



Settlement  
Council  
of Australia

# 2022 Election Platform

## What is Settlement?

Settlement is a two-way process of migrants and refugees adjusting to life in Australia, and Australia welcoming and adjusting to newcomers. All people who migrate to Australia, whether by force or choice, undergo this process. It is a non-linear process – settlement needs can arise over the life course. For example, someone may not need to learn to navigate the disability services system when they first arrive but may require this support many years later. Settlement is also inter-generational, with children and young people born to migrant parents navigating adjusting between cultures. Australia's settlement sector services all migrants and refugees, no matter how long they have been in Australia, and no matter what visa they arrived on. Effective settlement for all migrants and refugees leads to social cohesion and fuller economic participation.

### About SCoA

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) is the peak body representing services across Australia supporting new migrants and refugees. We are committed to building an Australia where every migrant and refugee feels at home, together with our membership which is over 110 members strong and counting. We are a trusted source of policy advice, and a thought leader on enhancing the economic and social inclusion of migrants and refugees.

SCoA's network is Australia's single largest body of experts in working with migrant and refugee communities, and in cultural responsiveness. We have leveraged this extensive grassroots network in informing our vision and key asks for the 2022 Federal Election.

# Our vision for the future.

We want to see all migrants and refugees thriving in Australia, and all parts of Australian society valuing and celebrating diversity.

To achieve this, Australia needs to have strong services that:

- Are tailored to the individual, family, and community needs of migrants and refugees
- Build the skills and capabilities of migrants and refugees;
- Build the capacity of broader communities and Australian society to be inclusive of migrants and refugees; and
- Represent the voices of migrants and refugees to drive change at the systems-level.



# Our Asks.



**Recognise the settlement sector as a critical pillar of Australia's social infrastructure, by expanding and reforming settlement services.**

SCoA calls on all political parties to recognise our sector as a fundamental part of Australia's social infrastructure, similarly to sectors such as disability services, housing, aged care, and others. Our sector services a large segment of society and responds to critical needs.

However, at present, the sector is underutilised and its resources are not used in the most efficient way to deliver good outcomes. We propose a series of reforms outlined below to strengthen Australia's infrastructure to support our multicultural population.

Specifically, we recommend the following reforms to settlement services:

- (a) Broaden the eligibility of services, so that access to settlement services is based on need rather than visa pathway.**
- (b) Increase funding to the sector to ensure it is commensurate to the significant social and economic outcomes expected of settlement services.**
- (c) Increase flexibility in contracts so that settlement providers can respond to the bespoke needs of individuals, families, and communities, acknowledging that no two settlement journeys are the same.**
- (d) Embed intersectionality by creating space for the delivery of services specifically tailored to refugee and migrant women, youths, children, the elderly, LGBTQIA+, people with disability and others.**
- (e) Ensure settlement funding is attuned to the younger demographic of migrants and refugees compared to the broader population by focusing on the settlement needs of children and young people.**
- (f) Reduce the problematically high administrative burden on settlement providers, ensuring more funding reaches clients, rather than being devoted to compliance.**
- (g) Undertake a consultative process together with migrant and refugee communities and settlement service providers to develop an outcomes framework that aligns with the aspirations of migrants and refugees, gathers meaningful data, and provides a useful evidence base for settlement.**



**(h) Increase funding specifically for settlement services to engage in community development work, community coordination, and volunteer engagement, so that services are building the settlement capacity of local migrant and refugee communities as well as broader communities.**

**(i) Ensure complementarity between different service offerings and funded organisations within settlement funding, to maximise the use of available funds and avoid duplication. This includes ensuring the intake of refugees through the new community sponsorship model is additional to the existing humanitarian intake.**

In designing and implementing these reforms it is critical to engage meaningfully with migrant and refugee communities, as well as to listen to the expertise of settlement service providers accumulated over decades of providing settlement services. Reforms that do not meaningfully engage at the grassroots level often result in the weakening of the sector, rather than strengthening it.

Good settlement ensures that migration yields the social and economic outcomes intended by the migration program. When individuals, families, and communities feel they belong in society and are thriving, the result is a socially cohesive and prosperous society overall. With migration being a key pillar of Australia's economic recovery following COVID-19, the effective use of our sector will be more critical than ever. Australia typically welcomes more than 150,000 migrants and refugees per year, who go on to shape Australia's shifting demographics. In this context it is critical that settlement services are recognised as a critical pillar of Australia's social infrastructure, and reforms are undertaken to position it as such.







## **Re-instate Social and Community Services (SACS) Supplementation funding for the settlement sector.**

In addition to reviewing overall funding for the sector as outlined above, SCoA urges the incoming government to urgently provide SACS supplementation funding for relevant settlement contracts, as has been done for all other government funded services affected by the expiry of SACS supplementation funding.

The health, social and community services workforce is predominantly female, and has been recognised as under-valued and underpaid. That is why the Fair Work Commission brought the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) in 2012, to achieve pay parity for work of equal value. At the time this order was made, the Federal Government chose to phase in equal pay for wages covered by the Social and Community Services (SACS) Award by providing organisations with supplementary payments over at least eight years. These payments expired in the 2020-21 Financial Year.

Almost all social services funded by the Federal Government have had this funding either renewed or had their contracts renegotiated to reflect the increased cost of wages. However, federally funded settlement services which previously received SACS supplementation funding have not had this renewed, or had their contracts renegotiated to reflect increased wages.

This is not consistent with the current whole of government commitment to increase base funding for programs impacted by the cessation of SACS Funding Supplementation on 30 June 2021,<sup>1</sup> or the Government's commitment to gender equality in the 2021 Women's Economic Security Statement.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Services (2020), Supporting social and community services sector workers: Budget 2020-21, available online at: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/10\\_2020/supporting-social-and-community-services-sector-workers.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/10_2020/supporting-social-and-community-services-sector-workers.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



## **Reinvigorate Australia's Access and Equity Policy**

SCoA encourages all parties to commit to reviewing and reenacting the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy into Australian Government programs and services, consistent with calls by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA).<sup>3</sup>

The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy acknowledges that we live in a multicultural society and that the Australian Government has an obligation to ensure its programs and services are accessible by all eligible Australians, that they respond to their needs, and that they deliver equitable outcomes regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.<sup>4</sup>

In 2022, According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, almost half of Australians (49 percent) were either born overseas (first generation Australians) or had parents born overseas (second generation Australians). A total of over 300 languages are spoken in Australian homes, with more than one fifth (21 per cent) of Australians speaking a language other than English.<sup>5</sup> The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy is more important than ever, however there is little evidence of its current implementation within government.

SCoA asks that all parties ensure that the policy is relaunched with a firm commitment to the policy guidelines that state that every year, all Australian government departments, and agencies must report on their multicultural access and equity performance, and that there will be a broader three-year review and whole-of-government report.

In addition, SCoA would like to see a committee established to review and update the current version of the policy.

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<sup>3</sup> Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (2022), FECCA's Policy Platform 2022, available online at: <https://fecca.org.au/policy-platform-2022/>.

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2018), The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Guide for Australian Government Departments and Agencies, available online at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/PDFs/multicultural-access-equity-policy-guide.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017), Census reveals a fast changing, culturally diverse nation, available online at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/media%20release3>



## **Embed specialist multicultural services and approaches across all aspects of social services**

We call on the incoming government to ensure there are specialist services for migrants and refugees across all key social services and programs.

We welcome moves towards recognising the specialist approaches needed to ensure migrants and refugees receive services that result in equitable outcomes. For example, we welcome the decision to ensure there are specialist employment services for migrants and refugees in the rollout of new employment services through Workforce Australia. There are many other aspects of social service provision that would benefit from dedicated culturally tailored services, including health services (including mental health services), family services, domestic and family violence services, legal services, and others.

This approach is critical to reflecting an intersectional approach to settlement, which resists migrants and refugees being placed in a singular category with singular needs viewed only through the prism of their migration experience. Migrants and refugees experience all the same needs as other Australians, only these intersect with cultural, faith, and migration backgrounds. Therefore, it is critical that there not only be funding for generalist migrant and refugee services and programs, but also initiatives that address the specific needs of refugee and migrant women, youth, children, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ and others.<sup>6</sup>

The implementation of specialist streams of services is also consistent with the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy. Equal access requires both culturally competent mainstream services, as well as culturally tailored specialist services. Rather than being phrased as an either or – the choice between a mainstream or specialist service should come down to client choice and agency. However, this choice only exists insofar as the different service options are available and accessible. Moreover, by funding specialist services the government increases the capacity and evidence base for effective culturally responsive services, which then provides a resource for mainstream services to improve their accessibility to migrant and refugee communities.

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<sup>6</sup> We specifically draw attention to the Youth Transition Support Program which was extended in the most recent Federal Budget, but is only presently available in three cities rendering it inaccessible to a large proportion of young migrants and refugees.





## Implement a national housing strategy

We support calls by colleagues in other sectors for a national housing strategy that addresses all aspects of the housing system including homeownership, private rental and social housing.

The issue of adequate and affordable housing affects not only migrants and refugees, but all Australians. However, a lack of rental history and disparities in incomes exacerbate the impacts of a lack of affordable housing for many migrants and refugees.

Although Australia has made impressive global commitments to assert the right to adequate housing, unaffordability, and inaccessibility of housing across all cities and regions have remained barriers to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.<sup>7</sup> SCoA stands with various organisations who have been calling upon the Federal Government to take comprehensive and urgent action to address housing affordability.<sup>8</sup>

We particularly support the following:

- To plan for, fund and implement a national housing strategy that addresses all aspects of the housing system including homeownership, private rental and social housing.
- A national housing strategy will provide an integrated and coherent plan with consistent policy governing a national approach to addressing the housing crisis in Australia.<sup>9</sup>
- Upscale the supply of social housing in order to reduce the risk of homelessness for people living on low incomes, and members of the CALD community.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Article 11 of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing (2006), Miloon Kothari Mission to Australia, available at: <http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content2/c7/United%20Nations%20Special%20Rapporteur%20on%20Adequate%20Housing%20-%20Mission%20to%20Australia%202006.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Compass Housing, whose submission is available at: <https://www.compasshousing.org/towards-national-housing-strategy>; National Shelter, whose submission is available at: <http://shelter.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/National-Shelter-Policy-Platform-amended-and-approved-220318.pdf>; ACROSS Election Priorities 2022, available at: <https://www.acoss.org.au/election-2022/election-social-housing/>

<sup>9</sup>This is consistent with calls by Compass Housing, whose submission is available at: <https://www.compasshousing.org/towards-national-housing-strategy>; and National Shelter, whose submission is available at: <http://shelter.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/National-Shelter-Policy-Platform-amended-and-approved-220318.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>This is consistent with the ACROSS Election Priorities 2022, available at: <https://www.acoss.org.au/election-2022/election-social-housing/>



## **Invest in the infrastructure, coordination and services needed to meet Australia's regional migration targets**

We ask the incoming government to ensure commitments to increasing regional migration are supported with the planning, funding, and infrastructure to ensure migrants and refugees are effectively supported and retained in regional areas. Revitalisation of regional areas has been on the national agenda for the past decade.

The Federal government has put in place several incentives to promote regional development, including promoting regional migration under the skilled, humanitarian and family migration pathways to Australia. Regional settlement addresses the population decline and labour shortages that have been looming across all regions. It provides social, cultural, and economic benefits for regional communities.<sup>11</sup>

SCoA encourages the next Federal government to continue pushing for and implementing the regional settlement agenda as a national priority. However, for a more viable and sustainable regional settlement program, SCoA recommends the following:

- Develop a national settlement strategy that promotes regional settlement, in collaboration with states and territories, the settlement sector, and other critical stakeholders.
- Increase funding for the settlement sector including:
  - Adopting a new funding model that is geared towards attracting migrants to regions and retaining them, in addition to servicing existing migrant populations; and
  - Resourcing and equipping settlement services in regional areas to build the capacity of local communities and services to be more welcoming and culturally responsive, recognising a sense of welcome is critical to retaining migrant populations in regional areas.
- Ensuring infrastructure such as housing supply, transport, internet, and public services are adequate in identified regional settlement locations.

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<sup>11</sup> For more detailed information on regional settlement refer to SCoA Policy Paper, 2021, "Exploring Options for Regional Settlement" available at: <https://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SCoA-Regional-Settlement-Policy-Paper.pdf>