STEPS TO SETTLEMENT SUCCESS

A TOOLKIT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE

scanlon foundation

Welcoming Cities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

This toolkit has been developed to respond to the information needs of rural and regional communities looking to settle migrants locally, be they migrants coming in from big Australian cities or overseas, entrants to Australia on skilled working visas or on humanitarian grounds.

At its core, this toolkit is based on interviews with community champions of regional settlement, many of whom have initiated programs for their communities with little to no formal guidance on how to make settlement 'happen'.

By synthesising the rich interview findings with key learnings from past regional migration approaches (both in Australia and overseas), this toolkit identifies best practice for regional settlement and outlines the key players and areas for action underpinning regional settlement success.

CONTENTS

KEY PLAYERS AND ACTIONS

» **New migrants**, who move to regional Australia to live and work.

Pyramid Hill's Filipino residents now makes up a significant part of the local community, with a Filipino grocery store and annual fiesta now key features in the town.

» **Governments** (local, state and federal), who create and implement policies and mechanisms for migration to regional parts of Australia.

Mount Gambier has been welcoming migrants for the past 11 years, having been selected to be a federally-supported regional settlement pilot location.

» **Local businesses,** which attract migrants to fill labour gaps.

Luv-a-Duck owner John Millington contacted the Karen community in Melbourne to see if they wanted to relocate to Nhill for work.

» **Local volunteers and community organisations**, who facilitate the settlement process, whether for migrants coming directly from overseas or from other parts of Australia.

Multicultural Tamworth provides friendship and support, using existing service providers, to migrants and refugees settling in the area.

» **Community champions**, who initiate migration projects, motivating others to get involved and for settlement to be realised. Community champions may assume any or all of the other three roles.

Julia Harpham and her husband Philip are now widely known as the driving force behind what has been called 'The Mingoola Project'.

» **Steering committees**, which operationalise the community champions' vision. As with community champions, steering committee members can be made up of local government, businesses, volunteers and members of community organisations.

Dalwallinu Council played a key role in the creation and success of the Dalwallinu Regional Repopulation Project.

» **Migrant and settlement service organisations**, who organise and link migrants with local communities and support them while they settle.

Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development (GLAPD) is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political agency that assists refugees and migrants living with insecurity, fear and trauma to make a positive change in their life.

THE 7 BUILDING BLOCKS OF SETTLEMENT SUCCESS
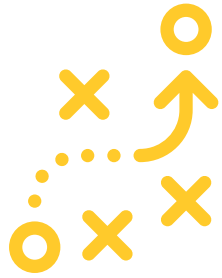
1. INITIATING A SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

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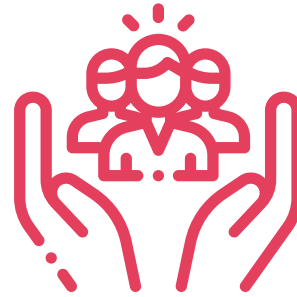
3. WELCOMING AND HOSTING NEW MIGRANTS

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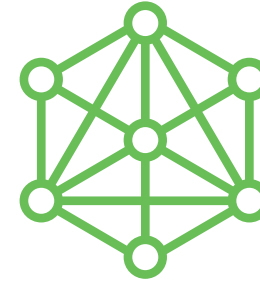
7. CONSIDERING CULTURE, CUSTOMS AND ENVIRONMENT

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INITIATING A SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

The most common motivators for initiation of a regional settlement project are labour shortages and population decline. While city dwellers and job network providers have criticised regional areas as places of no job opportunities, evidence points to the contrary. Chronic labour shortages have marked regional areas. In essence, there are jobs, but not enough workers to fill them.

Some regional employers have almost abandoned their manufacturing activities because of unmet labour gaps before eventually looking for skilled migrant workers from metropolitan cities and overseas. The owners of Luv-a-Duck in Nhill, for example, were considering closing down production in Nhill and relocating to Melbourne to source the workers it needed to expand operations. Instead, Luv-a-Duck contacted the Karen community in Melbourne and, through a staged recruitment and resettlement process over nearly a decade, has come to employ more than 50 Karen workers in Nhill. With their families, these workers make up the 182 Karen resettled in Nhill, with the Karen community now comprising around 10 percent of Nhill's entire population (Regional Australia Institute, 2018b).

By boosting local population numbers and filling labour shortages, relocating migrant workers from big cities to rural communities can, in turn, create new jobs and economic impact. Migrants can also help address the issue of surplus infrastructure that comes from population ageing and decline. They boost numbers in schools that may otherwise be on the verge of closing. They increase church participation and the utilisation of clubs and facilities that may otherwise lose funding or maintenance due to lack of use.

While considering local infrastructure potential, local governments and businesses are encouraged to think about what they have to offer to migrants and therefore, why migrants should relocate and stay there.

While jobs are an important factor in settling families in regional areas, the cost of living is another. Some migrants are driven to relocate to regional areas specifically for jobs. There are others who leave their jobs in cities to relocate to regional areas because of the lower cost of living, particularly buying or renting a home. When the cost of housing is high in regional areas, migrants may choose to leave, as has been observed in some of Australia's less successful regional settlement endeavours.

However, it is essential to recognise that there are lifestyle benefits to living in regional and rural Australia that attract migrants aside from both jobs and housing. Many migrants are attracted to country living and would preference rural or regional Australia above a major city, because of a strong desire to engage in farming activities. For many, this desire to 'connect with the land' is more important than securing a specific type of employment or the cost of living. For example, some migrants decide to relocate to regional areas for jobs that allow them the time and close location to pursue farming projects, either in addition to their employment or as their direct source of income.

Awareness of the motivations of migrants looking to move to regional areas, as well as the motivations of regional communities and businesses seeking migrants, is the first step to achieving a successful settlement outcome.

KEY PLAYERS

Community champions

(working with local government and local businesses to establish goals, needs and opportunities)

WHAT TO DO

Establish a clear reason for how and why the community would benefit from more migrants (e.g. labour shortages, population decline, surplus infrastructure challenges).

Identify potential benefits for migrants (e.g. jobs, living costs, spare housing and land)

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not initiate a settlement program if motivation cannot be clearly articulated.

Do not initiate a settlement program if there are no obvious benefits for migrants (e.g. no businesses located or looking to employ locally, high living costs, no spare housing or land).

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Lack of a community champion may inhibit the ability to instigate and organise support for a local settlement initiative.

A divided community may destroy a good initiative in its embryonic stages.

> "There was a turning point in the company and Luv-a-Duck were looking for people to help in operations. If we didn't get people in Nhill, we had to move that part of operation to big centres like Melbourne. I was anxious to keep the small town going, but it's difficult when there are no people.
>
> John Millington
> Former CEO of Luv-a-Duck

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ORGANISING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

It is common practice that, once a community champion identifies the motivation to welcome and retain new migrants, there is a community gathering to share this idea more broadly amongst the local population and explain the background of the newcomers and why welcoming them into the community is the right thing to do. This session is necessary to spurn any negative understanding that may exist about the prospective arrivals and garner community support for the presence and settlement of newcomers.

Community backing is essential for locally-led settlement programs to succeed. However, the planning and implementation of a regional migration program cannot be assumed to be a collective responsibility. That is why it is important to have a steering committee established specifically to organise the settlement facilities necessary to support relocating migrants. Steering committees (otherwise known as working groups) also take the pressure off the community champion to attempt to take on an entire settlement project without assistance.

Experience shows there are three ways in which steering committees can operate in this space. Firstly, steering committees can work with federal government departments to settle humanitarian entrants directly from overseas. In such cases, the government decides to appoint and fund a service provider to support and facilitate new arrivals by providing all the required government services. For example, after the federal government decided that Mount Gambier would become a settlement area, it appointed the local Migrant Resource Centre to provide all the needed settlement services with support from the existing community steering committee.

Steering committees can also approach local governments to support migration initiatives, to either bring skilled migrants from overseas or relocate workers from metropolitan cities. An example of this is in Dalwallinu, Western Australia, where the steering committee approached the local council in the early stages of planning so that by the time migrants arrived, support from the council was easily achieved.

Beyond government, steering committees may approach metropolitan-based settlement services and migrant community organisations to facilitate links with migrants who are willing to work and live in regional towns. The reverse is also true; metro-based settlement organisations may approach steering committees in regional and rural communities. Upon establishing these regional-metropolitan connections, involvement from local council may be sought to facilitate the relocation process.

The council may be a key proponent for a local migration effort, but it may or may not provide funding. An example of the council providing financial resources is Nhill. While Luv-a-Duck owners John and Margaret Millington initiated the recruitment and resettlement of the Karen community members to come and work for their company, with assistance from AMES in Melbourne, the council did play a key role in the town's settlement success. After a few Karen settled in Nhill, Love-a-Duck management approached the local council of Hindmarsh for support. The council subsequently funded the position of a caseworker to support the resettlement of additional Karen in the community. For instances where local councils are not funders of local settlement initiatives, the community (often via a steering community or working group) must mobilise resources. This is what happened in Mingoola, where the Tenterfield Shire Council was supportive but was unable to provide initial resources for a settlement program.

Consulting with local government and the broader community is critical to understanding exactly how feasible a local settlement initiative is going to be and knowing what resources need to be mobilised to make it happen.

SUMMARY OF ACTION 2: ORGANISING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

KEY PLAYERS

Community champions

(working with local government)

WHAT TO DO

Organise community consultation.

Appoint a steering committee.

Prepare the community to be welcoming.

Discuss the background of the incoming migrants

WHAT TO AVOID

Never surprise the community and turn up with migrants without consultation.

Do not bring migrants to a community where there is strong opposition to the prospect of newcomers.

Do not leave all of the organising and engagement for a settlement program to one individual (e.g. the community champion). This is not a sustainable approach to achieving settlement success.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Lack of a community champion may inhibit the ability to instigate and organise support for a local settlement initiative.

A divided community may destroy a good initiative in its embryonic stages.

"

Council should be part of conversations from the beginning to provide community leadership by connecting to local community networks.

Peter Petty
Mayor of Tenterfield

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WELCOMING AND HOSTING NEW MIGRANTS

Making new residents feel welcome is an integral part of sustainable regional settlement.

While not possible for migrants settling directly from overseas, migrants in metropolitan cities who may have limited awareness or experience of regional Australia emphasise the value of weekend visits to host communities to explore the environment, opportunities, and facilities available. These scoping visits ensure that newcomers make an informed decision about whether to relocate to a particular regional area. Certainly, not everyone who attends a weekend visit will choose to relocate. The steering committee and local council typically facilitate such weekend visits. Community volunteers are also invited to be part of the host community welcoming team.

After a visitation, migrants who decide to relocate should begin preparing for their arrival. This preparation includes looking for houses, applying for jobs, and enrolling children in schools. To begin this process, migrants need to provide family data to the local steering committee. For instance, the

> **We have seen firsthand that if new arrivals are welcomed and supported by locals, they don't want to leave. They have children, they build and buy houses, and they create businesses of their own.**
>
> Juanita Doody
> Multicultural Tamworth Inc.

community Working Group of the Great South Coast Economic Migration Project requests families to submit their family data as soon as possible to quicken the relocation process. The information migrants provide help facilitate relocation by identifying housing requirements (based on family size), the kind of jobs sought, and the schooling requirements of children.

Regarding assessing housing needs, the steering committee should present different options to the migrants and seek feedback from them about suitability for family needs. Allowing migrants to visit properties physically will further ensure any prospective newcomers are comfortable with their accommodation situation upon arrival. The steering committee should also use the family database provided by adult migrants to start searching for jobs on their behalf if they have not already found one.

In the information pack migrants send to the steering committee, they should include the age and level of education of all children in each relocating family. This helps determine the suitability of the family's relocation to the area, based on the education facilities available locally. Education is incredibly important to migrants. So, if there are no schools in a particular community seeking new migrant families, then migrant families should not

be relocated to that community. Ignoring the education needs of the migrant children will hinder long-term settlement success.

For migrants that do relocate, a welcome event (such as a barbeque or picnic) should be held as soon as possible to introduce new residents to the host community formally. As well as providing networking opportunities for employment, welcome events help new residents understand the community's way of life. Such events also help create a feeling of safety for newcomers and that their new community embraces and accepts their presence and is not unwelcoming.

CHALLENGES

The settlement of humanitarian entrants and skilled migrants is facilitated by settlement service providers and businesses, respectively. However, migrants from overseas have no chance of visiting regional towns before they relocate to decide whether or not that is a place they are willing to call home. The resulting challenge is that some migrants settled in regional areas directly from overseas may move on because it was not their choice to move to that town in the first place.

SUMMARY OF ACTION 3: WELCOMING AND HOSTING NEW MIGRANTS

KEY PLAYERS

Steering committee

Community champions

(working with local government, local businesses, and local volunteers)

WHAT TO DO

Organise weekend visits for migrants to see local schools, housing options, workplaces, amenities (e.g. hospitals/health facilities, shopping centres).

Obtain biographical information of prospective migrant families to assess needs (e.g. housing and schooling requirements).

For those migrants making the move, identify specific housing and job options, relevant amenities, farmers willing and able to lend land (where necessary).

Support pre-arrival arrangements (e.g. assist migrants to make rental applications, apply for jobs, enrol children in local schools).

Organise an introductory welcome event (e.g. barbeque) to introduce newcomers to the community so that newcomers feel welcomed and safe.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not relocate migrants from other parts of Australia without prior visitation; it may create false assumptions.

Do not relocate migrants if there are no jobs locally.

Do not relocate families where there are no schools for kids.

Do not relocate migrants if there is no land for them to use, and farming was listed as a priority for them.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Family Weekend visits that don't involve the community or exacerbate cultural difference may discourage migrant relocation.

Lack of cultural awareness about food preferences of visiting migrants may present avoidable tension.

Lack of opportunity for overseas migrants to visit regional communities hinders the ability for migrants to make informed decisions about relocation.

Some farmers may not be willing or able to lend land.

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SECURING EMPLOYMENT FOR NEW MIGRANTS

Labour shortage is the most pressing issue that affects the economic prospects of regional Australia, especially small rural towns. It is also one of the most compelling motivators for regional and rural communities to welcome new migrants to live and work locally. Migrants can also find meaningful work in regional areas that they may not otherwise have access to in big cities, where the competition for workers is much tighter. Given that employment in regional areas covers a wide range of skills and industries, it makes sense to assess the needs and actions for different categories of migrant workers separately.

A) INTERNAL MIGRANTS FROM MAJOR AUSTRALIAN CITIES

Migrants relocating to regional Australia specifically for work may only become aware of regional employment opportunities because of regional businesses reaching out to metropolitan migrant communities. Advertising jobs alone may not suffice. It may be that regional businesses need to approach metro-based settlement organisations to link them with the migrant communities. Through this connection, the migrant communities can become aware of the types of jobs and places that may suit them.

For businesses looking for a large number of workers, it may be best to start with just a few workers at first. Through the employee's social network, the business owners can then link back to the migrant community in the big cities to attract additional workers. The initial workers can vouch for the work and lifestyle on offer in regional areas, and the regional employers can build up knowledge about what their new workers' skills and needs are.

CHALLENGES

As migrant workers come to settle in regional communities, they bring their families with them. The more that migrant workers are satisfied with employment and living conditions, the more inclined they are to tell friends and family living in metropolitan Australia about how great regional Australia is. The challenge for regional communities is not to exceed local capacity to employ, house and educate new arrivals, to ensure in-migration does not outpace local resources for settlement.

B) SKILLED MIGRANTS FROM OVERSEAS

Faced with the prospect of closure or relocation due to lack of staff, some regional businesses choose to employ skilled migrants from overseas. This is a long journey as it involves visa processing, timings for which are not always predictable. Despite this hurdle, many regional businesses are successful in recruiting skilled migrants from overseas and have seen substantial growth as a result. For businesses looking to go down this route, it is important to think about the costs involved. It is worth considering sharing the costs of visa and travel with incoming employees, as there is mutual benefit from resulting employment. To help employee retention, businesses should also provide incentives for workers once they have commenced, such as opportunities for training, promotion, salary increases, and awards. Supporting employees to bring family members to Australia can help

greatly with retaining employees in the long term as well as reducing any potential time they may otherwise take off work to return overseas for visits. Facilitation of family relocation can also help regional economies because all the spending that employees would otherwise do abroad while visiting their families they spend locally.

At the onset of the arrival of skilled migrants, employers approach the local council and the broader community for support. Though settlement services may be considered primarily for humanitarian entrants, skilled workers coming in from overseas need help getting accustomed to regional Australian life, too. Business owners should not attempt to settle skilled visa entrants on their own, as they may have limited time or expertise to assist in all aspects of settlement in the community.

CHALLENGES

It may take longer for businesses to acquire this category of workers because of the visa requirements and processing times. The issue of workers traveling overseas to visit their families every time they acquire enough leave benefits is also an important consideration, as leave may jeopardise business outputs, particularly when businesses are small, and leave extensive. Therefore, consideration for the relocation of migrant families as a whole is important, as is an awareness that organising visas for dependents of employees requires further effort, money, and processing time than an individual worker.
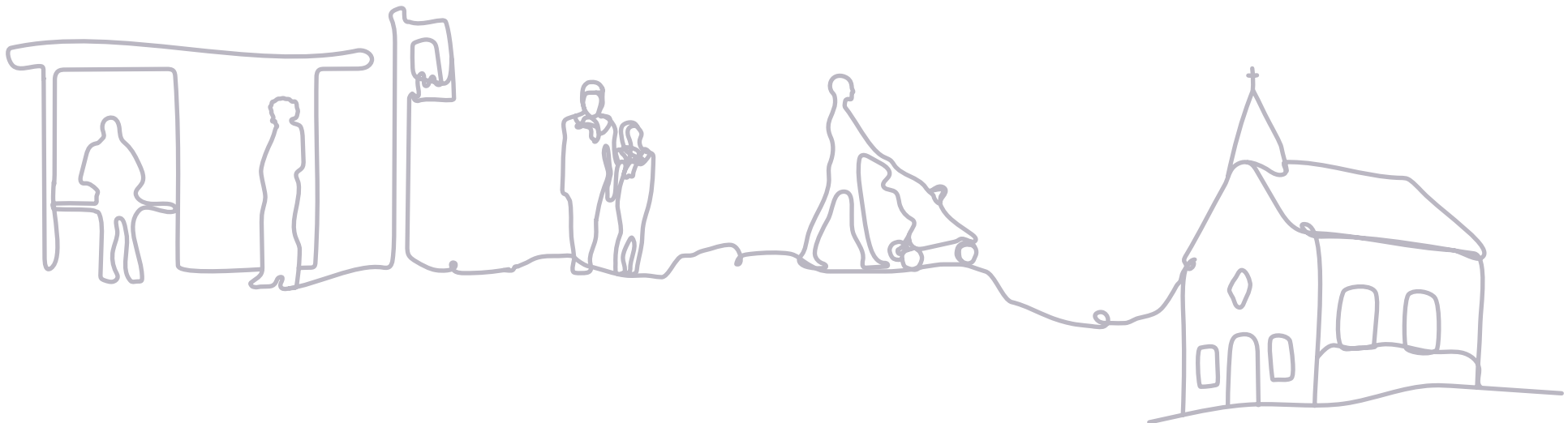
C) HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

Settlement of humanitarian entrants to Australia directly to regional communities from overseas tends to be actioned by the federal government, sometimes at the request of community steering committees or local governments. Such requests can also align with a desire to stem labour shortages in local businesses.

With funding from the federal government, directly settled humanitarian entrants receive settlement support from a dedicated settlement service provider. Settlement services can assist with organising housing, jobs for new arrivals, and providing English lessons, aware that for certain jobs migrants can learn English in conjunction with maintaining casual employment.

For humanitarian entrants already settled in major Australian cities for some time, support from settlement services may be limited. It may also be restricted to specific catchment areas which do not necessarily include rural areas. Consequently, humanitarian entrants previously settled in metropolitan Australia will likely have to find job vacancies and a means to relocate themselves without dedicated settlement assistance (but perhaps with assistance from other community groups).

Though they may not automatically be on the top of employers lists when seeking to fill vacancies, many humanitarian entrants are a great fit for rural life since they came from rural communities themselves. The impetus for many humanitarian entrants wanting to move to country areas tends to be less dependent on specific employment desires as it is on the need to practice farming activities. Work that allows for these interests to flourish may be casual or part time. Agriculture-specific work may also require specific training, such as how to use tractors, drive trucks, and use certain kinds of machinery safely on farms.

CHALLENGES

It may take some time for humanitarian entrants to find suitable employment, especially as the preference for particular jobs (as opposed to just 'any job') may be strong. Any preference for casual work requires a balance between employer and worker needs.

Most of the jobs in regional areas are dependent on connections, especially hidden jobs which are only known to internal workers and friends of workers or employers. Therefore, settlement service providers may be unaware of all employment opportunities, especially in smaller rural communities.

Once employment is secured, an unforeseen cost to some businesses is interpreters at work, especially during the early stages of employment (for instance, induction, staff briefing and meetings, and interpretation of official announcements).

Aside from English proficiency, other barriers or delays to employment for migrants, especially humanitarian entrants, include lack of local work experience, lack of any skills and certificates, and a lack of knowledge of Australian workforce regulations. To be ready for agricultural positions in rural areas, migrants may also wish to complete certain training before relocating. Migrants' awareness of and access to relevant courses may be limited.

SUMMARY OF ACTION 4: SECURING EMPLOYMENT FOR NEW MIGRANTS

WHEN SEEKING MIGRANTS SPECIFICALLY TO FILL LABOUR GAPS

KEY PLAYERS

Local businesses (including farmers)

Local government

(with support from local volunteers and community organisations)

WHAT TO DO

Present profile of the business to prospective migrant community (via contact with migrant community groups in other cities, or via overseas recruitment agencies).

Understand migrants' skills and aspirations (via biographical data of migrants looking for work).

Match migrants to particular job vacancies.

Approach local council to assist in obtaining jobs and apprenticeship opportunities where possible.

Businesses, through Migration Agents, obtain visas for employees coming from overseas.

Assist with migrant accommodation, travel, induction and work training (and look for assistance from broader community where possible).

Provide incentives for migrants to stay on (such as opportunities for training, advancement, assistance with family reunion).

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not leave it to the new migrants to look for their own jobs after they arrive.

Do not abuse or exploit migrant workers in any way.

Do not discriminate against migrants for workplace training or promotion opportunities.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Migrants may lack local work experience.

Migrants may have qualifications, but they are not formally recognised in Australia.

It may take long to get a visa processed.

There may be discrimination against migrant workers from other employees.

There may be language barriers between migrant workers and other employees.

There may be miscommunication between existing and incoming employees due to unfamiliar use of language (e.g. slang or jargon).

The importance of networking to uncover hidden jobs.

WHEN SETTLING HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

KEY PLAYERS

★ Local volunteers and community organisations

🏛 Local government (working with migrant and settlement service organisations)

Federal government (funding settlement service organisations to support humanitarian entrants)

WHAT TO DO

Link migrants with relevant service providers, such as Centrelink.

Assist migrants to learn English where necessary.

Encourage migrants to acquire skills and learning certificates

Connect with local businesses to give migrants local workplace experience.

Assist migrants in applying for jobs.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not assume migrants from refugee backgrounds are unable or unwilling to work.

Do not refuse migrants work if they are willing and able to do a job that needs filling.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Migrants may lack qualifications or work skills and obtaining these may delay job acquisition.

Without settlement services to assist in acquiring language skills, migrants may experience difficulty completing job applications.

Available employment opportunities may not align with migrant work preferences.

There may be additional costs required for interpretation/ language training once migrants do secure work.

There may be a lack of knowledge about Australian work regulations (e.g. work safety).

Hidden and casual jobs require active networking and negotiation to secure steady employment.

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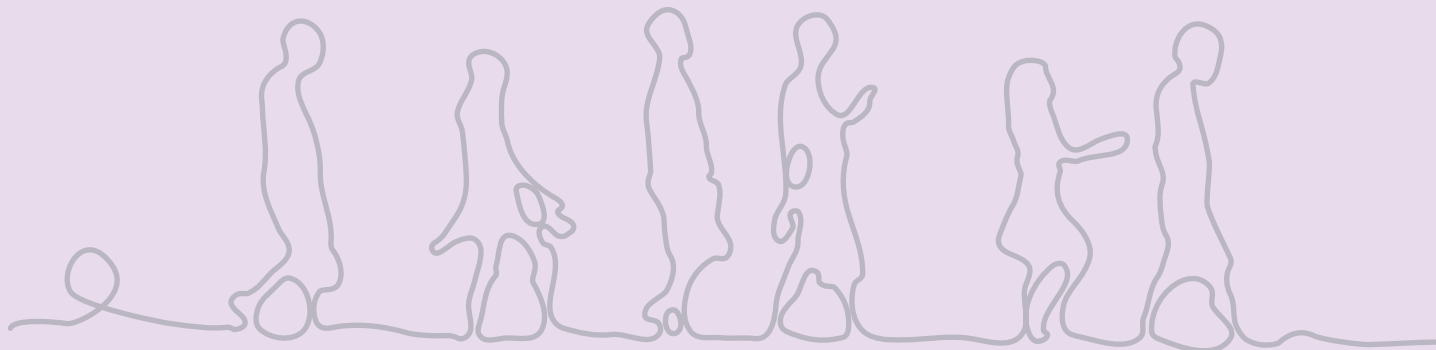
SECURING HOUSING FOR NEW MIGRANTS

The availability of affordable housing is a key factor behind many migrants' decision to move from big cities to country towns. However, price alone is not enough to ensure migrants' needs are sufficiently addressed. The size of houses is critically important. If the only housing stock available for migrants in rural and regional areas only have two or three bedrooms, this may limit the types of families willing to relocate there, as many migrant families may have more family members and thus require a larger living space. The ability to search for suitable housing stock before relocation varies among migrants, with those relocating from overseas facing a bigger challenge of an unknown market and inability to inspect properties in person. There are also certain realities of living in more rural areas that migrants from metropolitan areas may be unaware of and so need to be educated about (such as bush fires and what actions can be taken to mitigate bush fire threats). These and various other housing considerations are outlined below.

A) INTERNAL MIGRANTS FROM MAJOR AUSTRALIAN CITIES

Migrants relocating from other parts of Australia are often assisted in securing rental accommodation upon providing family data, including family size and ages, to the steering committee, employer or community champion facilitating their relocation. In the process of having migrants apply for a rental property, relocation facilitators should seek a letter of support for the migrants' application signed by the steering committee. In cases where the stock of housing is temporarily limited, the relocation facilitator may also consider approaching local volunteers or farmers to accommodate the new migrants at their own homes or establish other viable alternatives (residential dwellings only, avoiding overcrowding) in the short term until more permanent accommodation becomes available. In the case of Mingoola, farmers offered unused cottages on their properties to accommodate migrants. However, given the cottages required substantial repairs to be liveable, members of the Mingoola community worked with Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development International to renovate the cottages to a liveable condition. The families moved in and remain there, upon agreement that the cottages pay rent at market value or a subsidised rate.

CHALLENGES

It may take time to find accommodation initially, as there may be distrust from real estate agents and house owners about applicants without rental histories or who are from different cultures. Moreover, available housing stock may not match family needs or expectations of what is available in lower density populations (i.e. more spatially disperse populations doesn't necessarily mean bigger, cheaper or more accessible housing). Limited housing stock and higher prices in some areas can be a significant challenge regarding attracting and retaining new migrants.

B) SKILLED MIGRANTS FROM OVERSEAS

Time and again, businesses in regional areas have opted to bring in skilled migrants to fill labour gaps. Such migrants are easily integrated into the workforce because they are chosen on the merit of their skills and are ready to start right away. This, in turn, generates readily observable impacts on businesses productivity and output. To ease the transition of their relocation to Australia, employers of skilled visa entrants need to work with others in the community to secure appropriate housing for the migrants before they arrive. As they are unable to visit prospective properties before relocation, those migrating from overseas on skilled working visas will most likely move into a house that is not of their choosing, at least initially. In most cases, they will start in temporary accommodation and move to permanent accommodation after their relatives arrive.

> **CHALLENGES**
>
> Migrants may reside in temporary housing for relatively long periods if they are waiting for their relatives to get visas and join them.

C) HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

Housing is incredibly important for everyone, and migrants who enter Australia on humanitarian grounds are no exception. Where housing does present some challenges for humanitarian entrants is securing rental agreements for those who have either settled directly from overseas or have thus far been living in temporary or supported accommodation. It is standard practice for leases to be signed upon a check of one's rental history in Australia. However, migrants living overseas will not have such a history. A lack of rental history is something the steering committee will need to keep in mind when liaising with real estate agents to identify potential housing options. Upon relocating to a rural or regional town, humanitarian entrants may be best supported by settlement services or community volunteers to find temporary accommodation. With housing secured, caseworkers can assist new arrivals one on one to familiarise them with the operations of a house (e.g. heating and cooling systems, cooking utensils and appliances, toilets, water system, cleaning products and processes). Once acclimatised to living independently (after say, one month), these migrants can then be assisted to find long-term accommodation. Settlement service providers may be required to act as guarantors for such accommodation and assist with bond payments.

> **CHALLENGES**
>
> It may be difficult to find a house for bigger families of humanitarian entrants, and house owners may be scared that such a big family may damage their house.

WHEN SEEKING MIGRANTS SPECIFICALLY TO FILL LABOUR GAPS

KEY PLAYERS

Steering committee

Local businesses

WHAT TO DO

Identify the family sizes of incoming migrants prior to their relocation to gauge suitability of available housing stock.

Ensure prospective arrivals have opportunity to inspect available housing options if possible.

Engage with real estate agents and local council to help support migrant rental applications.

Consider relocating the working adult first, with family to follow once adult is settled.

Where migrant coming specifically to work in a local business, employer should assist in arranging temporary accommodation.

When it comes time for migrants to search for a long-term family house, employers should offer to assist in securing rental agreements where possible.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not relocate migrants before housing is secured.

Do not leave it up to migrants to secure housing on their own.

Do not accommodate migrants in non-residential structures (e.g. sheds).

Do not overcrowd dwellings or use individual electricity and water metres for multiple houses.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Potential lack of trust of real estate agents and home owners can be a barrier for migrants looking to relocate.

Lack of understanding of how different Australian homes may operate (e.g. fireplace with chimney vs electrical or gas-powered heating and cooling).

SUMMARY OF ACTION 5: SECURING HOUSING FOR NEW MIGRANTS

WHEN SETTLING HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

KEY PLAYERS	WHAT TO DO	WHAT TO AVOID	WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF
★ Local volunteers and community organisations	Temporary accommodation secured for approximately one month.	Do not rush migrants out of temporary accommodation.	Lack of Australian rental history could be a barrier to securing housing.
⚓ Migrant and settlement service organisations	Investigate long-term accommodation options after migrants become acclimatised to their new community.	Do not relocate migrants before housing is secured.	Lack of dedicated settlement services to assist migrants places onus on local volunteers and community organisations.
(with support from local and federal government in some instances)	Inform migrants about paying their own rent as they move to the permanent house.	Do not leave it up to migrants to secure housing on their own.	The rumours among some migrants coming from overseas that, in Australia, houses are free rather than rented.
	Partner with local organisations, like churches, to offer housing for migrants to rent.	Do not accommodate migrants in non-residential structures (e.g. sheds).	
	Consider offering to supply or loan bond money on behalf of the migrant family when applying for rental properties.	Do not surprise migrants about paying rent when they move to permanent housing.	
	Make sure migrants are informed that, after temporary accommodation, the cost of rent will be their responsibility.		

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FOSTERING COMMUNITY COHESION

It is one thing to migrate to a new community; it is another to stay in that community. Thus, local volunteers and community organisations, with support from the steering committee and local businesses, must remain active in supporting the new migrants to become part of the community following their relocation. Similarly, new residents should engage in the whole life of the community, including events, sports activities, and local clubs and associations. New residents may also benefit socially from having migrant peers and enrolling their children in the same schools.

Given employment's integral role in promoting community cohesion, opportunities for permanency or promotion at work can be a big motivator for a migrant's decision to stay in regional areas. Conversely, those migrating to regional areas as unemployed or single individuals may decide to leave regional areas due to a sense of social isolation. To combat this, the community steering committee in charge of a settlement program, and volunteers supporting its implementation must develop a mechanism to fully engaged single and unemployed adult migrants through work, education or training, and community activities.

One avenue for engagement of all new arrivals is through facilitators, or 'buddies' as the Great South Coast Economic Migration Project calls them, who are linked to each migrant family or individual to help them familiarise themselves with things like local amenities, events and public transport. Family facilitators or mates tend to be local volunteers matched to migrants upon their arrival to the community, such as at the welcome event.

Another way to encourage engagement and networking is through neighbourhood-run art and craft groups, skills workshops, and conversational English sessions, where migrants and volunteers are encouraged to learn English by sharing stories in neighbourhood centres, libraries, and any other place of choice. These informal gatherings are particularly helpful for mothers with young children who are not working.

Conversational English sessions are especially great for locals to get to know their new residents and vice versa while developing their English. Alternatively, English lessons can be conducted more formally in a classroom setting or conjunction with employment (either at work or around work hours). Whatever the delivery approach, a concerted effort to develop the English of new arrivals is integral to the long-term sustainability of a regional settlement program, for working and non-working migrants alike. Proficiency in English is a major factor in how well migrants can form social connections and become involved in their new community. Lack of confidence in English proficiency may deter new migrants from engaging in community activities and events which, in turn, can lead to isolation, depression, and eventual departure.

KEY PLAYERS

★ Local volunteers and community organisations

🏛 Local government

(working with steering committee and local businesses)

WHAT TO DO

Establish a system of family facilitators or buddies.

Encourage migrants to enrol their children the same schools as other migrants so that parents have a regular means to socialise.

Facilitate English learning, either by hosting conversational English sessions and storytelling group events or by organising more formalised teaching sessions around migrants' work.

Encourage migrants to join associations and clubs.

Organise community engagement activities and events, such as sewing and art classes, to help new migrants socialise (especially women).

Assist migrants to upskill and build networks to expand job opportunities.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not discourage engagement by migrants in community events and activities.

Do not limit migration to just a single family or an individual as this makes the migrants vulnerable to social isolation.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Long distance to amenities could be an issue if public transport is limited.

Communication issues between new migrants and existing residents could inhibit cohesion.

Lack of translation or language services in smaller regional towns places more responsibility on local volunteers to support new residents.

> "We have found the best way to increase social cohesion is by providing people with the facts; where the refugees settling in the community have come from and why, how the BCHS is assisting them, and sharing the positive contribution new arrivals are making in our city.
>
> Kaye Graves
> Bendigo Community Health Service

7

CONSIDERING CULTURE, CUSTOMS
AND ENVIRONMENTS

Australia is a welcoming country that has embraced so many from around the world. People from all walks of life have come to Australia by various means, from various cultures and professions. When considering taking part in a settlement program in regional or rural Australia (whether direct from overseas or as a secondary settlement from a major city), there are various cultural, historical, and environmental factors to be mindful of for both host communities and new migrants.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOST COMMUNITIES ABOUT NEW MIGRANTS

Origin and cultural background

When organising a community to be ready for the arrival of new migrants, community members should receive a broad understanding of the origin, cultural practices, and preferences of those migrants, and any wars or conflicts they may have gone through and how this has impacted their lives. Awareness of the background of humanitarian entrants is especially important. As subjects of wars and persecutions, humanitarian entrants come from a range of backgrounds. They may have been working professionals from an educated background, or they may be uneducated and illiterate even in their language, let alone English. Despite these differences, they likely found themselves in refugee camps struggling to survive. By having a greater awareness of what migrants have gone though, community members will be better equipped to support the wellbeing of new residents with issues that may arise (such as the need to access mental health services). An understanding of the traditional foods migrants like to eat and how they will access it will also help migrants feel welcome, as food is such a big part of a migrant's culture and sense of identity.

Traditional events and festivals

It is important for the host community to be aware of any festivals and events that in-coming migrants celebrate, and to encourage migrants to share their culture with others. Encouraging new residents to be part of organising local events and festivals that recognise and value their traditions will make them feel welcomed as part of their new community, as well as part of the local decision-making process. When attending such events, all community members should embrace the new cultures open to them (including the food offerings).

Churches and shrines

Australia is a multicultural society that respects diversity in people's origins and cultures. For new migrants to feel respected and welcome, host communities should ensure they have access to places for prayer services. This is especially important for migrants from refugee backgrounds, many of whom credit their survival to their faith.
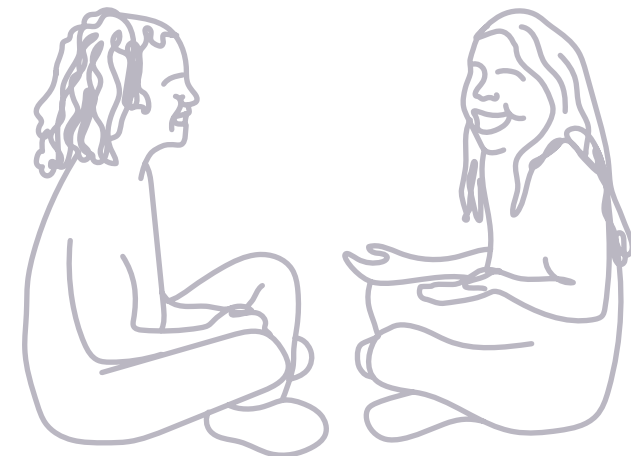
Safety

Migrants must feel safe in the community for them to want to stay. Safety doesn't necessarily mean the presence of police. For the most part, it means that migrants feel supported as part of the community. This means not excluding them from community activities and events. Since new migrants may not be aware of such activities or events, special effort needs to be made to inform them so that they are not inadvertently excluded.

Youth

Most migrants come from big and medium sized families. It is likely that families migrate to regional and rural areas with their teenagers and children. To encourage these families to stay for the long-term, communities need to think about how to keep migrant youth living and working locally. One example may be vocational apprenticeships, upon completion of which young migrants may be inclined to set up a business of their own, thus further embedding themselves in the community.

Land access

Connection to land is an important driver behind a migrant's decision to relocate from big cities to regional areas. However, acquiring land to grow produce (for themselves or to sell at local markets) is not simple. Often, land (and any relevant machinery or equipment) has to be lent by local farmers to migrants; it is not purchased outright. Land-lending may result in share farming or migrants eventually buying their own properties to farm, thus placing down roots in the community for the long haul.

Transport

Newly-arrived migrants may not be immediately eligible for a licence or funds to purchase a car. Consequently, they will be reliant on local information sessions, as well as their facilitators, to teach them how to use public transport and access other local amenities and services. Facilitators may also need to drive new migrants around to appointments and shops until they get acquainted with their new surroundings.

> "The local council made the Senior Citizens clubrooms available to the Filipino community to use as a gathering space, fencing off the outdoor area from the road to make it safer for young children to play.
>
> Cheryl McKinnon
> Mayor of Loddon Shire

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIGRANTS ABOUT HOST COMMUNITIES

Amenities

Since regional and rural Australia has vast space with lower population density, migrants should expect to live in places where amenities may be away from their homes. In some places, one may need to travel more than 20km to find the nearest shopping centre, medical centre or fuel station. Local townspeople and facilitators will be able to share knowledge about how and where to access relevant goods and services.

Transport

In some rural communities, there may be limited or no public transport. As such, Migrants arriving in country areas may benefit greatly from having a drivers' licence and a car. In many cases, it is even advisable that families have two cars, such that when one parent has gone to work with one car, a second one remains for the other parent to use to support the children and run errands.

Employment

Many country towns and rural areas are places with a high number of employment opportunities. Nonetheless, the kind of jobs in country towns may differ in nature to city-based jobs. There may be fewer white-collar jobs and more labour-intensive jobs available at any given time. If new migrants want to gain local work experience and earn an income while living in more isolated rural areas, it is important that they be open and ready to take up what work is available, and maintain a positive presence at work, not simply thinking about it as a means to pay rent. Opportunities to advance or change jobs may present themselves in time.

Safety

With new types of work come new types of work equipment (particularly in an agricultural or factory setting, where there are brushcutters, chainsaws, tractors etc.). It is important that skills and training be undertaken to use this equipment safely. It is also important to know about local environmental safety, such as what to do in the event of a bush fire outbreak.

Attention to animals

When driving around, especially in bush areas, care needs to be taken to avoid run-ins with animals, both wild and domestic. To reduce the chances of an accident with an animal, reduce speed while driving in the bush and avoid late-night driving where possible. Front bumper guards may also be beneficial. Residents in the community will be able to provide additional advice.

Cultural adjustment

Migrants that relocate to regional and rural areas tend to come from being near people with whom they share the same culture and language. Cultural familiarity may be much less apparent in regional and rural Australia. Thus, migrants need to prepare themselves for cultural adjustment if they are to do their part of cultivating a friendly and welcoming environment in the community. One adjustment may be an increase in interaction with others in the community compared with the more solitary lifestyle of big-city living.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOST COMMUNITIES ABOUT NEW MIGRANTS

KEY PLAYERS

Steering committee

(working with local government and local volunteers)

WHAT TO DO

Educate local community about culture and origin of new arrivals to foster a respectful and welcoming environment.

Provide access to spaces for migrants to practise their own cultural and religious beliefs while respecting others.

Give new migrants a chance to organise events and festivals to share culture and traditions and feel part of the local decision-making process.

Promote and host regular information sessions about local amenities, health services, transport, shopping centres, weather and seasonal knowledge.

Promote community events and activities regularly and widely (including to migrant groups) to ensure migrants feel safe and part of the community.

Create and support opportunities for young people to stay on living and working locally (e.g. apprenticeships).

Help facilitate local farming opportunities through the sharing of land, equipment, and local cropping and grazing advice.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not abuse migrants or disrespect their faith and traditions.

Do not deliberately exclude migrants from community events or activities.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Migrants may have very limited knowledge of bush fires and how to respond to or mitigate threats (e.g. gutter cleaning, access to water, evacuation plans).

Lack of facilities or programs to engage local youth may hinder long-term settlement objectives.

Lack of awareness of local climate may impact how easily new migrants adjust to their new environment (as individuals and as farmers).

Lack of knowledge of how to use heavy machinery safely may result in accidents if used.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIGRANTS ABOUT HOST COMMUNITIES

KEY PLAYERS

✱ New migrants

WHAT TO DO

Be aware that public transport is limited in some regional locations and so own transport may be required.

Be aware that amenities may be further away and so will require further travel than in metropolitan cities.

Be respectful of Australia laws and customs.

Participate and attend local events.

Join local clubs and associations to be part of local decision making.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not restrict the type of jobs accepted.

Do not equate rent to a number of days' work.

Avoid low self-esteem at work.

Do not refuse to be part of local events and activities.

WHAT TO BE MINDFUL OF

Poor public transport connections may limit accessibility in and around a community.

Small communities may not have a large number or variety of churches, mosques or shrines.

Accidents with domestic and wild animals may occur from time to time but there are actions to mitigate risk.

> "
> **We have always encouraged our new residents to use cars because public transport in Rupanyup is not reliable.**
> David Matthews
> Farmer from Rupanyup

DETAILED STEPS TO SETTLEMENT SUCCESS: A CHECKLIST

☐ **1.** Identify specific motivation for attracting migrants to your community.

☐ **2.** Identify incentives for migrants to come and stay (jobs, housing, land).

☐ **3.** Compare local cost of living to major cities.

☐ **4.** Consult local community about proposed migration initiative, including the background of prospective arrivals (origin and culture).

☐ **5.** Appoint a steering committee to oversee the initiative (pre- and post- arrival).

☐ **6.** Identify available jobs, housing stock, farmland, schools, communal spaces.

☐ **7.** Organise weekend visits for migrants (where possible).

☐ **8.** Obtain family data from migrants to be able to match their housing, lifestyle and employment needs and aspirations with those of the community.

☐ **9.** Assist with visas, travel costs, connecting with training, language and support services where necessary.

☐ **10.** Match migrants to specific job vacancies and housing.

☐ **11.** Encourage conversations between real estate agents, churches, local council and businesses and to support migrants' initial accommodation arrangements.

☐ **12.** Ensure there are appropriate and available housing options for long-term accommodation.

☐ **13.** Establish a 'buddies'/ family facilitators system.

☐ **14.** Encourage multiple families to migrate together and enrol their children in the same schools.

☐ **15.** Organise and facilitate English learning through casual get-togethers (conversational English sessions) as well as more formal education settings.

☐ **16.** Encourage migrants to join and participate in local clubs and events for social engagement.

☐ **17.** Identify and engage migrants in work-related training and networking opportunities.

☐ **18.** Give new migrants a chance to organise events and festivals to share culture and traditions and feel part of the local decision-making process.

☐ **19.** Host regular information sessions to educate migrants (re: environmental awareness etc.) and notify them of upcoming events or activities.

☐ **20.** Support migrants with facilities that would enable farming practice such as land, machinery, irrigation and the use of farm-based equipment.

☐ **21.** Create and support young adult migrants to stay and work locally (e.g. through apprenticeships) to encourage migrant families to stay in regional areas for the long term.

QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES LOOKING TO DEVISE A LOCALLY-LED MIGRATION STRATEGY

What is your motivation for attracting migrants to your community?

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Who is your community champion for the local migration initiative?

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What is the level of local support for the migration initiative? How have you gauged this?

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What community organisations and volunteer groups are available locally to facilitate settlement of new migrants?

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What settlement facilitators or 'buddies' have been identified?

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How well do you understand local business and workforce needs?
Can you evidence this?

What might make migrants leave your community?

How well do you understand local housing stock? Can you evidence this?

What will encourage migrants to stay in your community long term?

NOTES

NOTES

In Australia, small towns keep losing young and middle-aged people to big cities for a range of reasons. As a result, many of Australia's small towns are now fading away while big cities continue to grow. Not only have many young people moved to big cities in search of "greener pastures", but international migration has also been traditionally metropolitan-centric (Australian Government, 2014). Only very limited numbers of migrants are directed to regional cities through government initiatives, and almost none directed to small rural towns. For the majority of small towns, the onus is on them to develop locally-led strategies for attracting migrants to meet workforce challenges or grow a local population (Regional Australia Institute, 2018a). Such micro-level locally-led regional resettlement programs have been happening in different communities around Australia sporadically for some time now (Settlement Council of Australia, 2016). The sum of these micro-level efforts has amounted to some great achievements, particularly around regional and rural population increase, filling labour gaps, and supporting local infrastructure (Andrews, 2017).

There is no doubt that migrants who are moving to regional areas of Australia are looking to take up jobs and access cheaper housing (Fozdar and Hartley, 2012). However, many migrants moving to rural Australia also have great ambitions of practicing farming, whether through growing crops or keeping animals. It is a large part of why big cities are not their ultimate settlement location. Australian experience also shows that, eventually, the decision of migrants to remain in regional areas ultimately depends on whether the community is a welcoming community that is ready to embrace newcomers. A welcoming community is a source of safety for new migrants and can help greatly with migrant attraction and retention (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007). Thus, encouraging more small towns to become welcoming communities is also integral to sustainable regional settlement.

For more key lessons from Australia, see the supporting materials accompanying this toolkit. For a summary of the key learnings and challenges of the migration programs undertaken in Hamilton (Victoria), Shepparton (Victoria), Rockhampton (Queensland), Limestone Coast (South Australia), Nhill (Victoria), Mingoola (New South Wales), Dalwallinu (Western Australia), and Warrnambool (Victoria), see *Understanding regional settlement in Australia: key learnings from past experiences*. For on-the-ground testimonials of regional migration initiatives, see *Case studies of regional settlement*.

LESSONS FROM OVERSEAS

As part of an increasingly globalised world, Australia is directly affected by international migration trends. As well as the tendency for internal population movements to flow from small community towns to big cities, international migration has also emphasised big-city living due to policies that have favoured city-centred services. Looking at what New Zealand and Canada have done to encourage a more community-based approach to settlement can provide some useful examples of the better ways to achieve regional resettlement in Australia.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand has embarked on a community-based communication strategy that centres on the idea of "putting out the welcome mat" (New Zealand Government, 2018). In this Welcoming Plan resource, the notion of "welcoming" goes beyond developing proficient communication with new migrants. The welcoming of new arrivals is an all-inclusive process that requires local community members, new migrants, and local government representatives to plan and implement a welcoming program. This involvement is to ensure that people from all cultures and backgrounds feel included, listened to, and well informed about community change through a range of ways that consider their different communication needs. The outcome of a successfully-implemented welcoming strategy is that:

» The community is well informed about the local benefits of immigration and the Welcoming Communities program, including success stories;

» The local government is well informed about new migrants coming to their region and pro-actively seeks data about the new migrants from relevant sources; and

» The local government's engagement with all residents is two-way, culturally appropriate, and fit for purpose.

IIn developing approaches to engage with newcomers in meaningful ways, the overarching message from New Zealand is to allow newcomers to take part in local decision making. Examples of such approaches include:

» Creating an online hub where locals can connect with new migrants, learn about the benefits they bring to the community and read and watch success stories.

» Setting up innovative ways to communicate with new migrants, such as the 'Start with a Smile' campaign, where local council encourages its community members to smile and begin a chat with another person from a distinct cultural background, anytime and anywhere.
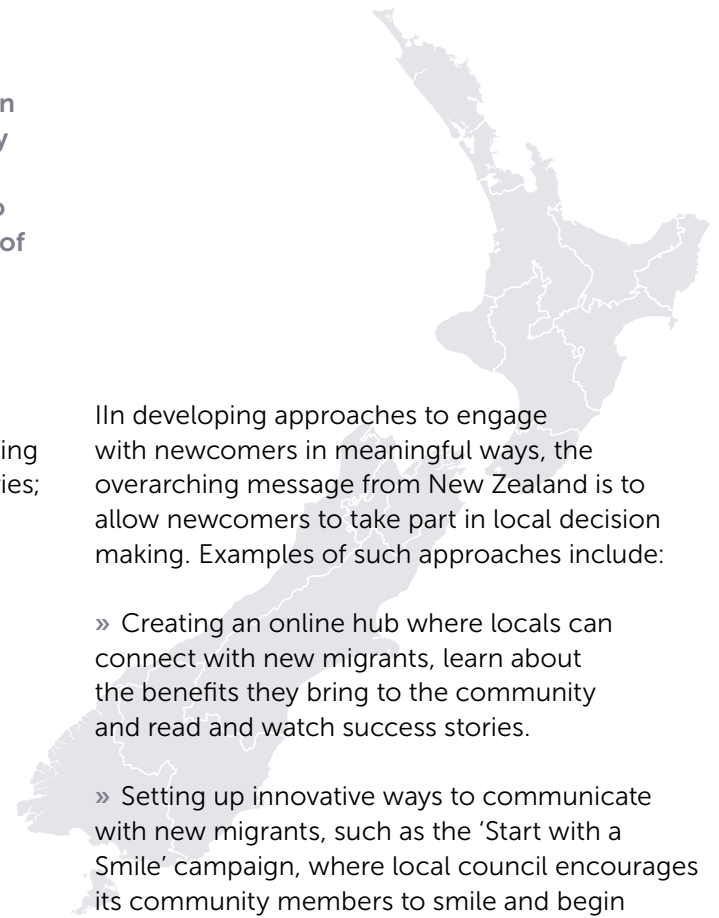
CANADA

Like many other countries, Canada is facing the challenge of population decline in small towns as people move to big cities without a compensating in-flow of people to non-metropolitan areas. To combat this challenge, authorities have embarked on creating "a community consensus" model to attract overseas immigrants to regional areas (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007). Small towns are encouraged to develop strategies to attract new residents by focusing on the following factors:

» The significance of family ties: Endorsing the relationship between families that exist in the community, and the relatives who may be coming, to help attract new migrants to the area.

» The importance of employment: Promoting the fact that jobs are being created every month as people leave the workforce, or as businesses expand, and that new migrants often enter jobs for which there are no local applicants.

» The importance of housing: Looking at the vacancy rates in the community to understand how affordable and available decent accommodation is locally (especially at the lower end of the cost spectrum) compared with other communities.

» The importance of a welcoming community: Respecting diversity, creating accessible public services; endorsing a range of educational opportunities; promoting health, wellness and safety; inviting new migrants to share leisure time activities; and acknowledging faith and spirituality.

» Possible barriers and how to manage them: Understanding what barriers might impede a successful immigration strategy and the plans to create solutions.

At its core, the New Zealand model emphasises a welcoming communication strategy that host community can use to make the new migrants feel at home. The Canadian model focuses on the importance of organising a welcoming community but also the availability of services and facilities, such as houses and jobs, for migrant attraction and retention. Regional settlement initiatives in Australia have essentially employed both of these models to different extents. The key difference is that, unlike Canada and New Zealand, where the focus has predominantly been on attracting migrants directly from overseas, in Australia, regional settlement initiatives have explored both direct settlement and secondary settlement (that is, relocation to regional communities from major Australian cities).

CLOSING REMARKS

In outlining the key players and areas for action behind settlement success, this toolkit will help empower more regional and rural communities to welcome and retain new migrants to fill jobs, create new economic opportunities, and promote population growth and sustainability.

By building on past evidence and experience to address both secondary and direct settlement, skilled and humanitarian migrants and their families, and issues to consider both pre- and post-relocation, this toolkit highlights the importance of addressing regional settlement from a holistic perspective. It also illustrates the need to involve key stakeholders early on in the process, and to work collaboratively to share learnings and responsibilities.

With focus here primarily on the initiators and facilitators of regional settlement programs, future work to capture the learnings from migrant and community experiences would be highly valuable, as would a review every five years or so to capture new learnings from current and future locally-led migration efforts. The more reflection and sharing of localised experiences, the more informed communities will be to make regional settlement a success.
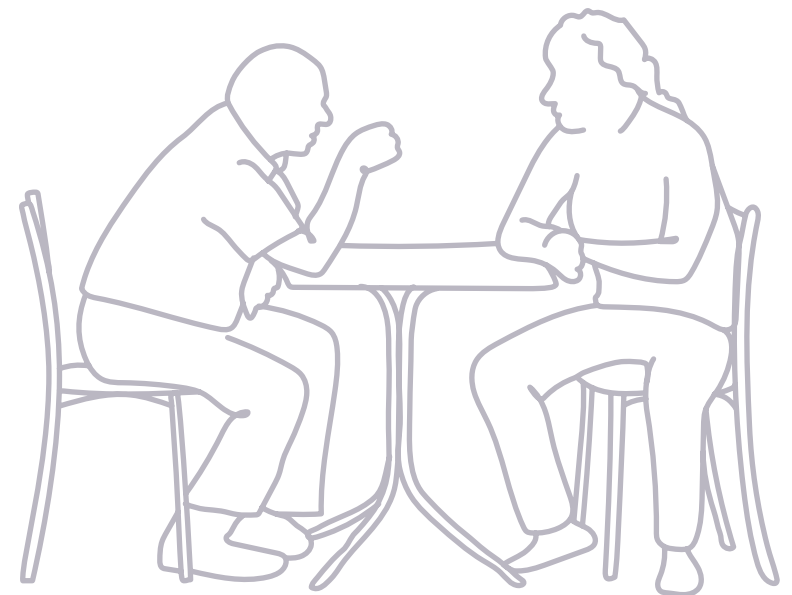
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Settlement Council of Australia (2016). *Exploring Options for Regional Settlement*. Deakin: SCoA. Available at: https://nsp.ssi.org.au/images/Resources/Other/SCoA_Regional_Settlement_Policy_Paper.pdf

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Welcoming Cities (2018). *The Australian Standard for Welcoming Cities*. Available at: https://welcomingcities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AustralianStandardWC_digital_2_0.pdf

Piper, M. (2017). *Refugee Settlement in Regional Areas: Evidence-based good practice*. Available at: https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/about_us/publications/other/m/other_publications/1354

The supporting material for this toolkit, *Understanding regional settlement in Australia: key learnings from past experiences*, is available at regionalaustralia.org.au