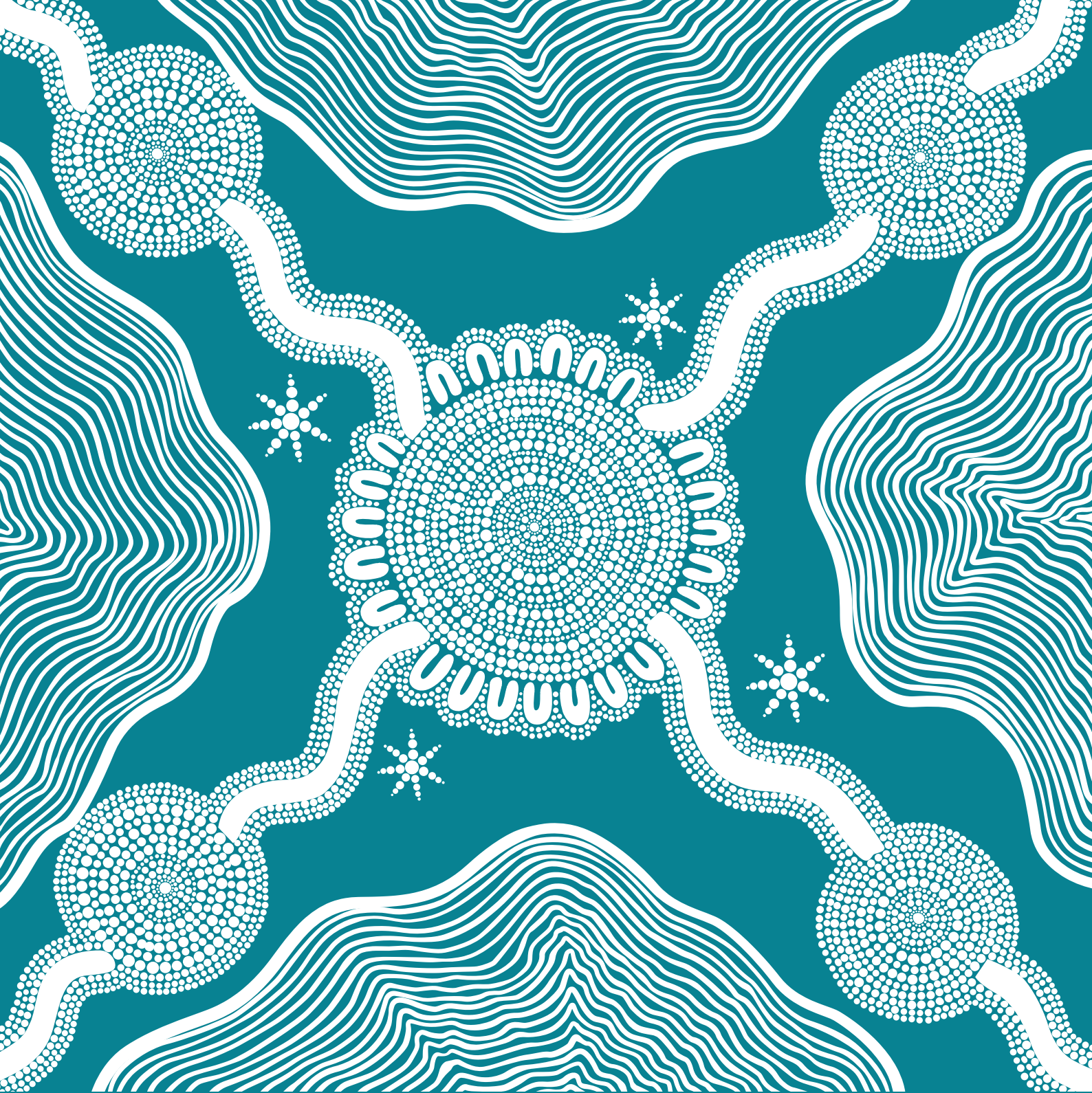
The Action Plan outlines priorities for the NSW Government where it develops and delivers key policies, services and programs. These actions will complement and strengthen various other initiatives under way in NSW that are led by the Australian Government and local government, the non-government sector and the community.

The Evaluation Framework will focus the NSW Government to monitor progress and be flexible and responsive to emerging needs in NSW.

The NSW Settlement Strategy is only one component of a broader system, which requires everyone from all levels of government, the non-government sector and the community to work together to achieve successful long-term settlement outcomes.

A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of the NSW Settlement Strategy. I am excited to see Multicultural NSW and the NSW Government leading the way to realise our common vision – a NSW where everyone benefits when refugees thrive.





Multicultural NSW proudly acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and waterways of this state, who have cared for Country since time immemorial.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians for their wisdom, insight and connection to the land and waterways – the same land and waterways that are now home to people from all corners of the world. We acknowledge the vital role First Nations people play in welcoming new arrivals to this country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging of all nations, for they hold the memories, culture, tradition and hopes of First Nations people.

*The artwork on this page is taken from the Multicultural NSW Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and was created by artist Rheanna Lotter. The artwork represents the commitment, inclusion, diversity and strength between Multicultural NSW and the wider community.*

# Introduction

NSW has a proud history of welcoming and settling people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds, dating back to postwar migration booms.



# Between 1945 and 1965, about two million migrants arrived in Australia, contributing to more than a third of the country’s population growth with many settling in NSW.

Many of these migrants were displaced by wars and welcomed by the Australian Government.<sup>1</sup>

In 1954, Australia ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and continued to resettle vulnerable groups in an ad hoc fashion in response to global crises. In the wake of rising numbers of refugees, the Refugee and Humanitarian Program was established in 1977. Since then, Australia has welcomed around 900,000<sup>2</sup> refugees and humanitarian entrants via the offshore and onshore components of the program—including refugees who have arrived by boat—making Australia one of the top five resettlement countries globally<sup>3</sup>, and one of the most generous per capita.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this period, Australia has welcomed refugees from Eastern Europe, former Yugoslavia, Latin and Central America, Indochina, Africa, Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Refugee source countries have varied, reflecting ever changing global circumstances such as the Vietnam War in the 1970s, the first Gulf War and Balkan War in the 1990s, conflicts in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Afghanistan throughout the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, and more recently people fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

NSW values people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds as part of Australia’s historical, current and future migration, and recognises that a diverse population is a social and economic asset. Diversity builds an inclusive society, enlarges our economy and talent pool, boosts productivity and encourages innovation.

Settlement is a multi-layered experience of new arrivals adjusting to a new life in Australia, and of Australia welcoming new arrivals. Successful settlement enables new arrivals to fully participate in Australian life.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, NSW settled a significant proportion of Australia’s annual Refugee and Humanitarian Program intake, having an average annual intake of 6,000 people.

Since December 2015, NSW has provided permanent resettlement to more than 40,000 people impacted by international humanitarian crises. Of these, more than 20,000 sought refuge from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.

NSW more recently has welcomed more than 1,400 Afghan evacuees following the fall of Kabul in 2021 and more than 4,000 Ukrainians on temporary visas following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

There are also around 35,000 people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds living in NSW on Temporary Protection and Bridging visas. This includes people who have sought asylum and are awaiting status determination or immigration status resolution, refugees on Temporary Protection visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise visas (SHEVs) who arrived in Australia prior to 2014, people transitioning to permanent Resolution of Status (RoS) visas<sup>5</sup>, and many others with uncertain visa status.<sup>6</sup>



01 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *A History of the Department of Immigration: Managing Migration to Australia*, 2017; Department of Home Affairs, *Australia’s Offshore Humanitarian Program*  
02 Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia*, 2019.  
03 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs*, 2022.  
04 Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia*, 2019.

05 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *Unauthorised Maritime Arrival Legacy Caseload December 2023*.  
06 Parliament of Australia, *Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Supplementary Budget Estimates 25 October*, 2021.



# Over 80 per cent of new arrivals settle in the Greater Sydney region.

The remainder are spread across designated primary settlement locations in regional NSW including Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Armidale, Wagga Wagga, Albury and Wollongong.

The Australian Government has primary policy and operational responsibility for settlement matters, including assessing and granting protection visas and managing on-arrival orientation and support. In NSW, the NSW Government is responsible for ensuring that state services are accessible, equitable and responsive to refugees, and for contributing to cross-sector work that supports community welcome and social cohesion. Local government coordinates community, services and industry at a local level to undertake place-based action to prepare for, welcome and support new arrivals.

Multicultural NSW leads the NSW Government's response to settlement and works closely with the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement, all levels of government, community leaders and members, service providers, non-government organisations and the private sector to ensure resources and services are well-coordinated and relevant.

The NSW Settlement Strategy is the first of its kind in the state and Australia. It brings together existing and new NSW Government efforts to improve settlement outcomes of people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds living in NSW.

The NSW Settlement Strategy builds on the past several years of cross-sector and interjurisdictional collaboration<sup>7</sup>, explores the current settlement landscape, and provides a plan with priority actions for the NSW Government.

To develop the NSW Settlement Strategy Multicultural NSW has worked closely with government and non-government stakeholders and heard directly from people with lived experience to better understand what services, systems and processes have been working well for people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds living in NSW, and where we have more to do.

The NSW Settlement Strategy builds on these strengths and learnings, and provides a framework for the NSW Government to have a shared understanding of what successful settlement means, continue to deliver services and programs that are working well, collaboratively address identified areas for attention, and to evaluate and apply learnings to improve settlement outcomes in NSW.

# Purpose

The purpose of the NSW Settlement Strategy is to improve settlement outcomes for people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds living in NSW and ensure they are supported and empowered to realise their potential and thrive.



07 Multicultural NSW explored recent experiences and learnings in NSW to inform the development of the Strategy. This included findings in the NSW Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement's Five Years in Review report and learnings from place-based efforts such as the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan and its recent Evaluation Report.

Settlement can be a lifelong journey to become oriented, established and independent in the community.

Objectives

This experience may start before arriving in Australia and extend over generations.

Settlement journeys may not be sequential or linear, and are often complex and diverse in nature, varying between individuals, families and groups.

The NSW Government acknowledges the complex settlement ecosystem that exists in NSW, with roles and responsibilities belonging to all levels of government and the non-government sector. The NSW Settlement Strategy recognises the non-government sector as a significant contributor to achieving positive settlement outcomes for people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds in NSW, providing supports that are complementary to government policies, programs and initiatives.

- Building on strengths, the NSW Settlement Strategy provides a clear framework to achieve the following objectives:**
- » articulate what the NSW Government means by settlement journeys and what constitutes successful settlement
  - » embed the voice of lived experience in decision-making
  - » enhance and formalise collaboration, coordination, strategic planning and service delivery across the NSW Government
  - » ensure continuous improvement, evaluation and capacity building across the NSW Government to ensure successful settlement outcomes
  - » engage a wide range of cross-sector actors and communities to ensure refugees thrive
  - » build and enhance existing strategic partnerships with the Australian Government and other state, territory and local governments to influence national decision-making.

Target cohorts

The NSW Settlement Strategy focuses primarily on people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds **(Table 1)** who are within the first 10 years of their settlement journey and living in NSW.

People from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds include people who come to Australia permanently through the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, Community Support Program, Family Reunion and Partner streams and other similar pathways.<sup>8</sup> The term also includes people who have unstable status, such as people seeking asylum, some Bridging visa holders, and people who hold or have held Temporary Protection visas (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise visas

(SHEVs). For the purposes of the NSW Settlement Strategy, the term ‘refugees’ intends to encompass this broader definition of people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds.

Many of the outcomes and priority actions to be achieved through the NSW Settlement Strategy are also relevant to other new and emerging cohorts. This is consistent with the remit of Multicultural NSW and the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement.

The target cohorts could change and expand over time with future reviews and evaluations of the NSW Settlement Strategy.

	People who are in Australia on	Through pathways such as	For example
Primary target cohorts	Permanent visas	Refugee and Humanitarian Program	Refugees on permanent protection visas
		Community Support Program	
		Family reunion, partner and other similar visas	
		Resolution of Status visas	
	Temporary humanitarian visas and have unstable status	Bridging visas	Refugees on temporary visas
		Temporary Protection visas (TPV)	People seeking asylum, including those who initially arrived on other temporary visas
		Safe Haven Enterprise visas (SHEV)	
		Temporary Humanitarian Stay visas	Evacuees, intending to become permanent
		Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas	People fleeing crises, not intending to become permanent
Secondary target cohorts	Other temporary visas	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility	Unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled migrants
		Working holiday and Skilled visas	Skilled migrants
			Working holiday-makers
		Student visas	International students

Table 1. Target cohorts

08 Some people who arrive in Australia on non-humanitarian visas are often also fleeing persecution and/or conflict.



# Outcomes

The NSW Settlement Strategy will work towards achieving a range of outcomes for refugees and the community, which is articulated in the program logic (Figure 1).

For the purposes of the NSW Settlement Strategy, the term ‘community’ extends beyond the people who live in the broader community to also include local councils, non-government organisations, place-based initiatives and grassroots networks.

The short-term outcomes are directly within the scope of the NSW Settlement Strategy and represent the intended changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, awareness, opinions and motivations brought about by the Strategy itself. The priority actions outlined in the NSW Settlement Strategy’s Action Plan are mapped against these short-term outcomes.

The program logic also outlines the longer-term outcomes and goals that the Strategy will contribute to. It is important to note that the program logic goes beyond the NSW Settlement Strategy’s lifespan. For example, the ultimate goal that everyone in NSW benefits when refugees thrive, reflects a desired change over 30-plus years. Likewise, the long-term and intermediate outcomes capture the broader changes expected at a systemic, environmental, structural and cultural level as a result of the NSW Settlement Strategy, as well as various other efforts in the broader settlement environment.

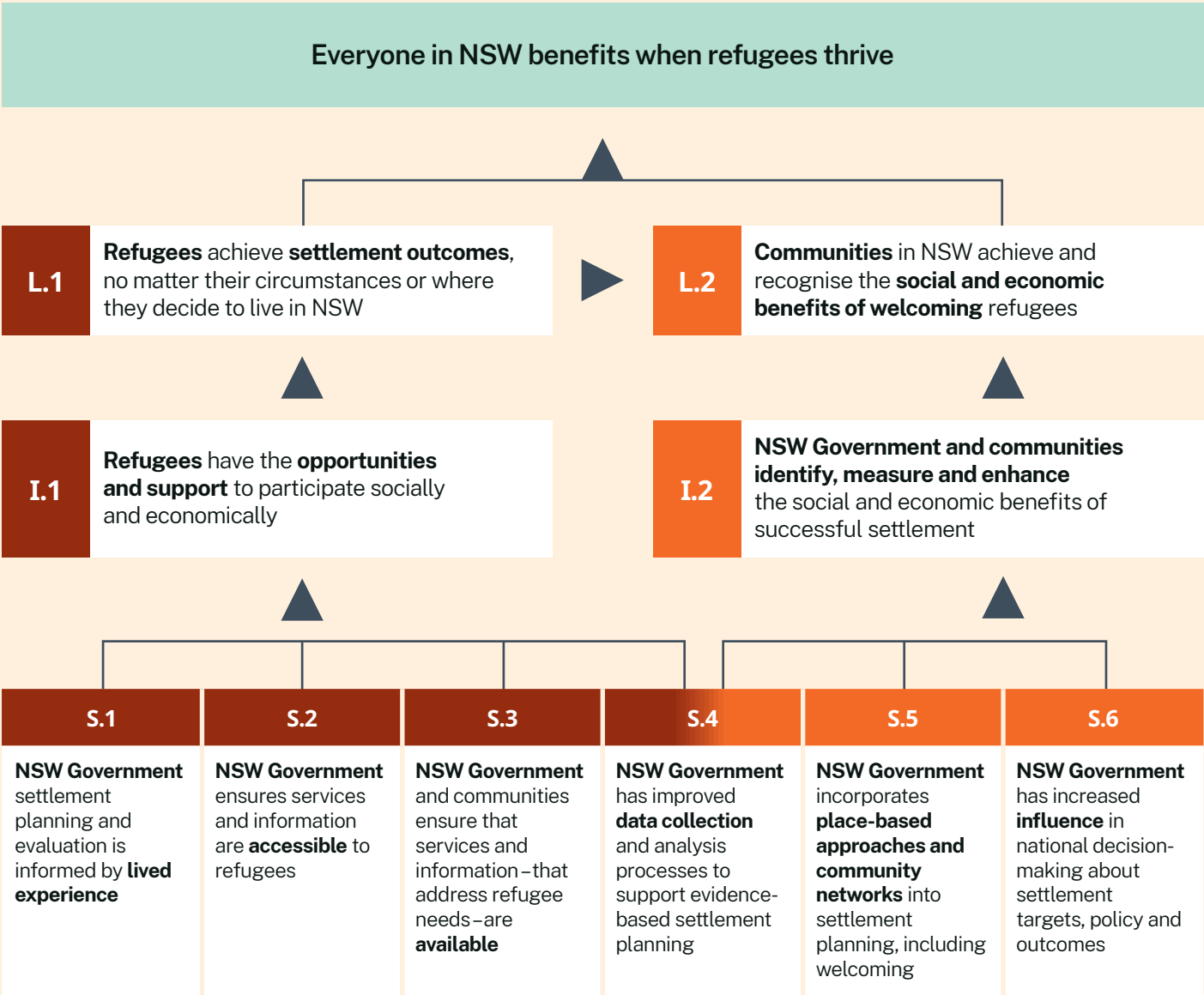


Figure 1. Program Logic



# Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles were drawn from international human rights instruments<sup>9</sup>, best-practice evidence and national standards.<sup>10</sup> The Guiding Principles underpin the NSW Settlement Strategy.



<sup>09</sup> Including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and of Their Families; the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child; the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>10</sup> Including Australian Government, *National Settlement Framework*; Settlement Council of Australia, *Settlement Sector Quality Framework and Outcomes Standards*; Multicultural Youth Affairs Network NSW (MYAN), *National Youth Settlement Framework*; P Shergold, K Benson and M Piper, *Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia*, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *Human rights-based approaches*.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Home Affairs, *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Guide*, 2018.

## 01.

### Human rights-based approach<sup>11</sup>

Refugees have the same rights as other members of society to realise their potential and participate in decision-making. Discrimination is prevented and eliminated, and participation is active, free and meaningful.

The NSW Government gives attention to issues of access and equity at the policy, service-design and service-delivery level to ensure that refugees can access programs and services, and that programs and services deliver outcomes for refugees on par with the wider population.<sup>12</sup>

The NSW Government strives to ensure refugees experience a positive settlement journey, no matter their circumstance or where they decide to live in NSW.

## 02.

### A focus on strengths

Refugees bring with them a great deal of strength, capability and resilience. These tangibly manifest in invaluable contributions to industry, arts, community, collective resilience and cultural richness –especially where barriers are sufficiently lowered and where the environment is sufficiently enabling.

The NSW Government supports individuals to exercise agency, determine what is in their own best interests and make informed decisions about matters that affect their lives.

## 03.

### Lived experience at the heart

Placing the voice of people with lived experience at the heart of the NSW Settlement Strategy means refugees are actively engaged to guide and help inform the Strategy at every stage of development, implementation and evaluation.

The NSW Government recognises that the voice of people with lived experience holds the truth about settlement experiences in NSW and reflects an expertise that delivers the knowledge and wisdom that can guide our human rights and strengths-based approach.

## 04.

### Whole-of-government approach

The NSW Government is committed to a whole-of-government approach that fosters strategic coordination and partnership.

A whole-of-government approach includes the NSW Government working collaboratively, sharing data and information, and prioritising forward planning across the three tiers of government.

The NSW Government works in partnership across traditional silos to problem solve, broker solutions and share knowledge, learnings and information. This is imperative to ensure refugees are empowered to live their best life in NSW.

## 05.

### Recognition of frontline experience

Organisations provide essential mainstream and settlement services and supports to refugees, including the Australian, state and local governments and non-government organisations.

The NSW Government recognises the value of frontline experience and expertise, and is committed to working collaboratively with such organisations and networks to improve settlement programs and policy design and delivery.

## 06.

### Shared commitment and ownership

Settlement is everyone's business. Positive settlement outcomes are achieved as a collective of governments, non-government organisations, businesses, people with lived experience, receiving communities and First Nations communities.

Commitment to cross-sector collaboration, participation and ownership is the responsibility of all sectors and services. It provides the opportunity to achieve good settlement outcomes that benefit the whole of society. These include promoting cultural diversity, social cohesion and inclusion.

## 07.

### Continuous improvement, development and ongoing evaluation

Continuous improvement provides the environment to ensure the NSW Settlement Strategy is responsive to, and reflective of, refugees' settlement experiences in NSW.

Ongoing and rigorous data collection, data sharing, and robust monitoring and evaluation of services, programs, structures and systems are crucial for successes to be recognised and for opportunities for improvement to be identified. This ensures accountability and enables evidence-based decision-making, and demonstrates the economic and social benefits of settlement.

The NSW Government recognises that lived experience is a key form of evidence to be given due weight.

# Settlement domains



**The NSW Settlement Strategy identifies 10 settlement domains that encompass the critical services delivered by all levels of government and the non-government sector.**

These domains align with those described in the National Settlement Framework and the Settlement Council of Australia's National Settlement Outcome Standards.

Importantly, these settlement domains are interdependent and do not exist in silos. Settlement is a complex and non-linear process, meaning that people will access different services concurrently or consecutively, and may exit and re-engage with services at different times. Further, the interdependence of these settlement domains means that achieving, or failing to achieve, positive outcomes in one domain will impact outcomes in others.

The non-government sector provides essential services, programs and initiatives that are central to all settlement domains, complementing and bolstering government-funded services and programs. The non-government sector often focuses resources to support people who are ineligible for government-funded services.

- 1 Health and Wellbeing
- 2 Education and Training
- 3 Employment
- 4 Language Services
- 5 Housing
- 6 Civic Participation
- 7 Justice and Law
- 8 Family and Social Support
- 9 Transport
- 10 Finance



# Follow the journeys of the Khalil, Khan, Bahati and Mahendran families to see what the settlement domains look like for refugees living in NSW.

The family profiles depicted are fictional, however have been based on real experiences and settlement journeys.



Nahida has work experience in accounting and has limited English. As a single-parent household, Nahida is the primary caregiver for Muhammad, who has autism. Muhammad likes music and animals.

Nahida is struggling with her mental health but is grateful for her cousins who are allowing her and her son to stay with them while she finds work.

Therese is a doctor and has work experience. She hopes to continue her medical practice in Australia. She also has very good English and is dedicated to helping others.

Felix is a business manager. He speaks five languages proficiently, including English. Felix also has diabetes.



Ravi was a machine operator in his home country and is currently working in a factory. He is engaged in studies at TAFE and dreams of studying at university.

Ravi is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Ravi has poor mental health, exacerbated by his time in detention and separation from his family. He has been unable to sponsor his family to come to Australia due to his visa status.

Salwa is the primary caregiver to Nour, has limited English and loves to cook.

Nour is preschool aged.

Ali is an engineer by trade with years of experience, has good English skills and likes to play football.

Mona is in primary school and, like her dad, likes to play football.

Hussein is in high school and hopes to one day be an actor.

Fatima has a heart condition and is not very mobile. She likes to listen to the radio in language as it brings memories of home.

## Khan KH

The Khan family arrived in Sydney as tourists and recently applied for protection. They are now on Bridging visas.

## Bahati BT

The Bahati family arrived in Wagga Wagga via community sponsorship. Felix and Therese hope to get Australian citizenship one day.

## Mahendran MH

Ravi Mahendran arrived in Australia by boat. He has a mother and father in his home country that he supports. After spending some time in detention, he was granted a Temporary Protection visa and settled in Sydney.

## Khalil KL

The Khalil family arrived in Sydney as refugees via the Humanitarian Settlement Program.



# 01. Health and wellbeing

An individual's good health and wellbeing enhances their ability to work and study, perform everyday activities and develop fulfilling relationships with family and friends and the wider community. Meeting the health needs of refugees soon after arrival supports their successful settlement in NSW.

Refugees often have complex physical and mental health needs and these needs can change over time. Accessible and appropriate mainstream and specialist health services—including early intervention and prevention—that are responsive to individual needs are essential to ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Access to bicultural professionals, interpreters and translated resources can support an individual's effective and ongoing engagement with relevant supports. Recognising the impact of trauma and difficult pre-arrival experiences is essential for holistic health care for refugees.

The services and supports available to refugees often vary depending on an individual's visa entitlements and where they live in NSW. For example, individuals with permanent residency or Australian citizenship are eligible for Medicare-funded supports; people holding Temporary Protection and Bridging visas may or may not be eligible for Medicare. Refugees living in regional areas of NSW may face other barriers to accessing health care.

The **Australian Government** determines visa eligibility and entitlements, and is responsible for Medicare policy, the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Many of the initial health services when people arrive in Australia are provided by the Australian Government.

The **NSW Government** delivers mainstream and specialised refugee health services directly through NSW Health, for example via the NSW Refugee Health Service. Provision of specified public health services to community-based people seeking asylum is facilitated by NSW Health Medicare Ineligible Asylum Seekers Policy Directive.

The NSW Government also funds providers such as the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) to deliver specialist trauma support and mental health capacity-building.

**Non-government organisations** and grassroots community groups also provide crucial local supports to those who are ineligible for health services. They deliver primary health care services, health education programs, assistance to access medications, and programs to support holistic health and wellbeing.

KH

The Khan family seeks medical support from the NSW Refugee Health Service Asylum Seeker Clinic.

Nahida is referred to a non-government organisation for mental health support.

BT

Felix engages with a local general practitioner and is referred to a specialist in a nearby regional town.

After some time, the Bahati family expects their first child and accesses birthing classes at the hospital in a nearby regional town. Ongoing separation from their family during this time impacts Therese and Felix's mental health and they end up seeking support from their local general practitioner.

MH

Ravi is signed up to Medicare as he transitions to a Temporary Protection visa. He is referred to a non-government organisation and a local LGBTIQA+ group for mental health support.



KL

On arrival, the Khalil family are signed up to Medicare, and the NSW Refugee Health Service helps the children get up to date with their vaccinations.

The NSW Refugee Health Service refers Ali and his children to optical and dental clinics for further health checks and Fatima to My Aged Care. Fatima sees a bilingual general practitioner for regular health checks.

After being in NSW for some time, conflict in their home country prompts the Khalil family to engage with a non-government organisation for mental health support.



# 02. Education and Training

Access to and participation in education and training programs enhances people's settlement outcomes and employment prospects, and contributes to future economic independence. This includes high-quality early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as training and skills-development pathways. Tertiary education, both vocational education and training (VET) and university-level qualifications, is an important pathway to employment, noting that the right to study is dependent on visa entitlements.

Many refugees, including school-aged children and young people, arrive in NSW with little or disrupted formal education. As such, their education needs may not be commensurate with other children and young people their age. Additionally, refugee children and young people may have complex emotional, mental or physical health problems, and as a result may have greater education and support needs.

High-quality early childcare provides important social and educational benefits to young children while enabling parents—especially women—to participate in the labour market. Access to early childhood education services can also be dependent on visa status.

The **Australian Government** provides financial assistance and subsidies to refugees with permanent residency wanting to attend Australian universities. People holding temporary visas may or may not be eligible. The Australian Government is responsible for childcare subsidies, although eligibility is often dependent on the type of visa held by refugee families.

The **NSW Government** delivers mainstream education services for children and young people through primary and secondary education. In certain settlement locations and schools with higher numbers of students from refugee backgrounds, the NSW Department of Education also invests in specialist programs that support school-aged children to settle successfully into NSW schools. These programs support student wellbeing and learning, deliver school-based Intensive English Centres (IECs), support and train teachers, and facilitate connections between schools and relevant external government and non-government agencies.

The NSW Government delivers vocational education and training (VET) and provides various concessions for NSW residents that some refugees are eligible for.

The NSW Government subsidises a limited network of community preschools across the state and has targeted strategies to ensure refugee families are accessing quality early childhood education.

**Local councils** support lifelong learning through local libraries as knowledge and learning hubs.

**Non-government organisations** deliver supports to help refugees navigate and thrive in the education system, including additional education-support programs and support to access essential school supplies and materials.

KH

Muhammad accesses free primary school education facilitated by the Temporary Residents Program. The school is supported via the School Liaison Program to ensure Muhammad's needs are met.

Muhammad receives assistance from a bicultural school learning support officer and school counsellor.



BT

Therese accesses free training at an Adult and Community Education (ACE) college via Smart and Skilled and gains certification in aged care.

MH

Ravi is motivated to continue his studies and accesses free training at TAFE via Smart and Skilled.

KL

Ali is motivated to continue to build his English reading and writing skills to help him secure employment and attends Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) classes.

Mona's primary school has a Community Hub, where Salwa meets with other women to practice her conversational English.

Once Nour is enrolled in early childhood education, Salwa begins attending AMEP.

Hussein is supported through the Intensive English Centre (IEC) at the nearby high school, before transitioning into the mainstream classes after 12 months. Mona attends the local primary school and is supported by a bicultural school learning support officer. Both Hussein and Mona receive additional support from school counsellors.



### 03. Employment

Refugees bring with them the potential to contribute significantly to the Australian community and economy. Refugees are generally highly motivated to find work in Australia and to use their education and training, skills, work commitment and entrepreneurial drive. Employment provides the bedrock for successful settlement, contributing to a wide range of personal and community benefits, including increased social capital, economic self-sufficiency and social cohesion. Employment also leads to secure housing and financial stability.

Finding work in a field or position commensurate with previous qualifications and training often relies on accessible information and awareness of jobs available, capability to apply for and succeed in the role, relevant Australian work experience and references, education and training, recognition of overseas skills and experience, and English language skills. For some refugees, the right to work is dependent on visa entitlements.

The **Australian Government** is responsible for work rights and employment policy, and funds a mainstream national employment support service (Workforce Australia).

State and local governments also play an important role in funding targeted employment and training programs and economic development initiatives. For example, the **NSW Government** invests in tailored refugee employment support services.

**Local councils** provide community-based volunteer programs and local economic development initiatives.

**Non-government organisations** provide employment support and social enterprise initiatives through a variety of different funding sources

BT

Once settled in Wagga Wagga, a member of Felix's Community Sponsorship Program (CSP) group connects him with the owner of a local business, who then offers him employment.

Therese wants to continue her career as a doctor in Australia but must save to complete the required exams. In the meantime, she finds casual employment in the aged care sector.



MH

Ravi is motivated to find employment so that he can support himself, and his family in his home country. He is assisted by a non-government organisation's employment support program to find casual employment working nightshift in a local factory.

KL

Once Ali completes the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), he engages with a career practitioner and is supported into employment by the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP).

Excited to share her country's cuisine with the Australian community, Salwa attends information sessions run by Business Connect where she learns about how she can start her own business.



### 04. Language Services

Language services play an integral role in enabling positive outcomes for refugees across all domains in the settlement journey, and across broader aspects of life. Language services can be a gateway for people to experience a sense of belonging and connection in a new and unfamiliar environment, and to remain connected to culture and identity and participate in social and economic life.

Refugees arrive in Australia with varying degrees of competency in English and literacy in their mother tongue. This impacts their ability to navigate systems throughout their settlement journey and across all settlement domains. It is crucial that mainstream and specialist services and organisations are committed to, and competent in, effectively using language services to enable positive settlement outcomes. For example, using interpreters and translated materials, including audio and visual resources, bilingual staff, and supports with digital literacy. It is important, and can be challenging, for services and organisations to remain flexible and adapt to ever changing demographics of refugee arrivals to ensure new and emerging community needs are met.

The **Australian Government** delivers the Free Interpreting Service through Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National) and has demonstrated commitment to providing information in language for Commonwealth-funded programs and policies, particularly through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Free Interpreting Service is available to certain groups and organisations to provide services to people in Australia who are eligible for Medicare.

The **NSW Government** delivers a suite of programs to support access to information, and strengthen community language learning, and interpreting and translating services.

**Non-government organisations** provide language accessible services through utilising formal translating and interpreting services, employing bilingual staff, and providing localised and informal supports.

KH

Nahida uses telephone interpreting services to assist her during essential appointments.

Nahida and Muhammad benefit from receiving translated health information to help them understand Muhammad's health needs.

BT

Felix and Therese access the Free Translating Service to get their qualification documents translated.

Through a friend, Felix hears about the NSW Interpreter Scholarship program and applies.

After being in NSW for many years and as the couple become elderly, Therese reverts to speaking in her mother tongue.

MH

Ravi benefits from his doctor using the online Appointment Reminder Translation Tool.

KL

Throughout the initial stages of their settlement journey, Salwa and Fatima frequently use interpreting services to assist them in accessing essential services, such as health professionals.

Mona participates in the Community Language School Program on the weekend to preserve language skills in her mother tongue.

Fatima struggles to build her English skills however enjoys listening to a community radio station in language to stay up to date with important events.







## 05. Housing

Housing plays a critical role in health and wellbeing and is integral to refugee settlement journeys. Access to adequate housing is also recognised as a human right. The availability of appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing underpins positive outcomes for refugees across all settlement domains. It has significant impacts on an individual's physical and mental health, sense of safety and autonomy, and builds a platform for social and economic participation. For children and young people, sustainable housing also has positive impacts on developmental, cognitive and education outcomes.

Securing suitable and sustainable housing is not only dependent on the options available but also on the ability to navigate the housing market and associated processes, having a stable job and income, an understanding of rights and responsibilities, and awareness of services and supports available. Additionally, eligibility for government-funded housing services and supports varies depending on an individual's visa entitlements, which can impact on the risk of housing stress and homelessness for refugees.

The **Australian Government** funds initial short-term accommodation, provides basic household goods and assists refugees to enter the rental market through the Humanitarian Settlement Program.

For eligible refugees on temporary visas, the Australian Government provides assistance to source suitable housing through the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program.

The **NSW Government** provides a range of private rental assistance products and services. These products are available for refugees on a permanent visa.

The NSW Government also manages social housing properties across the state which are available to refugees on a permanent visa.

**Non-government organisations** provide an array of supports to refugees regardless of visa status, such as one-on-one supports, educational programs, financial assistance and transitional and supported housing options for refugees.

KH

The Khan family stays with cousins on arrival in Sydney. After some time, the Khan family is supported by a Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) caseworker to find suitable private rental accommodation.

BT

On arrival, the Bahati family moves into a house on the outskirts of Wagga Wagga which has been sourced and secured by the community support group.

Felix and Therese are keen to understand housing rights and the Australian housing market better, with long-term aspirations to buy a house. The community support group are able to direct them to online information and guidelines.

MH

Ravi connects with a non-government organisation that provides information in language about affordable private rental options.

Eventually, Ravi moves into the private rental market with his boyfriend.

KL

On arrival the Khalil family accesses short-term accommodation through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP). The Khalil family soon secures a 12-month lease in a suburb of Sydney recommended by friends.

The Khalil family moves multiple times through their settlement journey before securing a longer-term rental suitable for the family's needs. They receive a Rentstart Bond Loan to help them secure the accommodation.



## 06. Civic Participation

Participating in government and democratic processes allows refugees to exercise their civic rights and engage with the broader community. Civic involvement includes voting for political leaders, volunteering and engaging with community, and can strengthen positive outcomes for both the individual and community. Participating in civil society empowers refugees to exercise self-determination, establish and strengthen connections with community, and build a sense of belonging in NSW. Voting helps governments better understand their constituents' needs and priorities.

To some degree, the extent to which refugees participate in civil society depends on their visa entitlements. For example, refugees on a permanent visa can eventually apply for Australian citizenship and participate in democratic processes; refugees on temporary visas are unable to apply for Australian citizenship.

The **Australian Government** is responsible for determining Australian citizenship, which is a requirement to vote in national, state and local elections. The Australian Government also funds the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program–Community Capacity Building, which supports refugees to develop skills in areas such as leadership and governance, as well as providing opportunities to interact with different levels of government and engage with local stakeholders on settlement issues.

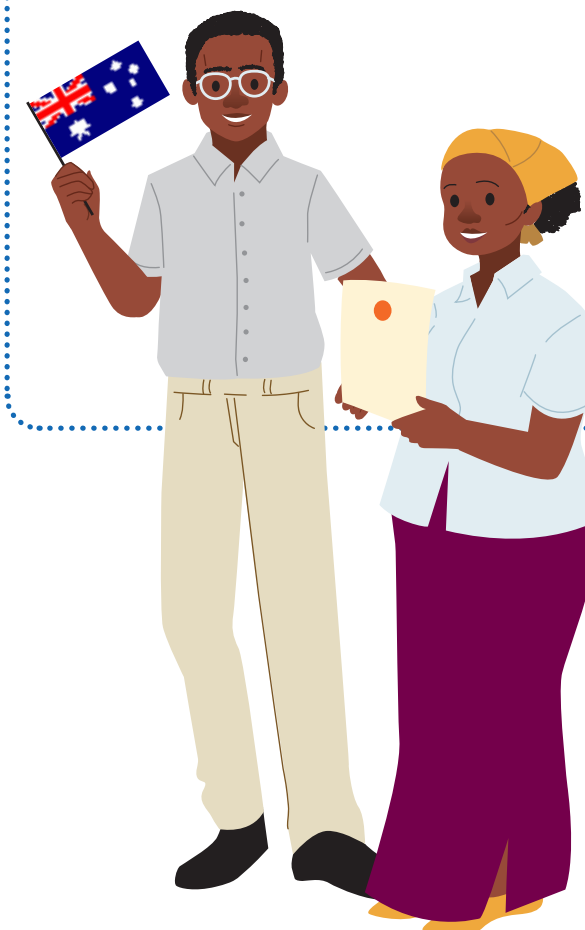
The **NSW Government**, through the NSW Police Force, provides community information sessions for refugees on permanent visas to inform them about Australian law, policing and safety.

In addition, civic participation and information classes are available through **local councils** for this cohort.

**Non-government organisations** provide a range of community-based activities fostering civic participation and volunteering opportunities, as well as capacity-building programs to equip refugees with leadership skills necessary to become advocates for their communities, and to build the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate in political decision-making.

BT

Felix and Therese eventually sit the Australian citizenship test and become Australian citizens.



MH

Ravi participates in a capacity-building program run by a non-government organisation to build his advocacy skills for refugees who have arrived by boat.

KL

The Khalil family accesses orientation sessions about Australian law through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and Families in Cultural Transition Program (FICT).



# 07. Justice and Law

Understanding rights and responsibilities under the Australian law allows refugees to navigate society and make informed choices across all settlement domains. A refugee's rights and responsibilities extend beyond their visa status and entitlements. Refugees also have rights and responsibilities as civic participants, employees, employers, parents, students, patients, tenants and taxpayers, to name a few. Australian law more broadly impacts refugees' visa status, their rights to work and study, their rights to access government-funded services and their ability to reunite with family members that remain overseas.

Awareness and understanding of one's rights and responsibilities and the legal and justice system, as well as the ability to communicate effectively about them, are integral to refugees exercising self-determination, feeling safe and building a sense of belonging. They are also integral to refugees effectively navigating society and experiences across settlement domains.

Refugees may fear or have low trust in the justice system, built on experiences prior to arriving in Australia. Rights and responsibilities of the home country may also be contrasting, demonstrating the importance of encouraging refugees to understand Australian laws.

The **Australian Government** has ultimate responsibility for determining Australian law and provides tailored information on visa entitlements.

The **NSW Government** has responsibility for state-based legal and justice systems, and for providing mainstream services and programs for refugees through agencies such as Legal Aid NSW and the NSW Police Force. These services and programs are bolstered by the non-government sector, including pro-bono supports and philanthropic funding.

**Non-government organisations** provide specialist community legal education programs, outreach clinics, and advocacy on systemic legal problems affecting refugee communities.

KH

The Khan family seeks advice from a specialist non-government organisation in relation to their protection visa application.

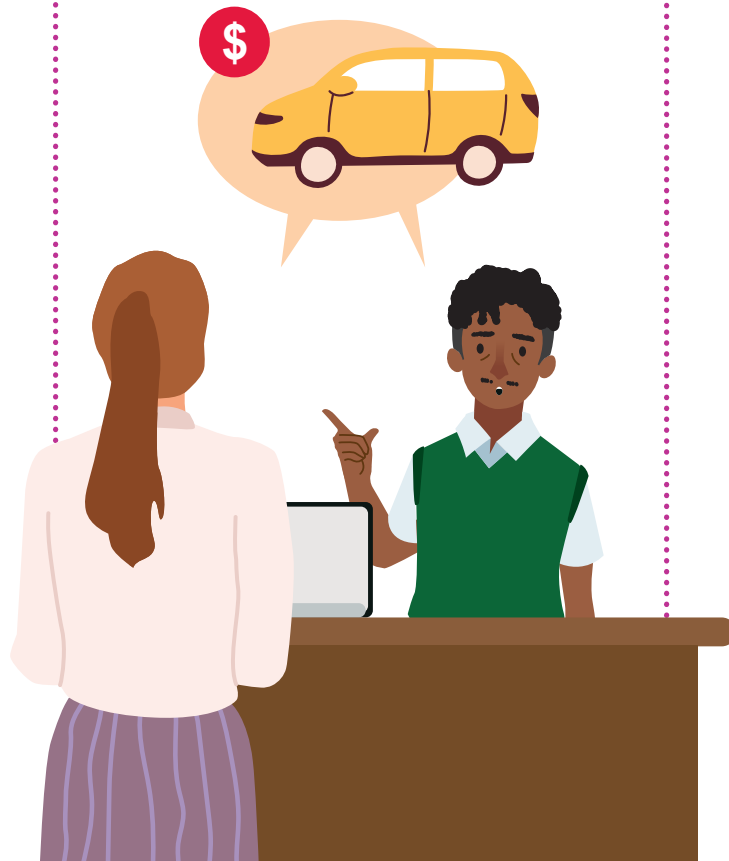
BT

Felix and Therese access the Legal Aid NSW Refugee Service to discuss how they could potentially bring family members to Australia.

MH

Ravi receives support from a not-for-profit legal service after receiving a parking fine.

Ravi also receives free assistance from a not-for-profit legal service to apply for a permanent visa.



KL

Ali seeks advice from a Migrant Employment Legal Service after he has been treated unfairly by his employer.



# 08. Family and Social Support

Safe, healthy, positive and meaningful family and social relationships are important factors for settlement and general wellbeing. In addition to positive family environment, a harmonious community free from racism and discrimination, and where refugees are supported to establish a sense of belonging in the broader community, is vital to successful settlement.

During their settlement journeys, refugees navigate the complexities of preserving cultural identity while learning and integrating Australian values and norms, often in a context of disrupted family dynamics and while coping with the impacts of pre-arrival traumatic experiences. Service systems and practitioners must be aware of intersecting factors and create culturally safe programs and responses to support refugees with challenges such as domestic and family violence. The unique needs of each individual within a family unit, and the needs of the family unit as a whole, must be supported to facilitate successful settlement.

**Australian Government** programs, including Settlement Engagement and Transition Supports (SETS) and Youth Transition Support Services, deliver a range of projects and activities to assist refugees in accessing mainstream and specialist services that support positive family and social engagement.

The **NSW Government** supports refugees through a range of mainstream services, including Targeted Early Intervention program and the Active Kids initiative, and through specialised services including Multicultural Women's Hubs and the Multicultural Youth Linker initiative.

There are also programs funded by multiple levels of government, such as Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) and Community Hubs.

**Local councils** also support the community through community centres.

**Non-government organisations** have an integral role in delivering culturally appropriate and trauma-informed programs to families and supporting the development of positive social relationships within the wider community through events, activities and festivals.

KH

The Khan family joins the Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program, and Nahida gets linked to a locally run support group for parents of children with disability.

Muhammad joins his school's music club.

The Khan family participates in a local cultural festival run by the local council.

BT

Therese and Felix connect with a religious community and attend social activities through their place of worship.

MH

Ravi regularly visits his local community centre. Ravi meets other people his age from his home country and joins their cricket team.

KL

Salwa attends the local Community Hub and Multicultural Women's Hub, where she builds strong relationships with the local community.

The Community Hub links Mona with swimming lessons and a local football team, and Nour with a playgroup at the local library. Ali supports Mona's football team as one of the coaches.

Through school, Hussein connects with an after-school youth drama program.

The Khalil family enjoys spending time with other families in their neighbourhood.





## 09. Transport

Affordable and accessible transport options facilitate an individual's ability to access health, education and employment opportunities, which in turn increases their potential for social and economic participation. Private and public transport options are essential for refugees navigating society, exercising their rights and responsibilities, maintaining social connections, going to work and school and accessing mainstream and specialist services.

The availability of private transport options relies on the ability to access a car, obtain a driver licence, understand road safety, and afford associated costs such as insurance. Private transport options are especially appealing to refugees living in regional NSW where services, places of employment, suitable accommodation and education institutions can often be in neighbouring regional towns.

The **Australian Government** funds learner driver supports and bespoke initiatives like Keys2Drive

The **NSW Government**, through Transport for NSW, is responsible for public transport services and policy in NSW, including initiatives like public transport concessions.

The NSW Government also invests in tailored driver licence and road safety programs, such as the Driver Licensing Access Program. Training Services NSW also supports learner drivers from refugee backgrounds through existing employment support programs.

**Non-government organisations** also provide informal transport supports such as community buses, local driving programs and financial relief for private and public transport.

KH

The Khan family receives Opal Card concessions and accesses subsidised public transport locally.

BT

The Bahati family saves for a car and Felix gets his driver licence.

In the meantime, a community support group helps Therese and Felix travel around the community.



MH

Ravi purchases a second-hand car, with the help of a friend.

KL

Ali accesses the Driver Licence Access Program to get his driver licence, and then teaches Hussein how to drive when he turns 16.

Salwa, Hussein, Mona, Nour and Fatima use public transport locally.



## 10. Finance

Achieving financial security is not only limited to having an income that is sufficient to meet one's needs. It is also about having the ability to navigate the financial landscape and make decisions that support financial wellbeing and independence. Financial security impacts, and is impacted by, many settlement domains including housing, employment and health and wellbeing.

Due to pre-arrival experiences, refugees often arrive in Australia with limited financial capital and may have to learn about and adapt to a financial landscape that differs from their country of origin. Clear, accessible and easy-to-understand information in language and in a wide range of formats, along with a culturally competent and gender-sensitive financial sector, support financial inclusion and overall financial security. Financial literacy programs and income supports available to refugees vary depending on an individual's circumstances, including visa entitlements.

The **Australian Government** administers financial support through Centrelink to most refugees who are permanent residents and citizens.

The Australian Government also delivers education programs to support financial literacy and resilience through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.

For people seeking asylum, financial assistance can be accessed via the Commonwealth's Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS), depending on eligibility.

The **NSW Government** supplements Commonwealth-funded income support payments through a range of initiatives such as No Interest Loans Schemes (NILS), Opal Network concessions, and targeted emergency relief grants and programs. The NSW Government also funds financial counselling services across the state.

**Non-government organisations** also deliver essential financial supports, particularly for people who are unable to access mainstream government payments.

KH

The Khan family receives income support from a non-government organisation.



BT

The community support group connects Therese and Felix to a financial adviser and they seek advice about pathways to home ownership.

MH

Ravi feels unwell and is unable to work his regular casual shifts. He receives an Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) voucher.

KL

Salwa engages in a financial literacy program delivered by a non-government organisation to build financial skills.





# Current settlement landscape

During the development of the NSW Settlement Strategy, Multicultural NSW worked closely with government and non-government stakeholders and heard directly from people with lived experience to build on existing knowledge and better understand the current settlement landscape in NSW – what services, systems and processes have been working well for refugees settling in NSW and what areas require attention.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The sentiment gathered has directly informed actions listed in Attachment 1 Action Plan.  
<sup>14</sup> This was also a key finding in the NSW Settlement Partnership, *Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia Final Report*, 2022.  
<sup>15</sup> This was also a key finding in the NSW Settlement Partnership, *Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia Final Report*, 2022.

## What is working well

### Existing and continued investment in policies, programs and services

The existence and continued investment in policies, programs and services that help address and meet the needs of refugees is, overall, contributing to positive settlement experiences in NSW.<sup>14</sup>

Education and Training and Health and Wellbeing are settlement domains where the systems and processes are particularly working well. Some examples, and depending on eligibility, include access to free public health care, programs delivered by the NSW Refugee Health Service, free education for children through the public education system, and fee-free training programs through vocational education and training (VET) providers. Employment programs, such as those delivered by non-government organisations, are also enablers to access employment pathways.

### Service navigation supports

Service navigation supports are also enabling successful settlement in NSW, especially when services and supports are delivered in a timely manner, and when mechanisms to access language services, through interpreting services or bicultural workers, are in place.<sup>15</sup>

Dedicated support workers and non-government organisations are helping new arrivals navigate services and systems on arrival. Examples include assisting with accessing mainstream programs such as Centrelink and enrolling children in school. Informal navigation supports, such as family, friends and mentors, are also supporting service navigation and providing direction and guidance as well as links to the broader community.

### A whole-of-community approach

When a whole-of-community approach is prioritised, including engaging non-traditional settlement stakeholders, the better the settlement experiences are for refugees and the benefits for the broader community.

Cross-sector collaboration and engagement, including community participation and support, are essential to successful settlement and have positive impacts for both the welcoming community and for newly arrived people. Building strong social connections has practical benefits for refugees, such as facilitating acquisition of English language skills and assisting with service navigation or pathways to employment, as well as community benefits such as supporting cross-cultural bonding and reducing social isolation within a community.

A whole-of-community approach in the design and delivery of services is also a key component of successful settlement. Effective programs and services are co-designed with community members, specialised and mainstream service providers and refugees.

The existence of local coordination mechanisms supporting collaboration within the settlement sector, and between the settlement sector and mainstream services, is also contributing to positive settlement experiences in NSW. When there is investment in building good working relationships and raising public awareness, referral processes are found to be more efficient and service accessibility is improved.

### People at the centre

Self-determination, respect and celebrating diversity are important contributors to positive settlement experiences. For refugees, being able to exercise independence and the ability to capitalise on opportunities, positively impacts their settlement journeys. In addition, existing programs that are designed with the person at the centre, particularly in education and training and creative settings, are key enablers.

For the broader community, attitudes that embrace diverse skills, cultures and religions that refugees have to offer, and safe spaces and places, are supporting positive settlement experiences and better settlement outcomes.

# What we still need to do

Although the existence of government and non-government services and supports in NSW available for refugees is contributing to positive settlement experiences, there are also a number of barriers and challenges that should be given attention to further enhance such experiences.



## Limited rights and eligibility for supports due to visa status

People seeking asylum, and other vulnerable temporary visa holders, often face additional challenges due to visa eligibility limitations. Some examples in particular include limited work and study rights and no access to Commonwealth income supports and Medicare services. These barriers are compounded with difficult pre-migration experiences and challenges associated with resettlement. Such limitations negatively impact settlement experiences, particularly in the settlement domains of Employment and Health and Wellbeing, and on people's ability to form a sense of belonging. The NSW and Local Governments and non-government sector provide essential services, programs and initiatives to people who are ineligible for broader Commonwealth supports.

The NSW Government supports the transition of people on Temporary Protection and Safe Haven Enterprise visas to permanent visas and is advocating for and discussing solutions to ongoing issues for people

seeking asylum, and for other vulnerable temporary visa holders with the Australian Government, along with other state and territory governments, at the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG).

## Better collaboration and coordination are needed between the Australian and state and territory governments

Improving the settlement experience relies on all levels of government communicating effectively and planning collaboratively at all stages of the settlement journey. Experiences of settlement in NSW in recent years have highlighted the importance of early collaboration and coordination to ensure effective service delivery, clarity of often overlapping Commonwealth and state roles and responsibilities, and a shared understanding of opportunities and barriers for government decision-making, partnerships and investment.

With recent global conflicts and the additional challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, NSW has sought to strengthen collaboration and undertake regular negotiations with the Australian Government to ensure positive settlement outcomes in emerging crisis situations. The NSW Coordinator General for Settlement has helped to pave the way.

The NSW Government is working with the Australian Government, along with other state and territory governments, via Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG) to improve collaborative settlement planning, timely and detailed communication about settlement priorities and arrival data, and alignment of complementary services to drive broader settlement outcomes.

## Disproportionate impact of whole-of-society challenges

There are whole-of-society challenges that are negatively impacting refugees in a disproportionate way, most particularly in the settlement domains of Housing and Employment.

Challenges securing accommodation in NSW, such as housing affordability, difficulty entering the rental market, long waitlists for social housing and limited supports to find suitable housing, are not unique to refugees. However, these are negatively impacting refugees due to compounding factors such as lack of Australian rental history and references, language barriers and lack of required identity documentation. Additionally, challenges finding suitable housing –especially for new arrivals with single-parent family structures, families with many children and multi-generational family compositions–create further challenges.<sup>16</sup>

The NSW Government is scoping how to address the lack of access to, and availability of, housing and homelessness products for refugees and advocating that the Australian Government include voices of lived experience in national policy.



Despite strong motivation to find work, refugees are disproportionately impacted by challenges to securing suitable employment due to compounding factors such as language barriers, difficulty getting overseas work experience and skills recognised, lack of familiarity with eligibility and enrolment processes for government-funded programs, and limited availability of employment supports such as career counselling, interview preparation and work-placement experience.<sup>17</sup>

The NSW Government is funding and supporting tailored employment support and pathway programs for refugees while advocating that the Australian Government address broader issues affecting employment support.

## Service availability, accessibility and equitability

Although there is a comprehensive range of specialised and mainstream services available, the benefits of these services are not always maximised due to availability, accessibility and equitability.<sup>18</sup>

Service demand sometimes outweighs supply, which results in service delays and extended wait times, such as for free legal support and access to in-demand training. Challenges are compounded for people who rely on alignment of different services. For example, the availability of childcare when enrolling in English classes, particularly for women, and the availability and alignment of public transport schedules, especially for those living in regional areas.

Service accessibility is often determined by language knowledge and familiarity with Australian systems. Limited English language skills, in combination with interpreters not always used by services, are a key barrier for many refugees accessing services. Additionally, the shift to digital and blended models of service delivery compound barriers to access services for refugees with limited digital literacy.

Refugees access mainstream services throughout their settlement journeys, however not all experience culturally appropriate and inclusive practices. For example, interpreters and translators are not always used, and not always budgeted for, despite identified need. Additionally, the design of services themselves is not always culturally appropriate or inclusive.

The NSW Government is working to build the cultural appropriateness of its services to better meet the needs of refugees and will further investigate service availability and awareness through more settlement journey mapping.

## Limited coordination of data and evidence gathering in NSW

Although the Australian Government funds settlement services, NSW is responsible for providing accessible and equitable mainstream services. Non-government organisations also provide essential grassroots supports and services to refugees. To improve settlement experiences, baseline and identified data should be collected, coordinated and measured consistently.

The NSW Government is developing a comprehensive mechanism to capture data consistently and effectively, within and across settlement domains, to monitor and evaluate settlement outcomes.



<sup>16</sup> This was also a key finding in the NSW Settlement Partnership, *Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia Final Report*, 2022 and Australian Red Cross, *COVID-19 Impacts us all: Ensuring the safety and well-being of people on temporary visas during COVID-19 report*, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> This was also a key finding in the NSW Settlement Partnership, *Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia Final Report*, 2022.  
<sup>18</sup> This was echoed throughout the findings outlined in the NSW Settlement Partnership, *Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia Final Report*, 2022.

# Action Plan

## The NSW Settlement Strategy will be implemented by the NSW Government via the Action Plan (Attachment 1).

The Action Plan comprises a list of priority actions and timeframes, categorised according to the Strategy's objectives, and mapped against the six short-term outcomes (Figure 1 on P15).

### The priority actions are based on:

- analysis of local, national and international best-practice evidence
- accomplishments and challenges over the past five years to improve settlement outcomes for people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds beginning new lives in NSW
- insights and recommendations gathered from representatives on the NSW Joint Partnership Working Group (JPWG)<sup>19</sup>, people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds, services and organisations that provide support to them, advocacy networks and interested members of the public.

The priority actions seek to complement and strengthen the various other programs and initiatives underway in NSW that are led by the Australian Government and non-government sector.



<sup>19</sup> JPKG is a robust and collaborative forum that brings together senior representatives from all levels of government, the community sector and settlement services. JPKG is convened by Multicultural NSW and is chaired by the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement.

# Monitoring and evaluation

## The NSW Settlement Strategy and its associated Action Plan (Attachment 1) will be monitored, reviewed regularly and evaluated using the Evaluation Framework (Attachment 2) to ensure that it remains flexible and responsive to emerging needs in NSW.

### Roles and responsibilities

The NSW Settlement Strategy is a flagship priority of Multicultural NSW. Multicultural NSW is responsible for reporting on the NSW Settlement Strategy progress to the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement, the NSW Government Social Policy Senior Officials Group (SPSOG) and the NSW Secretaries and Executives Board (SEB).

NSW Government agencies have responsibility for implementing, monitoring and reporting against identified actions in the Action Plan. NSW Government agencies will report to the NSW Government Immigration and Settlement Planning Committee (GISPC).<sup>20</sup>

The GISPC, co-chaired by Multicultural NSW, is responsible for building strong accountability across the NSW Government, and monitoring and evaluating the NSW Settlement Strategy.



<sup>20</sup> GISPC is comprised of senior officials from across NSW Government with the purpose to plan, monitor and respond strategically to settlement issues in NSW. The overall aim is to contribute to positive settlement outcomes for refugees, people seeking asylum and other migrants within NSW, and to foster a service system that encourages full economic and social participation for these groups.



# Appendix A

## Terms and definitions

The definitions of key terms outlined below largely align with those in the Australian Government’s National Settlement Framework.<sup>21</sup> Definitions which differ from nationally recognised frameworks have been discussed and agreed with key stakeholders.



Key Term	Definition
Community	For the purposes of the NSW Settlement Strategy, the term ‘community’ refers to a group of people who share commonality, such as geographic location, membership of a particular social group, or shared circumstances. Geographically, community extends beyond the people who live in the area to also include the structures around them –local councils, non-government organisations, place-based initiatives, and grassroots networks. People can also connect as a community based on shared experiences and characteristics, such as religion, ethnicity, language and identity. People’s sense of community is also based on the relationships they have with the people with whom they interact, and their sense of belonging.
Domain	<p>Priority outcome areas identified in the NSW Settlement Strategy that encompass the critical services delivered by all levels of government and the non-government sector, and are interdependent with one another.</p> <p>The 10 settlement domains in the NSW Settlement Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• health and wellbeing</li><li>• employment</li><li>• education and training</li><li>• language services</li><li>• housing</li><li>• civic participation</li><li>• justice and law</li><li>• family and social support</li><li>• transport</li><li>• finance</li></ul>

Key Term	Definition
Embed	To embed or have embedded lived experience refers to the incorporation of meaningful participation of refugees in government decision-making as an integral element of business-as-usual processes. Specifically, this refers to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs.
Human-centred design	A problem-solving approach that focus on the lived experience and needs of individuals, acknowledging the limited capacity of policymakers and experts to anticipate and accommodate the complexity of human reasoning and action. <sup>22</sup>
Humanitarian entrant	A person who has entered Australia through Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program. This program consists of both the onshore protection program and the offshore resettlement program.
Intersectionality	<p>The dynamic ways in which multiple aspects of a person’s identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, family circumstances and age, can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and privilege.<sup>23</sup></p> <p>It is important to recognise that intersectionality shows that an individual can face a very complex overlap of multiple barriers and privileges simultaneously.</p> <p>Intersectionality also demonstrates that members of particular social groups are not all the same. While they may face similar barriers and share experiences, every person’s challenges are unique.<sup>24</sup></p>
Lived experience	<p>Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in events rather than through representations constructed by other people. It may also refer to knowledge of people gained from direct face-to-face interaction rather than through a technological medium.<sup>25</sup></p> <p>As a result of lived (or living) experience, refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants with similar backgrounds are experts in their own right, having unique perspectives that enable them to feel, think and act in ways that add value to the broader community.</p> <p>It is a mechanism for participatory democracy, giving refugees genuine opportunities to contribute to policy making through the expertise of their lived (or living) experience.<sup>26</sup></p> <p>See ‘strength-based approach’.</p>
Migrant	A person who was born overseas whose usual residence is Australia. A person is regarded as a usual resident if they have been (or are expected to be) residing in Australia for a period of 12 months or more. <sup>27</sup> As such, it generally refers to all people, regardless of nationality, citizenship or legal status who live in Australia, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, refugees, people seeking asylum, and temporary or permanent residents. <sup>28</sup>
New and emerging community	<p>Communities of migrants and new arrivals that have recently arrived in Australia and are characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a lack of established family networks, support systems, community structures and resources</li><li>• unfamiliarity with mainstream services and challenges accessing these services.</li></ul> <p>New and emerging communities may have other identifiers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• limited English language proficiency</li><li>• high numbers of refugees</li><li>• low levels of formal education</li><li>• financial vulnerabilities</li><li>• difficulty in finding long-term and sustainable employment.<sup>29</sup></li></ul>
New arrival	Someone who was born overseas and has lived in Australia for a relatively short amount of time (five years or less). <sup>30</sup>

22 Centre for Public Impact, *A brief introduction to...Human-centred design and behavioural science*, 2018.  
23 NSW Public Service Commission, *Diversity and inclusion in the NSW Public Sector: A conversation*.  
24 Regional NSW, *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025*.  
25 D Chandler and R Munday, *Oxford: A dictionary of media and communication (2nd ed.)*, New York, 2016.  
26 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Lived experience of people with disabilities*.  
27 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migrant Data Metrics*  
28 Welcoming Australia 2019, *Welcoming Cities Standard*, 2019.  
29 Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), *New Emerging Communities in Australia Enhancing Capacity for Advocacy*.  
30 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *National Settlement Framework*.

21 Australian Department of Home Affairs, National Settlement Framework.

Key Term	Definition
Other temporary visa holders	People arriving under a range of visa subclasses outside of the Humanitarian, Skilled, Family and Special Eligibility streams of Australia's migration program, who intend to reside in Australia. This includes a range of visa subclasses for international students, workers/businesspeople and New Zealand citizens on special category visas. <sup>31</sup>
Permanent visa	A range of visa subclasses within the Humanitarian Program and within the Skilled, Family and Special Eligibility streams of Australia's permanent Migration Program <sup>32</sup> that allows the visa holder to remain in Australia indefinitely. <sup>33</sup> Permanent visas also refer to the Resolution of Status visa, which allows for the permanent resolution of status for certain visa holders, including eligible Temporary Protection visa and Safe Haven Enterprise visa holders. <sup>34</sup> The Resolution of Status visa allows the visa holder to remain in Australia permanently and, if eligible, become an Australian citizen.
Person seeking asylum	Someone who has made an application for protection in Australia but whose claim has not been finally decided.
Person/people with refugee-like background	Those who arrived in Australia through migration streams outside of the humanitarian program but have experiences similar to those who arrive as refugees. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• people who arrived on family reunion, partner, or other similar visas and other temporary visa holders but have experiences similar to those who arrive as refugees</li><li>• people who have unstable status, such as people seeking asylum, some bridging visa holders, and people who hold or have held Temporary Protection visas (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise visas (SHEVs).</li></ul>
Place-based approach	An approach that addresses a set of problems that are specific to a location or community. It empowers the local community itself to develop holistic answers to these problems by giving them a degree of control and accountability. <sup>35</sup>
Receiving community	The existing, local community welcoming new arrivals. Receiving communities are themselves diverse, and include a range of actors including individuals, communities, businesses and other stakeholders.
Refugee	A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for by international or regional instruments, under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) mandate, and/or in national legislation. According to many of these instruments a refugee is a person who cannot return to his/her country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. <sup>36</sup> Australia's interpretation of its protection obligations under the Refugee Convention are set out in the <i>Migration Act 1958</i> .  It is important to note that not all refugees are the same and some sub-groups face additional distinct challenges, for example, women, young people, and those living in regional areas.  For the purpose of the NSW Settlement Strategy, the term 'refugee' intends to encompass a broader definition of people from both refugee and refugee-like backgrounds.
Regional	All areas of NSW except for metropolitan areas of Greater Sydney. For the purposes of the NSW Settlement Strategy, the term 'regional' extends to include cities and major regional centres such as the City of Newcastle and City of Wollongong <sup>37</sup> , as well as rural, remote and cross-border areas.

31 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *National Settlement Framework*.

32 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *Migration Program planning levels*.

33 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *Permanent resident*.

34 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *Subclass 851: Resolution of Status*.

35 Centre for Public Impact, *Do place-based approaches hold the key to unlocking potential in Australian communities?* 2019.

36 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

37 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *Designated regional areas*.

Key Term	Definition
Settlement	A multi-layered experience of new arrivals adjusting to a new life in Australia, and Australia welcoming new arrivals. Successful settlement enables new arrivals to fully participate in Australian life. <sup>38</sup>
Settlement journey	The process by which new arrivals are supported and empowered as they seek to become oriented, established and independent in the community.  Settlement journeys can be lifelong, and can start before arriving in Australia and extend over generations.  Settlement journeys are not sequential or linear, but are complex and diverse in nature, varying between different individuals and groups.
Settlement outcomes	Effective settlement outcomes provide new arrivals with every opportunity to fully participate in society. Achieving these requires whole-of-community responsibility involving a wide range of organisations and stakeholders, including the three tiers of government.  Settlement outcomes are categorised across 10 settlement domains of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• education and training</li><li>• employment</li><li>• health and wellbeing</li><li>• housing</li><li>• language services</li><li>• transport</li><li>• civic participation</li><li>• family and social support</li><li>• justice</li><li>• finance<sup>39</sup></li></ul>
Settlement period	For the purposes of the NSW Settlement Strategy, the settlement period is primarily focused on the first 10 years after arrival in Australia, without considering the new arrival's background or visa.  This definition is different from the Australian Government, which considers the first five years of permanent residence in Australia after arrival as the settlement period. <sup>40</sup>  State and territory governments and non-government organisations working in the settlement sector have varying definitions of the settlement period and consider the settlement period to be up to 10 years after arrival. <sup>41</sup>
Social cohesion	The willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. <sup>42</sup>
Strength-based approach	An approach that focuses on the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities. <sup>43</sup>
Temporary visa	A range of visa subclasses that permits the visa holder to remain in Australia on a temporary basis. Temporary visa holders also seek to become oriented and established in Australia and may go on to acquire permanent residence during their stay. This includes people with refugee-like backgrounds who have been granted a range of temporary humanitarian visas such as Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785), Safe Haven Enterprise visa (subclass 790), Temporary Humanitarian Concern (subclass 786) and Temporary Humanitarian Stay (subclass 449).

38 Settlement Council of Australia, *State of the Sector Report*, 2020.

39 National Settlement Framework Outcomes, with additional tenth outcome 'Finance' as identified by Settlement Council of Australia in its *National Settlement Outcomes Standards*.

40 Australian Department of Home Affairs, *National Settlement Framework*.

41 These align with Settlement Council of Australia, *Settlement Sector Quality Framework* and *National Settlement Outcomes Standards*, as well as the Australian Department of Home Affairs, *National Settlement Framework* (with the additional 'Finance'), and relevant state and territory outcomes frameworks.

42 Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, *What is social cohesion?*, 2021.

43 Settlement Council of Australia, *National Settlement Outcomes Standards*.

# Appendix B

## Acknowledgements

Multicultural NSW acknowledges the lived experiences of people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds and gives special thanks and appreciation to those who have generously and bravely shared their stories and experiences.

Multicultural NSW extends its gratitude to the Australian Government, state and local governments, settlement providers, organisations, networks, community groups and individuals who contributed to the development of the first NSW Settlement Strategy. Your collaboration reflects a shared commitment to achieve good settlement outcomes that benefit the whole of society.

The NSW Settlement Strategy would not have been possible without the valuable contributions through various stakeholder consultations, workshops and submissions.

Our deepest thanks to Professor Peter Shergold AC, NSW Coordinator General for Settlement and to:

- » **Australian Government**, including Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG) and Better Settlement Planning Working Group
- » **NSW Government**, including Government Immigration and Settlement Planning Committee (GISPC), Social Policy Senior Officials Group (SP SOG) and Secretaries and Executives Board (SEB)
- » **Local government** representatives
- » **cross-sector governance mechanisms and interagency networks**, including the NSW Joint Partnership Working Group, Refugee Support Network, Humanitarian Support Program Networks and Asylum Seeker Interagency
- » **settlement service providers**, including those who deliver services under national programs such as Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS), and Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS)

» **non-government and community organisations and networks**, including anonymous consultation participants and:

- Asylum Seekers Centre
- Australian Red Cross
- Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia
- CORE Community Services
- Forcibly Displaced People Network
- House of Welcome
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Local Government NSW
- Multicultural Youth Affairs Network of NSW
- Navitas
- NSW Afghan Community Advisory Forum
- NSW Religious Communities Forum
- NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
- Refugee Advice and Casework Service
- Refugee Community Advocacy Network
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Salvation Army
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Settlement Services International
- SydWest Multicultural Services.





# Action Plan

## NSW Settlement Strategy

Objectives

- 1 Embedding the voice of lived experience in decision-making
- 2 Enhancing and formalising collaboration, coordination, strategic planning and service delivery across the NSW Government
- 3 Ensuring continuous improvement, evaluation and capacity building across the NSW Government to ensure successful settlement outcomes
- 4 Engaging a wide range of cross-sector actors and communities to ensure refugees thrive
- 5 Building and enhancing existing strategic partnerships with the Australian Government and other state, territory, and local governments to influence national decision-making

Short-Term Outcomes

NSW Government settlement planning and evaluation is informed by **lived experience**

NSW Government ensures services and information are **accessible** to refugees

NSW Government and communities ensure that services and information – that address refugee needs – are **available**

NSW Government has improved **data collection** and analysis processes to support evidence-based settlement planning

NSW Government incorporates **place-based approaches and community networks** into settlement planning, including welcoming


























NSW Government has increased **influence** in national decision-making about settlement targets, policy and outcomes



1

Objective  
Embedding the voice of lived experience in decision making

The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to incorporate refugees and people who work with refugees in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and services in NSW. This will include a feedback mechanism about what the NSW Government heard and learned, and what action has been taken as a result.




























	Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
1.1	<b>Scope mechanisms for NSW Government to include the voice of lived experience</b> to inform advice, identify opportunities and areas for improvement, and offer solutions on specific areas	Multicultural NSW, in collaboration with GISPC <sup>1</sup>	<b>Complete</b>	 
1.2	<b>Work to involve and embed the voice of lived experience</b> during NSW Settlement Strategy implementation and evaluation	Multicultural NSW, in collaboration with GISPC	<b>June 2025</b>	 
1.3	<b>Deliver the NSW Public Sector Refugee Employment Initiative</b> to provide refugees an employment pathway into the NSW Government	NSW Government	<b>June 2024</b>	 
1.4	<b>Scope opportunities to help address social isolation</b> , particularly for refugees living in regional areas without community networks and supports	NSW Premier's Department	<b>June 2024</b>	  
1.5	<b>Support refugees to understand and navigate the health system</b> to ensure they are confident and informed partners in decision-making	NSW Health	<b>Ongoing</b>	  
1.6	Work with key stakeholders in primary settlement locations to <b>include First Nations communities in settlement planning</b> <sup>2</sup>	Aboriginal Affairs NSW and Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2025</b>	  
1.7	<b>Undertake discovery, develop customer journey maps and explore</b> the delivery of solutions that support people in NSW through their settlement journeys	Multicultural NSW and NSW Department of Customer Service	<b>June 2024</b>	   
1.8	<b>Work with refugee communities</b> to raise awareness about domestic and family violence issues, including supports available	NSW Department of Communities and Justice	<b>June 2025</b>	
1.9	<b>Provide advice on appropriate ways to incorporate the voice of lived experience of children and young people</b> from refugee backgrounds in the implementation of the NSW Settlement Strategy	Advocate for Children and Young People	<b>June 2025</b>	
1.10	<b>Include refugee representatives in the membership of the new Multicultural Youth Network</b> as a mechanism to embed the voice of lived experience in advice provided to NSW Government	Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2025</b>	   

<sup>1</sup> GISPC stands for the NSW Government Immigration and Settlement Planning Committee.  
<sup>2</sup> Recognising key stakeholders will differ according to region and include a variety of organisations with good links to community, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, the NSW Coalition of Peak Organisations, Aboriginal Regional Alliances, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

## Objective

Enhancing and formalising collaboration, coordination, strategic planning and service delivery across the NSW Government

The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to coordinate NSW Government collaboration, planning and delivery to improve outcomes for refugees.




























	Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
2.1	<b>Formalise the role the State plays</b> in settling refugees in NSW	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	   
2.2	<b>Continue to coordinate and support senior leaders from the government and non-government sectors</b> to improve the current settlement system in NSW through the JPWG <sup>3</sup>	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	   
2.3	<b>Sustain active membership on the JPWG</b> to improve the current settlement system in NSW in collaboration with interjurisdictional and non-government stakeholders	NSW Government	June 2025	   
2.4	<b>Commit to two-way data sharing with the JPWG</b> to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>drive a strategic and informed approach to settlement planning and delivery in NSW</li> <li>consider and respond to identified systemic issues or opportunities for services delivered by NSW Government</li> <li>enable a strategic coordination mechanism for escalating relevant emerging issues to the SOSOG</li> <li>support delivery of the framework for improved data collection and analysis</li> </ul>	GISPC	Complete	   
2.5	<b>Deliver the NSW Interpreter and Translator Scholarship Program</b> to provide people from new and emerging language communities the opportunity to become an interpreter through an employment pathway into the language sector	Multicultural NSW and TAFE NSW	June 2024	 
2.6	<b>Provide professional development, mentoring and casual employment</b> to every graduate of the NSW Interpreter and Translator Scholarship Program on the Multicultural NSW Language Services Panel	Multicultural NSW	June 2024	
2.7	<b>Deliver targeted health education programs</b> on a range of issues, with a focus on priority populations outlined in the NSW Refugee Health Plan 2022–2027	NSW Health	Ongoing	 
2.8	<b>Deliver targeted programs to refugee communities</b> to help prevent and reduce crime and the fear of crime	NSW Police Force	June 2025	 
2.9	<b>Deliver the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP)</b> to address the challenges that are experienced by refugees in finding long-term skilled employment opportunities	NSW Department of Education (Training Services NSW)	June 2024	 
2.10	<b>Deliver the Asylum Seeker Employment Skills Support (ASESS) program</b> to address the challenges that are experienced by people seeking asylum in finding long-term skilled employment opportunities	NSW Department of Education (Training Services NSW)	June 2025	 

<sup>3</sup> JPWG stands for the NSW Joint Partnership Working Group.

## Objective

Enhancing and formalising collaboration, coordination, strategic planning and service delivery across the NSW Government

The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to coordinate NSW Government collaboration, planning and delivery to improve outcomes for refugees.




























	Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
2.11	<b>Expand eligibility of Smart and Skilled</b> to include all people from refugee and refugee-like background	NSW Department of Education (Training Services NSW)	June 2025	 
2.12	<b>Commit to two-way communication with the COMPLAN Committee</b> via Multicultural NSW to identify and address emerging settlement opportunities and issues relating to social cohesion and community harmony	GISPC	Complete	  
2.13	<b>Refresh Multicultural NSW's Settlement Portal</b> that assists with service navigation, and seek input from place-based coordination mechanisms	Multicultural NSW and NSW Department of Customer Service	June 2025	 
2.14	<b>Provide timely and effective interpreting and language services</b> to ensure refugees can access services and information they can understand, and with which they can connect	NSW Government	June 2025	 
2.15	<b>Deliver cost-effective, high quality and trusted language services</b>	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	 
2.16	<b>Employ and train a culturally responsive and resilient workforce</b> to ensure the specific needs of refugees are met	NSW Government	June 2025	 
2.17	<b>Support access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed healthcare</b> that responds to the diversity that exists among refugee populations	NSW Health	Ongoing	 
2.18	<b>Provide targeted and specialised healthcare services</b> with a focus on priority populations outlined in the NSW Refugee Health Plan 2022–2027	NSW Health	Ongoing	 
2.19	<b>Continue to support the provision of free and equitable access to public healthcare services</b> for people seeking asylum living in the community	NSW Health	Ongoing	 
2.20	As part of the Early Years Commitment, <b>scope opportunities to enhance access to early childhood education and care services</b> for families from refugee backgrounds	NSW Department of Education	June 2025	 
2.21	<b>Deliver services and programs that are accessible to refugees</b> (via the NSW Police Force Multicultural Policing Strategy 2021–25, NSW Police Force Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2020–23, and participation in the Public Sector Refugee Employment Initiative)	NSW Police Force	June 2025	  
2.22	<b>Streamline trade skills recognition at the state level</b> to help address difficulties in recognition of prior qualifications and experience, and support NSW Government initiatives linked to broader skills recognition	NSW Department of Education (Training Services NSW)	June 2025	  



## Objective

Enhancing and formalising collaboration, coordination, strategic planning and service delivery across the NSW Government






The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to coordinate NSW Government collaboration, planning and delivery to improve outcomes for refugees.

Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
<b>2.23</b> Provide scholarship opportunities for aspiring and current Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) professionals, including people from refugee or refugee-like backgrounds, to obtain relevant qualifications to progress their ECEC career in NSW	NSW Department of Education	Ongoing	 
<b>2.24</b> Monitor the settlement patterns of new arrivals to inform planning and delivery of English as an Additional Language and/or Dialect (EAL/D) education provisions, including intensive English tuition and professional support for teachers	NSW Department of Education	Ongoing	  
<b>2.25</b> Explore alignment between future regional economic development policies and the NSW Growing Regions of Welcome (NSW GROW) pilot program, particularly in relation to skilled labour	NSW Department of Regional NSW	December 2024	 
<b>2.26</b> Review acceptance of overseas identification documents for police checks, Working with Children checks and applying for driver licences	NSW Police Force and Department of Customer Service (Service NSW)	June 2025	 
<b>2.27</b> Deliver the NSW Refugee Internship Program to support refugees into employment at Service NSW	Department of Customer Service (Service NSW)	June 2025	  
<b>2.28</b> Through the Refugee Service, continue to deliver statewide community legal education, advice, assistance and representation in the areas of civil, family and criminal law to people who have arrived in Australia on a refugee or special humanitarian visa in the previous eight years	Legal Aid NSW	June 2025	 
<b>2.29</b> Embed culturally responsive practices across GambleAware gambling treatment and support services	NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade	Ongoing	 
<b>2.30</b> Develop costing model for NSW Government settlement support	NSW Treasury and Multicultural NSW	June 2024	 
<b>2.31</b> Deliver the NSW Safer Drivers Course, including to refugees	Transport for NSW	Ongoing	 
<b>2.32</b> Deliver the Driver Licensing Access Program (DLAP), including to refugees	Transport for NSW	Ongoing	 
<b>2.33</b> Deliver the Future Women Jobs Academy to eligible participants, including refugees	Women NSW	June 2026	 
<b>2.34</b> Employ an additional 1,000 apprentices and trainees, including refugees, across NSW Government agencies and State-Owned Corporations	NSW Department of Education (Training Services NSW)	June 2025	  

## Objective

Enhancing and formalising collaboration, coordination, strategic planning and service delivery across the NSW Government

























The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to coordinate NSW Government collaboration, planning and delivery to improve outcomes for refugees.

Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
<b>2.35</b> Promote opportunities that support refugees to consider firefighting and other roles within the organisation, to support a viable career choice across NSW	Fire & Rescue NSW	June 2025	  
<b>2.36</b> Build the capacity of the Service NSW Business Bureau to deliver specialised support to refugees to help them open and run their businesses	Department of Customer Service (Service NSW)	June 2025	 

## Objective

Ensuring continuous improvement, evaluation and capacity building across the NSW Government to ensure successful settlement outcomes


















The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to ensure that the NSW Government captures relevant information to demonstrate achievements, respond to current and changing contexts, and apply learnings for the future. The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to build NSW Government capability to support, empower and connect with refugees.

Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
<b>3.1 Map NSW Government data collection mechanisms</b> relating to settlement, including type and level of data collected	Multicultural NSW and GISPC	<b>June 2024</b>	
<b>3.2 Develop and implement framework for improved data collection and analysis</b> to better evaluate the impact of state-delivered settlement services, and help address service and systemic opportunities and gaps that fall within the NSW Government's responsibility	GISPC	<b>June 2025</b>	 
<b>3.3 Collect and analyse learnings about emergency settlement processes</b> in NSW and deliver settlement response protocols to document the process, roles and responsibilities, and key considerations for supporting emergency settlement	NSW Premier's Department	<b>June 2024</b>	  
<b>3.4 Engage senior leaders from across the NSW Government</b> to ensure NSW Government services and supports are responsive to the impacts of emerging crisis situations (such as pandemic outbreaks) on refugees and the settlement sector	Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2025</b>	 
<b>3.5 Scope programs and initiatives that aim to build capability</b> of NSW Government officials working with, making policies that impact, and delivering services to refugees	Multicultural NSW, in collaboration with GISPC	<b>June 2025</b>	  
<b>3.6 Build recruitment capability of NSW Government agencies as well as refugee job-seekers</b> via the NSW Public Sector Refugee Employment Initiative	Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2024</b>	 
<b>3.7 Continue to build the capacity of School Learning Support Officers</b> (bilingual) to support newly arrived English as an Additional Language and/or Dialect (EAL/D) students, including those from refugee backgrounds	NSW Department of Education	<b>Ongoing</b>	 
<b>3.8 Continue to build the NSW Department of Education's capability</b> to ensure young children from refugee backgrounds have the best start in learning	NSW Department of Education	<b>June 2025</b>	 
<b>3.9 Continue to strengthen the capacity of schools</b> to meet the wellbeing and settlement needs of refugee students and their families	NSW Department of Education	<b>Ongoing</b>	 
<b>3.10 Build capability of police</b> to improve understanding of potential fear of justice services, and improve use of interpreters	NSW Police Force	<b>June 2025</b>	 
<b>3.11 Uphold and observe the multicultural principles outlined in the Multicultural NSW Act 2000</b> by participating in the Multicultural Policies and Services Program	NSW Government	<b>June 2025</b>	  

## Objective

Ensuring continuous improvement, evaluation and capacity building across the NSW Government to ensure successful settlement outcomes



















The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to ensure that the NSW Government captures relevant information to demonstrate achievements, respond to current and changing contexts, and apply learnings for the future. The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to build NSW Government capability to support, empower and connect with refugees.

Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
<b>3.12 Review and refresh the Multicultural Principles and Services Program Framework and associated Multicultural Principles and Services Program toolkit</b> to ensure NSW Government agencies engage with multicultural communities more effectively, including refugees.	Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2024</b>	   
<b>3.13 Refresh the NSW Government Language Services Guidelines</b> to provide a clear model for NSW Government agencies to engage translators and interpreters, including associated resources and best-practice guides	Multicultural NSW	<b>December 2024</b>	 
<b>3.14 Build the cultural capability of gambling treatment and support services</b> to respond to the needs of refugees through GambleAware Multicultural Service	NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade	<b>Ongoing</b>	 
<b>3.15 Build evidence base for investment in place-based coordination and locally led settlement initiatives</b> through NSW Growing Regions of Welcome Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and independent, end-of-program evaluation to enhance regional resettlement initiatives	Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2025</b>	  
<b>3.16 Collect, monitor and report on data</b> to evaluate settlement work according to the <b>NSW Settlement Strategy Evaluation Framework</b>	GISPC and NSW Government	<b>Ongoing</b>	  
<b>3.17 Articulate the economic value</b> of improved settlement outcomes for refugees as part of the NSW Settlement Strategy evaluation	NSW Treasury and Multicultural NSW	<b>June 2025</b>	
<b>3.18 Promote public education strategies that support</b> the successful settlement of students from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds	NSW Department of Education	<b>Ongoing</b>	 

## Objective

Engaging a wide range of cross-sector actors and communities to ensure refugees thrive


















The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to engage communities, including local government and non-government organisations, to strengthen, invest in and elevate existing efforts.

Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
<b>4.1 Redesign and deliver the Multicultural Youth Linker program</b> to continue to support young refugees to navigate pathways and strengthen social connections in community	Multicultural NSW and Department of Customer Service (Service NSW)	June 2024	 
<b>4.2 Resource the non-government sector</b> to help refugees better understand key aspects of life in NSW, the stages of the settlement and how this process can affect families	Multicultural NSW	June 2024	 
<b>4.3 Resource the non-government sector</b> to improve social connections, health, education, economic, safety and service accessibility for refugee families, particularly mothers with young children	Multicultural NSW	June 2024	 
<b>4.4 Resource the non-government sector</b> to support women from refugee backgrounds to develop social enterprises and obtain employment through creative learning, training and technology	Multicultural NSW	June 2024	 
<b>4.5 Provide multi-year support for arts service organisations</b> who offer targeted programs and workshops for underrepresented multicultural communities, including refugees	NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade (Create NSW)	June 2024	  
<b>4.6 Showcase positive settlement stories</b> in partnership with government and non-government organisations to strengthen a positive settlement narrative in NSW	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	 
<b>4.7 Promote NSW Settlement Strategy progress and opportunities to contribute to implementation and review</b> through regular community engagement mechanisms	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	  
<b>4.8 Leverage existing community Welcome Initiatives including sponsorship programs</b> to maximise economic, social and language learning outcomes for refugees via the NSW Growing Regions of Welcome Program	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	 
<b>4.9 Resource NSW Growing Regions of Welcome pilot program</b> in western Sydney and the Riverina and Murray regions to support cross-sector engagement in secondary settlement	Multicultural NSW	April 2024	  
<b>4.10 Scope models to deliver greater local expertise for schools</b> in building cultural inclusion, strong home-school partnerships and parent engagement strategies, and communicate effectively with families from multicultural backgrounds	NSW Department of Education	June 2024	  
<b>4.11 Continue to strengthen the capacity of all schools to address racism and build culturally inclusive environments</b>	NSW Department of Education	Ongoing	

## Objective

Engaging a wide range of cross-sector actors and communities to ensure refugees thrive

The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to engage communities, including local government and non-government organisations, to strengthen, invest in and elevate existing efforts.









Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
<b>4.12 Scope existing and emerging opportunities to work with the business sector</b> on inclusive workplace practices and accessible information in language, when engaging with refugees	NSW Premier's Department	June 2024	
<b>4.13 Strengthen harmonious relations between refugee, Aboriginal and established communities in regional settlement locations</b> through the Multicultural NSW Community Partnership Action (COMPACT) Program and Regional Engagement Program	Multicultural NSW	June 2024	
<b>4.14 Empower young people and community partners in settlement locations to stand up and stand united against divisive forces as champions for community harmony</b> through the Multicultural NSW COMPACT Program and Remove Hate from the Debate initiative	Multicultural NSW	June 2024	
<b>4.15 Partner with the non-government sector</b> to strengthen supports available for refugee families about the child protection system	NSW Department of Communities and Justice	June 2025	 
<b>4.16 Participate in and use evidence from a longitudinal research study</b> that focuses on humanitarian settlement in regional Australia, including NSW, in partnership with the University of Wollongong and other key stakeholders	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	  
<b>4.17 Collect and analyse community sentiment about settlement</b> through the NSW Partnership for Multicultural Peaks Program, NSW Regional Engagement Program, NSW Growing Region of Welcome Pilot Program and the longitudinal research study that focuses on humanitarian settlement in regional Australia	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	 
<b>4.18 Deliver the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor (UHM) program</b> in collaboration with the Australian Government as required	NSW Department of Communities and Justice	Ongoing	 
<b>4.19 Deliver gambling harm minimisation and prevention</b> to multicultural communities, including refugees	NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade	Ongoing	
<b>4.20 Consider the needs of refugees</b> in delivering innovative local and place-based service-delivery pilots in local communities	NSW Department of Regional NSW	June 2025	   



Objective

Building and enhancing existing strategic partnerships with the Australian Government and other state, territory, and local governments to influence national decision-making

The NSW Settlement Strategy aims to work and plan better with the Australian Government, other state and territory governments and local government to make sure that NSW Government positions are accurately and appropriately informed and influence Commonwealth decision-making.

Action	Who	By when	Short-Term Outcomes
5.1 Through representation on the SOSOG Better Settlement Planning Working Group, <b>negotiate with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions to improve advanced information and data sharing</b> across jurisdictions	Multicultural NSW	Ongoing	
5.2 Through representation on SOSOG, <b>contribute to the review of the National Settlement Framework and other Commonwealth-led settlement policies and programs</b>	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	
5.3 Through representation on SOSOG, <b>advocate and work collaboratively with other jurisdictions to address emerging systemic issues and opportunities to improve settlement planning</b>	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	
5.4 <b>Work with local government and key stakeholders to consolidate and share learnings</b> from local settlement action plans to inform future planning and decision-making in relation to primary and secondary settlement, particularly in regional NSW	Multicultural NSW	June 2025	    

Previous actions to address housing and homelessness have been removed as these related to actions under the previous NSW Government. New actions will be included in a future version of the Action Plan to reflect Machinery of Government changes, including the establishment of Homes NSW.

Attachment 1  
Action Plan  
NSW Settlement Strategy

Version	Date	Reason
1	February 2023	Strategy endorsed
2	June 2023	Actions updated
3	February 2024	Program logic updated Actions updated

# Evaluation Framework

## NSW Settlement Strategy

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to review the NSW Settlement Strategy’s implementation and the extent to which it has contributed to achieving the intended outcomes. To address each of the key evaluation questions outlined below, the evaluation design includes three components - process evaluation, outcome evaluation, and economic evaluation - to be completed at various stages of the Strategy lifecycle.

Evaluation type	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	Sub-Questions	Design/Methods
Process Evaluation	How is the Strategy being implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What is the quantity of the Strategy outputs, for both tailored and mainstream services?</li><li>What NSW Government mechanisms collect data related to settlement and migration (type and level of data collected)? What processes support the use of this data to inform decision making?</li><li>What are the costs involved in delivering the Strategy?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Quantitative monitoring data (outputs)</li><li>Stakeholder survey</li><li>Synthesis of existing evidence about the quality and quantity of services</li></ul>
	Has the Strategy been implemented as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How do the quantity of outputs and timeline compare to targets?</li><li>What changes have been made to the Strategy design, and why?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Document review, including budget documents</li></ul>
	What are key issues to be addressed in terms of implementation or design?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Are there challenges or barriers impacting implementation? What strategies have been or might be effective in addressing these?</li><li>What are lessons from implementation to date and how might they be applied?</li><li>To what extent and in what ways does the governance structure effectively support implementation and monitoring?</li><li>To what extent and in what ways is the initiative supporting improved collaboration and co-ordination across NSW Government?</li></ul>	

Evaluation type	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	Sub-Questions	Design/Methods
Outcome Evaluation	To what extent have the intended outcomes been achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To what extent is NSW Government settlement planning and evaluation informed by the lived experience of refugees?</li><li>To what extent does the NSW Government ensure that appropriate services and information are accessible for refugees?</li><li>To what extent do NSW Government and communities ensure that services and information are available to address the needs of refugees?</li><li>To what extent and in what ways does NSW Government have data collection and analysis mechanisms that effectively support evidence-based settlement planning?</li><li>To what extent is the NSW Government elevating or incorporating the voice of place-based and community networks in settlement planning, including welcoming?</li><li>To what extent does NSW Government have influence in national decision-making about settlement targets, policy and outcomes?</li><li>Under what conditions has the initiative been most effective? What factors support success?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Re-analysis of monitoring data on settlement outcomes</li><li>Secondary analysis of other evidence identified by implementing agencies and other stakeholders</li><li>Synthesis of evidence about system strengthening outcomes using rubrics</li></ul>
	What impact have NSW Government-delivered services achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What has been the contribution of NSW Government-delivered services to the short-term outcomes?</li><li>What other factors contributed to the outcomes/support success?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Contribution analysis and process tracing</li></ul>

Evaluation type	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	Sub-Questions	Design/Methods
Economic Evaluation	What is the cost of NSW Government settlement support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Are the costs of refugee settlement outweighed by the benefits over time? After how many years post arrival do refugees represent a net economic benefit to NSW?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cost benefit analysis</li></ul>
	What is the economic value of improved settlement outcomes for refugees?		

Attachment 2  
Evaluation Framework  
NSW Settlement Strategy

Version	Date	Reason
1	February 2023	Strategy endorsed
2	February 2024	Evaluation Framework updated



NSW Settlement Strategy

Version	Date	Reason
1	February 2023	Strategy endorsed
2	February 2024	Strategy revised





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