Settlement
Council
of Australia

State of the Sector - 2020

Settlement Council of Australia

March 2021

The Settlement Council of Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which migrants and refugees settle across Australia, and on which our sector operates.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

About the Settlement Council of Australia

The Settlement Council of Australia is the peak body representing the vast majority of settlement agencies across Australia providing direct services and support to people of migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Our members include organisations large and small, who are committed to the successful settlement of migrants and refugees across the country. Their services range from greeting new arrivals at the airport, through to assisting them to secure housing, learn English, make social connections, access services and find their first job. Australia's settlement services are recognised as being among the best in the world.

Report Preparation

This report has been prepared by the Unveiled Institute for the Settlement Council of Australia.

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INTRODUCTION

MELISSA MONTEIRO
CHAIR

Chair's Forward

2020 was a year like no other. It started with an unprecedented bushfire season which resulted in the loss of life, destruction of homes, and the burning of millions of hectares of land. As the country started to assess the damage, Australia very quickly found itself also dealing with the health, social, and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like other industries, the settlement sector was forced to quickly adapt to new, socially distanced working conditions and to continually find creative ways to deliver services to some of our most vulnerable communities. The sector also dealt with a surge in demand for services across the country, including support for those who have lost their jobs, translation and delivery of government messaging to vulnerable communities, and maintaining existing settlement services.

I have been blown away by the commitment and dedication of our sector during these difficult times. I have been touched by the sector's drive to ensure that even newly arrived residents are able to understand the government's messaging around COVID-19 safety measures and to comply with changing restrictions.

The Settlement Council of Australia's *State of the Sector Survey 2020,* which was undertaken in late 2020, has given us valuable insights into our sector.

Responses to the questions which related to the type of organisations in our sector, the make-up of our workforces, our funding, our qualifications, and our priorities, have been analysed and presented in this report.

Unsurprisingly, the results of the survey demonstrate that we have a diverse range of organisations that deliver critical settlement services across the country. With a workforce that is heavily supported by part time, casual, and volunteer staff, it is more important than ever that our sector continues to receive funding that enables our services to continue to be delivered and expanded during these trying times.

As we move into 2021, our sector continues to adapt to our changing operating environment and the effects of COVID-19 on the community. We continue to work with our members, sector networks, and government agencies, to ensure that we can provide the sector with the support it needs to undertake this work.

Although the effects of the pandemic are likely to be felt well past 2021, I know that together we will come out stronger and more equipped to deliver services in even the most challenging circumstances.

I hope that you find the data and insights of the *SCoA State of the Sector Report 2020* to be useful and look forward to continuing to work with you in 2021.

Executive Summary

The *State of the Sector Report 2020* is the Settlement Council of Australia's (SCoA) assessment of the make up of industry, priorities, and challenges of the sector which provides services to people who want to make Australia home. It is based on the *State of the Sector Survey 2020* which was undertaken in late 2020. This is the first such report created by SCoA.

The report shows a sector that is incredibly resilient, but facing more pressure than ever in light of COVID-19. The almost complete cessation of humanitarian arrivals since March 2020 has dealt a devastating blow to settlement workers delivering the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), which operates based on a fee-for-service model. Many workers in the program have left or are leaving the settlement sector for other sectors, raising risks of brain-drain and the loss of significant expertise. The loss of income through the HSP has also affected organisational viability, particularly for those organisations heavily reliant on HSP funding.

At the same time, demand for settlement services is higher than ever. COVID-19 has added strain on many migrants and refugees, their families, and their communities. In this climate, even more is being asked of already stretched settlement services. They have been asked to lead the delivery of messaging around COVID-19 precautions, deliver emergency relief to those who have suddenly lost jobs, address spikes in domestic and family violence incidents, and mitigate the impacts of increased social isolation, to name just a few of the challenges.

While services have shown their ability to rise up to the incredible challenges of 2020, it is clear that the current models are neither sustainable nor optimised to empower the sector to deliver the best settlement outcomes possible.

The silver lining of major disruption to the sector is an opportunity to reset, made all the more possible by the federal government review of settlement services, led by the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services. It is this opportunity SCoA will be seizing with both hands in 2021.

As we look forward, we will be focusing on ensuring a reformed sector is a stronger one—one that is adequately resourced and emplowered to deliver the best settlement outcomes possible. We will do this by working closely with the Department of Home Affairs and ensuring the reforms are informed by the experiences and expertise of our sector on the ground.

We will also be working hard to provide strong leadership around clearly articulating the value proposition of settlement services and the need for the specialist services our sector provides. We will do this by investing in monitoring and evaluation capabilities and exploring an accreditation framework for the sector.

Finally, we will continue to provide strong support for the settlement workforce by rolling out sector-wide training, facilitating opportunities for settlement workers to connect with each other, sharing examples of best practice, and developing and sharing resources to help settlement workers in their practice.

Our engagement with members over the past year has shown us that our sector is capable of great achievements – as their work with communities during COVID-19 has demonstrated. However, our engagements have also shown us just how much more there is to do. Over the coming year, we look forward to working together with the sector to maximise and amplify our collective achievements and impact.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report considers the types of agencies in the sector, the services being provided, where funding comes from, the type of staff who work in these agencies, these agencies' priorities for 2021 and how SCoA can assist agencies in obtaining positive settlement outcomes.

What is the settlement sector?

Settlement is a two-way process of migrants and refugees adjusting to a new life in Australia, and Australia welcoming migrants and refugees. Successful settlement enables migrants and refugees to fully participate in life in Australia.

Settlement is a key part of Australia's multicultural success story. Successive waves of migrants have brought social and economic value to Australia, and this has been made possible through their effective settlement. Settlement services work with migrants and refugees and local communities to facilitate this process in a way that enhances positive outcomes for us all.

The services that do this work are wide ranging and diverse. The core of the sector is made up of organisations funded by the federal government for one of the following three large programs:

- The **Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP)**, which provides intensive support to humanitarian entrants for their first 6-12 months after arrival in Australia. This support includes sourcing accommodation, providing initial orientation, enrolments in schools, linking with health services and other immediate needs to live an independent life in Australia.
- The **Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)** program, which provides less intensive support to humanitarian entrants and other eligible vulnerable migrants for up to 5 years after arrival, as well as providing capacity building support for communities.
- The **Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)** provides English language tuition to eligible migrants and refugees.

The majority of these service providers are full members of SCoA.

In addition, there are a number of other organisations that contribute to effective settlement, and are associate members of SCoA. This includes organisations that do settlement work through smaller programs funded through state and territory governments, or philanthropic support. It also includes small volunteer groups that support migrants and refugees. Many of these are ethno-specific organisations supporting people who have migrated from their countries of origin. There are also many organisations that have a broader mandate than settlement, but take an active interest in being a positive part of the settlement journey of people they work with who are migrants and refugees. This includes organisations as diverse as employment services, schools, local councils, and others.

Data

This report has drawn on data provided through two key sources:

1. *Quantitative data:* This data has been obtained through the *SCoA State of the Sector Survey 2020.* This survey was open during November and December 2020 and received 73 responses.[1] Respondents delivered at least one of the three major settlement programs outlined above. The survey contained 24 questions which mostly required those responding to select from pre determined answers or provide a response in the 'other' field. There were also some questions which allowed free text responses.

2. *Qualitative data:* This information was obtained from a series of network meetings that were held with the sector in the second half of 2020. Information has also been collected in the form of case studies from participating agencies. These case studies outline the programs which have been rolled out to support migrant communities, outcomes, challenges, and key learnings.

Case Study | Australian Migrant Resource Centre

The Australian Migrant Resource Centre's (AMRC) 'Women's Employment into Action' program started in March 2019. The project supports migrant and refugee women to complete vocational training and find work or participate in activities that are pathways to employment in the care sector.

Despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment, the project has been a great success. 44 participants engaged in employement and volunteering in the first year of the program. 52 participants engaged in formal education or training and 101 participants completed pre-vocational training. Participants have had the benefit of increasing their confidence, building social connections, and embracing professional development while supporting their families. Participants have also been able to participate in other activities, such as studying other courses and undertaking further professional development.

Intensive case management and mentoring by experienced and culturally competent staff has been key to assisting participants. A focus on one vocational course instead of a range of courses was also important as it meant that women from a range of backgrounds could participate.

The project also demonstrated that needs across the full sprectrum of settlement areas are inseperable from employment outcomes.

[1] SCoA estimates the size of this sector to be approximately 115 agencies nationwide.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Organisation type

There are different types of entities offering settlement services in Australia. Of the organisations surveyed, almost half (52.9%) are incorporated associations. 36.8% of organisations are a company limited by guarantee. 1.5% of respondents were unsure of the legal structure of their organisation. The remaning organisations (8.8%) were government, health, or education organisations.

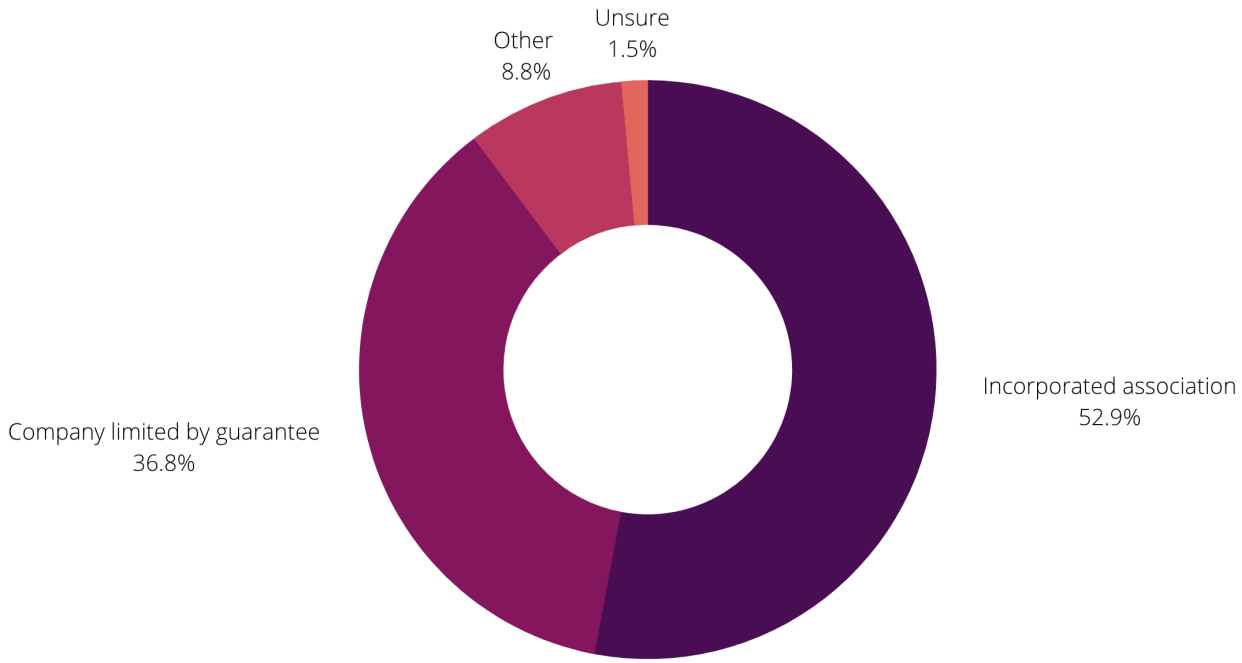

Figure 1 - Legal structure of organisations that offer settlement services in Australia

A majority of organisations (93%) that were surveyed are registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and are deductible gift recipients (68.42%). 10% of organisations were neither registered as charities or deductible gift recipients.

Programs

The sector provides a broad range of settlement services, including the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support program (SETS), the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), the Community Support Program (CSP), and various forms of post settlement support services for migrants and refugees (PSS).

The majority of organisations surveyed provided SETS (65.7%) as a primary service. The remaning organisations provided HSP (11.4%), AMEP (8.6%), PSS (5.7%), CSP (2.9%) or other services (5.7%) (see Figure 2).

44% of the surveyed organisations indicated that they provided more than one service.

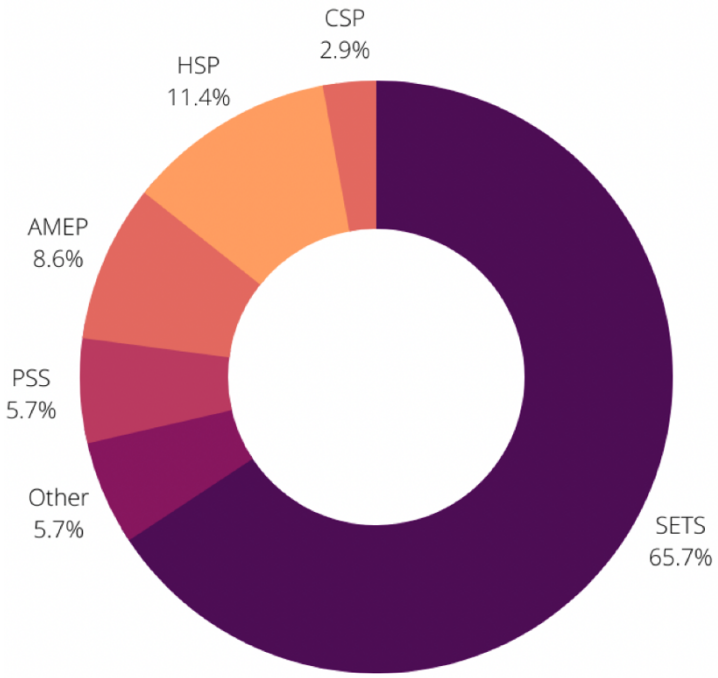

Figure 2 - Primary service provided by organisations

FUNDING

Funding for settlement, migrant and refugee services

Funding for settlement, migrant and refugee services comes from various sources. The majority of organisations surveyed (93%) indicated that they received funding from the Department of Home Affairs (75%). This constituted the largest contribution of funding. Figure 3 indicates the

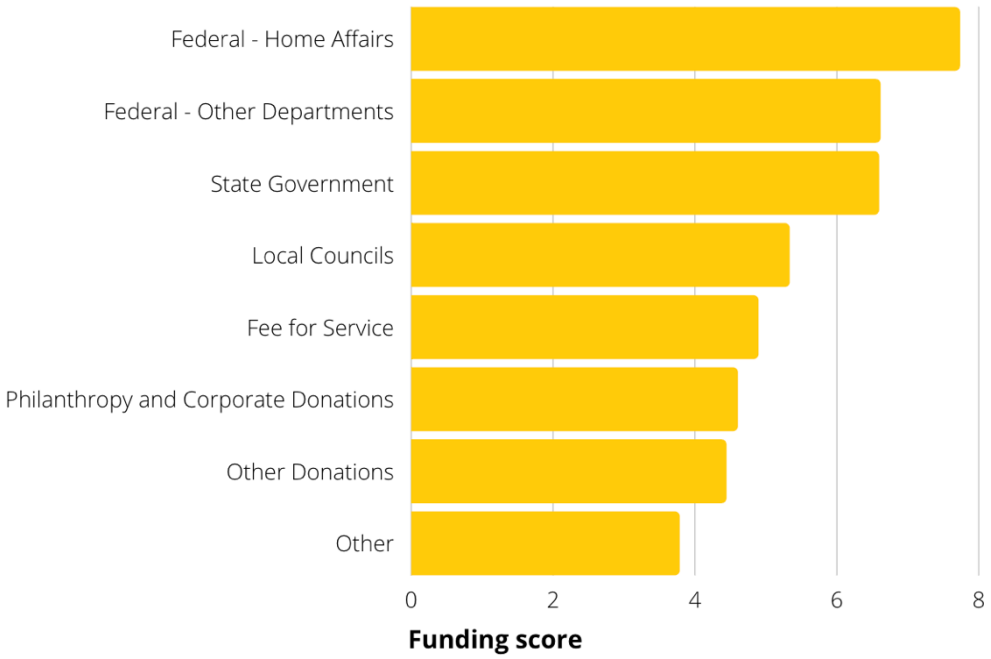

Figure 3 - Sources of funding for settlement, migrant and refugee services

sources of funding for settlement, migrant and refugee services which have been scored based on the size of the contribution from largest to smallest.

Organisational income

Organisations worked within a range of budgets in 2019-20. 27.94% of organisations had an income between $1 million to $5 million for the provision of settlement services, while 22.06% had an income of over $10 million during this period. 7.35% of organisations had an income between less than $50,000 and $100,000 and 7.35% had an income between $500,000 and $1 million. 14.71% had an income between $5 million to $10 million, as outlined in Figure 4.

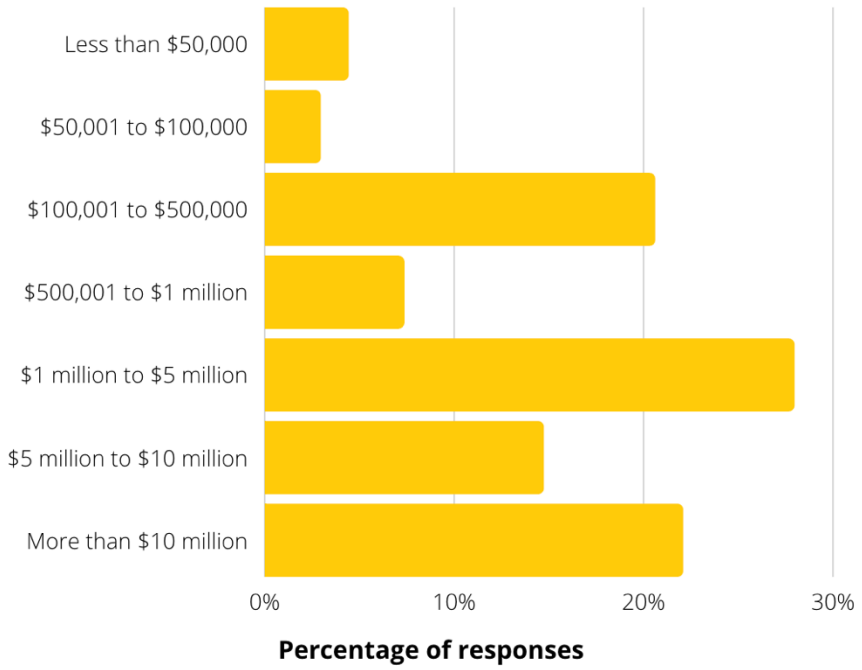

Figure 4 - Organisational income for 2019-20

Impact of COVID-19 on funding

When asked whether the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced the income of organisations over the past 12 months:

- 34.29% of agencies said yes
- 64.29% of agencies said no
- one agency was unsure.

Of the respondents who said 'yes', 16% were able to provide a percentage of the reduction in funding. Of those responses, there has been an average decrease in funding of 23%. Approximately 30% of respondents who indicated that their agencies had experienced a decrease in funding were unsure of how much their income has been reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organisational surplus

Organisations that completed the *SCoA State of the Sector Survey 2020* were asked to indicate their retained surplus as of 1 July 2020. Of the organistions that were able to provide a figure, just over a quarter (26.67%) had a surplus of up to $10,000 and a quarter retained a surplus between $10,000 and $100,000 (26.67%). Approximately 18% of respondents retained a surplus between $100,000 and $500,000. Approximately 20% of organisations retained a surplus between $1 million and $ 5 million and 8% retained a surplus of more than $5 million[2] (see Figure 5)

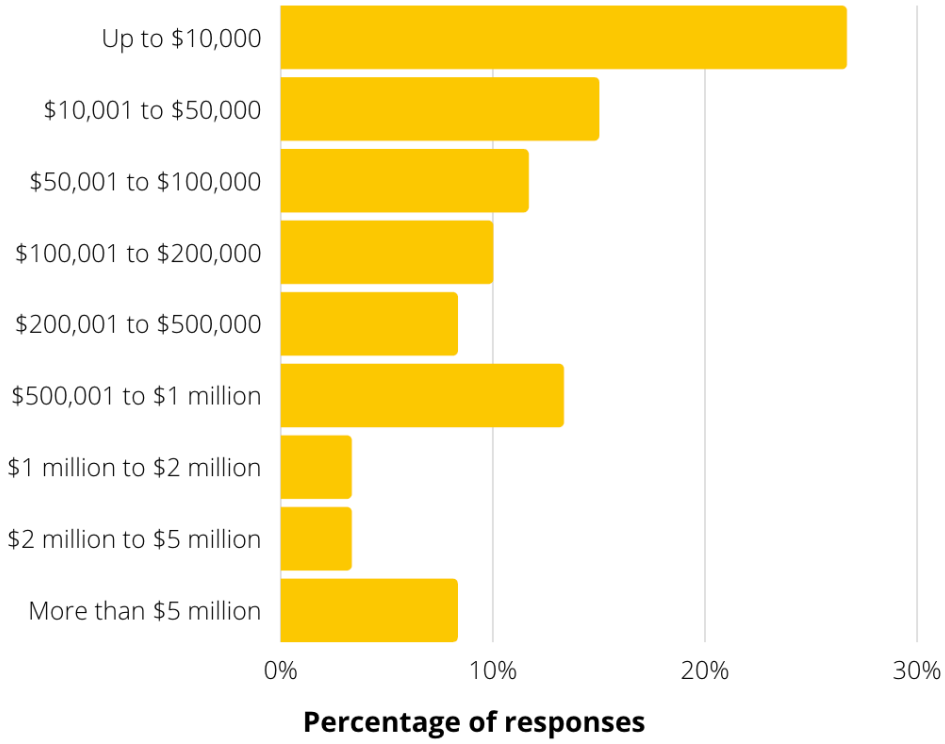

Figure 5 - Retained surplus as of 1 July 2020

Of the remaning respondents, five were unsure of the amount of retained surplus and four had no surplus or had experienced a deficit.

[2] One organisation indicated that the retained surplus was for all services.

Grant administration

Organisations that were surveyed spent varying amounts of time on applying for and administering grants. As described in Figure 6, of the responses received, 23.19% spent 10 - 20% of the organisation's time on this task. A similar amount of respondents (21.74%) spent less than 10% of their time on this task. 13% of organisations spent 20 - 30% of their time on administering grants. Approximately 7% of organisations spent 40 - 50% of their time on this task. Almost 9% of respondents spent 50 - 70% of their time on applying for and administering grants while 7.25% spent over 70% of their time on this task.

One organisation indicated that staff are constantly seeking funds to meet increasing and emerging demands.

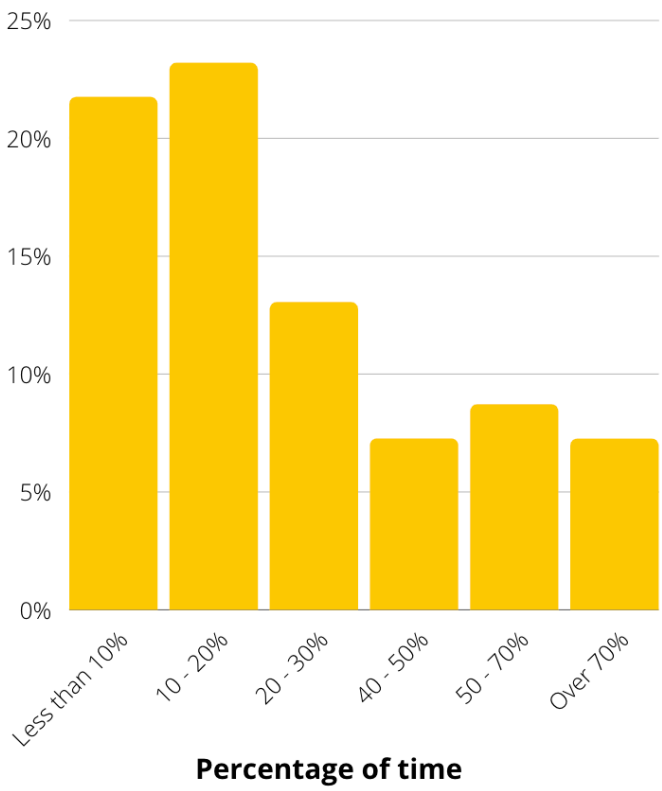

Figure 6 - Percentage of time which organisations spend on applying for and administrating grants

Social and Community Services supplementation funding

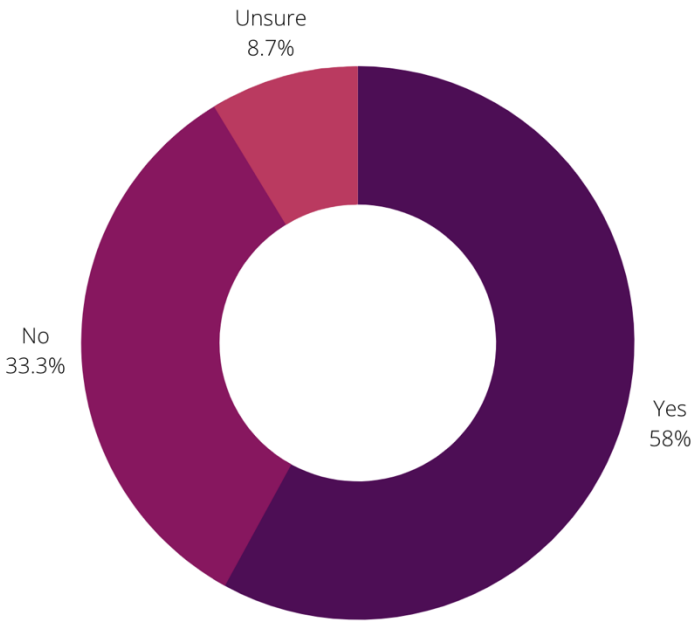

Figure 7 - Responses to the question 'does your organisation receive supplemental SACS funding?'

A majority of organisations that were surveyed receive Social and Community Services (SACS) supplementation funding for settlement activities (58%). A third do not receive any SACS funding and almost 9% of respondents were unsure about whether this funding is received. Of those organisations that did receive SACS supplementation funding, 51.35% indicated that their workforce would reduce by one full time equivalent (FTE) employee if funding is not extended beyond 1 July 2021. For organisations with a smaller workforce, this represents a significant impact on capacity to deliver essential services. 16.21% of organisations reported that their workforce would reduce by more than 5 FTE and 5.45% indicted more than 10 FTE.

Organisations that would experience a reduction in employees if SACS supplementation funding is not extended indicated that this loss of staff would have an impact on service delivery. One response stated:

> '*The funding reduction means the reduced service capacity and resources for clients. It is going to impact on the number of people who can access the support and available programs. Consequently, this affects the outcomes of settlement transition*.'

This sentiment was echoed by many of the responses which made it clear that this could have other flow on effects for organisations such as:

- significant reduction in the scale of services and reduction in targeted work (such as a lack of availability of bilingual staff who can support non-English speaking communities or rural communities)
- exhausting remaining staff who would have to try and pick up additional work, particularly for organisations that are already overwhelmed and understaffed
- a loss of ability to record and report statistics or attend information sessions
- reduction in administrative capacity and/or a requirement for remaining caseworkers to undertake more administrative work
- an inability to succession plan
- exacerbation of difficulties in meeting community needs that have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other organisations suggested that a reduction in SACS supplementation funding would only result in minor reduction in the capacity to deliver services or a minor rescoping of KPIs to suit the reduced staff loads.

WORKFORCE

Number of staff

37.31% of respondents indicated that they have less than 10 FTE employees. 17.91% have 10 to 25 and 17.91% have more than 200 FTE.[3]

24% of respondents indicated that the number of FTE employees had decreased over the past 12 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Comments from respondents indicate that in some cases, there has been a significant loss of staff and that there may be a further reduction in staffing during 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

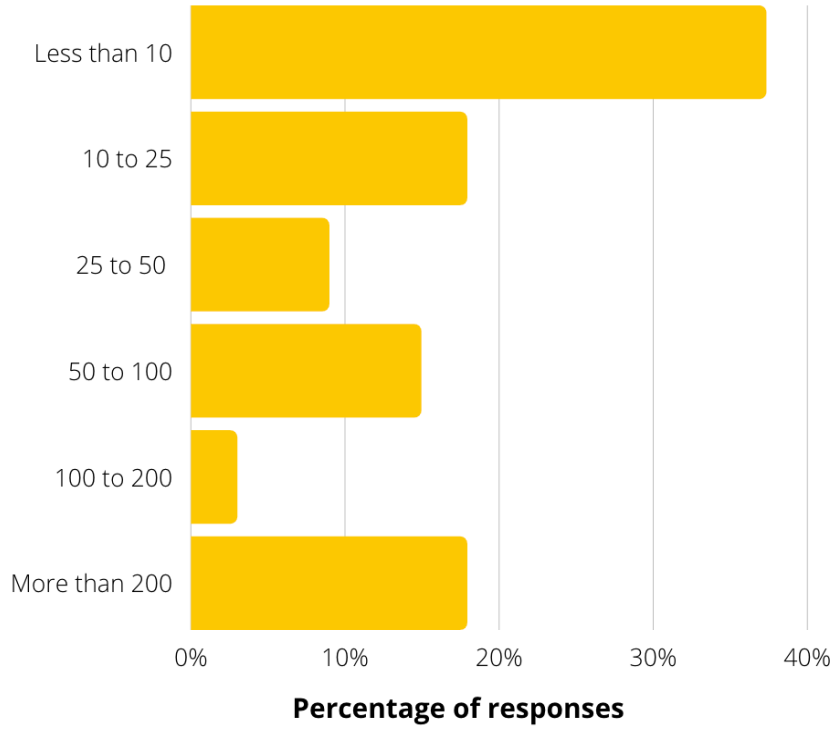

Figure 8 - Number of FTE employees

Employee diversity

Organisations that deliver settlement services have a diverse workforce. Respondents indicated that their organisations had at least one staff member who identified as:

- female (98.44%)
- male (93.75%)
- non-binary (32.81%)
- LGBTQI+ (46.88%)
- being from a refugee or migrant background (84.38%)
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (51.56%)
- Having a disability (45.31%)

[3] It is important that a wide variety of organisation types, from incorporated associations to government departments responded to these survey questions.

Permanency of staff

There is a lot of variation amongst organisations in the percentage of employed staff (not including volunteers) who are full time, part-time, casual, or other. 83% of organisations indicated that they had full time employees. On average, full time employees made up 36% of a team. Some respondents' organisations employeed no full time staff, while others only employed full time staff.

A majority of respondents (93%) employed part time staff. On average, part time employees made up 43% of an organisation. Again, there was much variation amongst organisations; that is, some organisations had no part time staff, while others only employed part time staff.

Case Study | Australian Red Cross

The Red Cross identified that public health information about the COVID-19 pandemic was not readily accessible to refugee and migrant communities living in the Murray-Riverina region of NSW. The Red Cross worked with their bicultural workers, community members, and faith leaders to develop a range of assets in written and multimedia form to help promote good hygiene, encourage social distancing, and provide information for managing self-isolation. The Red Cross workshopped key messages with bicultural workers and community members to ensure that messages were understood.They then worked with communities to distribute information through trusted channels. The Red Cross also worked with NSW Police to develop a flip card that they could use when enforcing social distancing requirements.

The involvement of bicultural staff and members of the community ensured that important public health messages could be distributed in a manner that took into consideration the health literacy of the intended audience and could be understood by diverse communities.

Volunteers

The *SCoA State of the Sector Survey 2020* asked respondents to indicate the number of volunteers that their organisations have. 30% of respondents indicated that their organisation has more than 100 volunteers. 25% have 20 – 50 volunteers. A similar number (23%) have less than 10 volunteers. 15% of repondents have 10 – 20 volunteers and 6% have 50 – 100 volunteers. Respondents highlighted the importance of volunteers, with one indicating that volunteers are '*a vital part of allowing us to deliver services and build ongoing connection*.'

35% of organisations noted that more than 75% of their volunteers are bicultural or bilingual and use these skills while working with the organisation. A similar number (30%) indicated that less than 25% of their volunteers have or use these skills. 18% of respondents indicated that 50 – 75% of volunteers are bilingual or bicultural and 11% indicated that 25 – 50% of their volunteers had these skills.

40% of respondents stated that less than 25% of their volunteers were working with the organisation as a way to gain Australian work experience. 20% of respondents indicated that more than 75% of volunteers were using their experience for this purpose.

Case Study | Melaleuca Refugee Centre Family Harmony Program

The Family Harmony Program supports newly arrived refugees and migrants and their families as they settle into life in their new community. It helps families develop strategies for building strong, resilient and healthy family units. The program has been delivered, developed and refined for over 24 years.

The program includes a number of practical group activities that provide capacity building for parents. Many parents find their children adjust to life in Australia more quickly than them, leading to a loss of confidence in their role as parents and their parental authority. The group activities help them to regain their confidence. For example, one group session provides swimming lessons for adults to help them to feel more confident in the water and in their abilities to take their children to pools and supervise them.

The program has demonstrated that strengths-based community development approaches are central to successfully promoting healthy family relationships in refugee and migrant communities. It also shows that discreet practical skills, such as learning how to swim or ride a bike, can have a big impact on parent-child relationships.

Workforce qualifications

Organisations were asked to indicate the percentage of their workforce that holds formal qualifications in social work, human services, or community services. Almost 40% of respondents had a workforce where over 75% of staff held one of these qualifications. Almost 28% of respondents said that less than 25% of their workforce had relevant formal qualifications. Some respondents indicated that their staff had other formal qualifications that were relevant to the delivery of settlement services. Examples provided included health and medical, education, and cultural affairs qualifications.

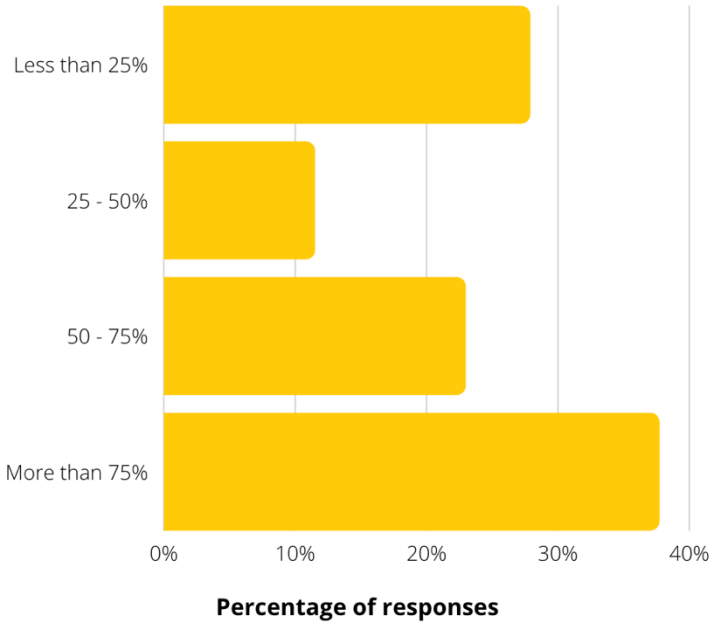

Figure 9 - Percentage of staff with formal qualifications in social work, human services or community services

SECTOR PRIORITIES FOR 2021

SECTOR PRIORITIES FOR 2021

Figure 10 - Word cloud of the industry's priorities for 2021

The *SCoA State of the Sector Survey 2020* identified that the three key priorities for the industry for 2021 are recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, provision of employment support services to clients, and securing funding.

COVID-19 recovery

Impact on workforce

Like all industries, the settlement sector has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have been required to adjust to a new way of working through online platforms and to develop the skills to do this rapidly. Staff have also had to adjust to a decrease in face to face interactions with colleagues and the benefits that come with this. Service providers are also increasing interaction with vulnerable communities to ensure that clients receive the support needed. As a result, working conditions and community requirements are regularly changing and organisations are working to keep up with these changing demands. This has included learning how to deliver therapeutic programs without face to face interactions.

There have been some positive consequences to the changes in the way that our industry works. For example, organisations have reported an increased participation in online information sessions; with some reporting a 500% increase in participation. There has also been an increase in joint events and information sessions, even between organisations that would not have previously collaborated on projects. Some organisations have reported that collaborations have become easier and more targeted in the current climate.

A key challenge is the loss of settlement expertise in the sector, due to settlement workers in the HSP obtaining employment in other sectors. This presents a risk to the

resumption of on-arrival programs, as this expertise is not easy to replace. The specialist skill of settlement is predominantly built through years of experience in the sector, and rebuilding lost expertise will be a challenge moving forward.

Impact on required services

Of course, there have also been impacts on the communities that are supported by the sector. There have been significant negative impacts on employment, housing, domestic and family violence and mental health. These circumstances create additional challenges for communities given the intersecting difficulties faced by some groups of clients. These impacts can be varied as the groups that are supported by the sector are not homogenous. For example, some clients are learning to use technology to access services and government support.

Some organisations have reported an increased demand for services and support that will continue into 2021. This includes requests for services from new groups, such as employeers who have had to stand down culturally diverse staff and recognise that they may require specialised assistance. There were also difficulties with delivering services and ensuring housing and food security during COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. Further lockdowns in 2021 are likely to stretch resources and result in increasing challenges to service delivery, particularly for more vulnerable groups. Service providers are working to ensure that government communications are available in different languages, can be understood by clients, and are received from a trusted source.

The sector will be working thorugh these challenges in 2021. Organisations are reaching out to health and community leaders to proactively respond to these challenges. The sector is also learning to understand how some potentially permanent changes to service delivery will be managed into the future.

Against this backdrop, some organisations which are heavily reliant on HSP funding are grappling with risks to their ongoing organisational viability. The loss of settlement organisations would reduce assistance available in certain local areas, and increase strain on other services.

Employment support

One of the biggest challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the impact on employment. Service providers have seen an increase in unemployment and requests for assistance from international students and temporary migrants. Many clients who have lost their jobs are either ineligible for commonwealth government support or have to wait for eight weeks or longer before payments are received. Support has also been sporadic and not continuous. Some clients face difficulty with accessing emergency relief due to language barriers. This has had flow on effects with people's ability to pay rent, bills and provide essentials for themselves and their families. There is now a greater need for mental health, family, and social support. Service providers are also seeing an increased need for child protection within families that are struggling with poverty as a result of job losses.

Another aspect of these job losses includes a lack of social support for certain groups. This has resulted in situations where insecure workers are increasingly working in unsafe conditions as a result of increased workplace exploitation. Organisations are prioritising the provision of employment support to help people to understand their rights in the workplace, get back to work, or to be provided with financial support. These efforts are likely to continue into the forseable future.

Funding

Funding for the services provided by our sector is often inadequate for the work that organisations are expected to undertake. There are often more clients who require settlement services than are eligible for services. Thus, despite many people being ineligible for particular settlement services, there are many people who still require assistance and some clients require intensive case management.

COVID-19 has had an impact on the three federally funded programs that make up a large portion of our sector's funding: the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program, and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The HSP, which operates on a fee-for-service model has been most affected by the pandemic due to border closures and a lack of new arrivals. Some organisations which are heavily reliant on HSP funding are concerened about their organisational sustainability.

The AMEP has also been affected by border closures because most enrolments in this program are new arrivals to the country. In 2020, the Federal Government expanded the eligibility criteria of the AMEP to allow services to be devlivered past the five-year time limit. Although this expansion of services has the potential to offset funding loses experienced due to border closures, it is not yet clear whether this will be sufficient in 2021.

The SETS program, which operates on the basis of a five-year grant is less effected as current contracts will end in 2022. However; there is some apprehension in the sector about what funding will look like post 2022 in light of the reduction in migrants. This is particularly concerning given the increased demand for settlement services due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, while the number of participants may drop, the demand for services continues to increase.

Given these difficulties, our sector is working to secure appropriate funding to ensure that settlement services can be delivered to our clients, particularly during the uncertainty of this pandemic.

During 2021, the sector will continue to advocate to sufficient funding from the Federal Government to deliver settlement services during increasingly uncertain times and to seek new funding opportunities to supplement this funding.

Case Study | Brotherhood of St Laurence COVID-19 Support

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's Youth Program works with young people aged 15 – 25 to support them to access education and employment support through one on one and group coaching. The pandemic required the Brotherhood of St Laurence to transition the youth program to an online format to ensure that young people remained connected and supported. This meant using the medium preferred by the young person to speak to them, creating WhatsApp and Facebook group chats, and using Instagram as a platform for people yo connect and chat to others.

Key challenges were the digital literacy of participants and their access to technology, as well as young people's willingness to enage online. However; by moving services to online platforms after having developed rapport with clients, the Brotherhood of St Laurence has been able to maintain its connection with them.

SUPPORTING THE SECTOR

Supporting the Sector in 2021

SCoA has heard the sector loud and clear and will be working to assist members during 2021 in a number of ways, outlined below.

1. *Informing the review of settlement services*
In 2020, the federal government embarked on a program of reform in settlement services to strengthen settlement and employment outcomes for migrants and refugees. We will be working closely with the Department of Home Affairs to ensure the reforms do achieve their intent in resulting in stronger settlement outcomes. This will include advocacy around the priorities articulated below.

Settlement organisations widely acknowledge current policy and programming around settlement services does not optimise outcomes, and that there are a range reforms that would improve settlement. At the same time, it will be critical to ensure the reforms do not inadvertently diminish the capacity of settlement organisations to deliver services.

2. *Increase resources to the settlement sector*
We will be advocating for increased resources for the settlement sector to support activities during these difficult times.

3. *Raise awareness of the sector's work*
We will undertake activities which highlight the rich experience and unique competence we have in delivering settlement services and the significant positive impact that we have on migrants and refugees and on Australia's social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

4. *Strengthen workforce capacity*
We will help the industry to develop its capacity to deliver settlement services through continuing to deliver our full-day training sessions and other training opportunities, facilitating opportunities for settlement workers to connect with each other, sharing examples of best practice, and developing and sharing resources to help settlement workers in their practice.

5. *Building the credibility of the sector and ensuring consistency in service delivery*
We will be exploring the development of an accreditation framework for the sector, supporting consistent monitoring and evaluation across the sector, and looking at other ways to increase trust in settlement services.

6. *Expanding eligibility for the SETS program*
We will continue to advocate for the removal of the 5 year limitation on eligibility, as well as an expansion of the visa categories eligible for SETS.

7. *Building the evidence base*
We will continue to work with the sector to develop an evidence base to support our advocacy through embedding monitoring and evaluation, undertaking surveys as needed, working with universities to conduct research, and regular consultation with our members.