

Settlement Council of Australia

Key Recommendations for the 2019 Federal Election

In the lead up to the 2019 Federal Election, the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) calls on all political parties and candidates to support the continued investing in settlement support for migrants and refugees arriving in Australia. To achieve the best possible outcomes for newly arrived individuals, families and communities, and for the Australian society and economy, SCoA recommends the following:

1. Provide adequate, flexible funding for settlement services

Settlement agencies provide specialised services based on sophisticated, culturally sensitive delivery models. These have been developed over decades of dedicated experience. Because of this, settlement agencies are best placed to provide responsive and flexible services to migrants and refugees, to assist them to reach their full potential in Australia across all identified settlement outcomes - both social and economic.

Funding for settlement service providers should be adequate and flexible, particularly in line with any increases in client numbers. Settlement service providers must be empowered to deliver effective, tailored services to meet the specific needs of individuals and communities without being bound by a set of rigid, pre-determined outcomes.

Future funding of the settlement sector must:

- Be **sufficient** to meet identified needs
- Be **flexible** to enable settlement agencies to achieve best possible outcomes
- Be **outcomes focused** - not tied to outputs
- Provide **longer-term security** for funded organisations
- Ensure there is an adequate **base component** to funding which is unlinked to the flow of clients, in order to enable organisational sustainability

2. Improve employment outcomes for migrants and refugees

SCoA recommends the establishment of a well-funded specialist employment service specifically to support newly arrived refugees and vulnerable migrants. This service would:

- Ensure **culturally aware** service provision
- Deliver **person-centred**, multi-faceted employment pathways
- Focus on individuals' **strengths**, as well as their areas of **need**
- Not require refugees and migrants to fit into a predetermined, mainstream service model.

Under this approach, shortly after arriving in Australia each job seeker from a refugee or vulnerable background will be provided with an individually tailored employment support plan. This plan will be informed by their settlement service provider(s), and consider any specific assistance they need to achieve settlement foundations and job readiness, prior to commencing any mutual obligations.

3. Improve English language learning

Access to English language learning must be prioritised for all new arrivals. English language learning must:

- Be provided on an “**as needed**” basis
- Provide **sufficient class time** (and funding) to ensure each person can learn sufficient English for them to fully participate in society, employment and/or education
- Not require learners to juggle English language learning with other obligations (such as jobactive).

4. Remove time limits and visa restrictions for accessing settlement services

To improve the settlement outcomes for newly arrived refugees and migrants, the Federal Government must:

- Continue funding the successful, intensive services provided to newly arrived humanitarian migrants through the **Humanitarian Support Program (HSP)**
- **Broaden the eligibility** for the federally funded Settlement Engagement Transition and Support (SETS) program so that services are provided on an individual needs’ basis, irrespective of the length of time a person has lived in Australia
- Broaden the eligibility for HSP and SETS to include all migrants irrespective of the visa they hold, assessed on an **individual needs’ basis**

5. Provide place-based settlement services and support regional settlement

The Federal Government, SCoA and the settlement sector must work together to develop and implement a coordinated whole-of-government strategy for regional settlement. As part of this approach, SCoA recommends that government engage with regional communities to assess the best possible locations for regional settlement, with particular reference to the critical factors outlined below:

- Adequately funded **settlement services**
- Commitment to a steady flow of migrants and refugees to ensure the **viability** of settlement
- Suitable infrastructure to resettle sufficient numbers of migrants and refugees to make the location **economically and socially viable**
- Strong **capacity for economic integration** including suitable education, English language support, employment opportunities and housing
- Demonstrated commitment in the host community to **welcome** migrants and refugees, and a **respect** for religious and cultural diversity
- Local leaders willing to serve as **champions and advocates** for settlement
- Social and community **networks and events**

6. Collect data for measuring settlement success

The Federal Government should commence a funded program for measuring the success of its settlement services and strategies through the collection of appropriate and timely statistics, data *and case studies* concerning the settlement outcomes of refugees, including regional settlement.

For more information see SCoA’s full 2019 Election Platform at www.scoa.org.au

For more information visit www.scoa.org.au