



# 2019 Federal Election Policy Platform

## Introduction

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) is Australia's national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

This Election Platform presents the key issues and recommendations concerning young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the lead up to the 2019 Australian Federal election. This platform provides a national perspective, drawing on MYAN's breadth of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors across Australia. It has a focus on the rights and interests of young people (12 to 24 year olds) from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Australia.

In this Election Platform, MYAN is calling for more attention to policies and strategies that will ensure better youth settlement outcomes, including through promoting access to education and employment, providing opportunities for youth participation and leadership, addressing disadvantage and promoting social cohesion.

## Why a platform for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds?

The 2016 census revealed that just under half of Australia's young people were either first or second generation migrants and one in four Australians aged 18 to 24 years were born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Australia's Migration Program sees thousands of new Australians arrive each year - one in every three of whom will likely be aged under 25 years. Just under a third of arrivals in the Humanitarian Program will likely be aged between 12 and 24 years and more than half aged between 18 and 25 years. Cultural diversity is our reality and our strength.

Australia's multiculturalism is unique and the success of social cohesion in this country has made our settlement program recognised across the world. But such success can be easily undone. Fear, intolerance and isolation are real threats to social cohesion. Careful investment and nurturing are required to continue to build and support a successful multicultural society that affords all its members opportunities to participate fully and meaningfully.

MYAN's recommendations are designed to build on Australia's successes and to address identified issues. They are based on the understanding that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds demonstrate high levels of resilience and resourcefulness but commonly face particular barriers to accessing the support and opportunities they need to reach their potential. These include language, culture, limited social capital, unfamiliarity with Australian systems and processes, lack of cultural competency within the service system and racism and discrimination. These factors can place young people at social and economic disadvantage within Australian society, which in turn can place them at higher risk of disengagement and social isolation. MYAN believes targeted, specialist approaches are essential to supporting youth settlement and the social, cultural and economic participation of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australian society.

## National Youth Settlement Framework

In 2016, MYAN launched the National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF), an evidence-based framework to support and measure the successful settlement and integration of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The NYSF focuses on four key "domains" and indicators to promote active citizenship - Social Participation, Economic Participation, Civic Participation and Personal Well-Being - and includes a set of Good Practice Capabilities and practical assessment tools.

This Policy Platform uses the NYSF as a basis for highlighting what the Federal Government can do to enable the effective settlement of young people by investing in programs and strategies that advance a strong, cohesive multicultural community. This requires leadership, targeted policy and programming, investments based on sound evidence, and direct engagement with young people in the planning and delivery of programs and services that support them to realise their potential.

As a member of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), MYAN also supports AYAC's call for the following:

- A federal Minister for Youth
- A National Youth Plan
- A funded national voice for all young Australians.

For further information please contact MYAN's National Coordinator, Nadine Liddy, on [nadine@myan.org.au](mailto:nadine@myan.org.au)

## DOMAIN: ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

### 1. EDUCATION & TRAINING



#### SETTING THE SCENE

Access to targeted and responsive education and training is one of the most significant factors influencing the settlement process for young people. Most young people and their families arrive in Australia with high aspirations, and success in their education is a key goal. However, succeeding in mainstream education and training can be challenging.

Education provides necessary job-related skills and knowledge for young people, as well as supporting their capacity to become autonomous, have self-confidence and empathy, and be able to problem solve. These skills and assets are increasingly essential for navigating a rapidly changing economic, technological, social and global environment for young people, including those from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds (and their families) are often less aware of possible education pathways (especially vocational education and training apprenticeships and traineeships) which may lead to employment pathways that suit their interests and desires.

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds can face specific disadvantage staying engaged in education and training pathways, as they:

- Are often required to learn a new language in an unfamiliar learning environment
- May have limited, interrupted or no formal schooling prior to their arrival in Australia.
- May have limited knowledge of the Australian education and training system

If used as intended, the Gonski funding model (with needs-based loadings under the Education Act) can address inequity in our school system and provide the necessary support that students from refugee and migrant backgrounds need to reach their potential. However, the categorisation of loadings risks overlooking the supports young people need at schools as it does not recognise the broader context of settlement for young people.

Significant changes in the “world of work” means new approaches are needed in the education system to prepare young people and their families for these new demands of work-life.

Read MYAN's submission on improving Australia's education system for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds [here](#).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Implement the recommendations from the Inquiry Report on School Funding in relation to monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that Federal Government funding intended for students with limited English is only used for these students.
- Fund specialist staff and programs in schools, including multicultural youth workers, to support young people to remain in education.
- Ensure families are included in and informed about the Australian education system, and training and employment pathways, both within and outside school.
- Develop and utilise data collection mechanisms that accurately measure access, engagement and track the educational progress of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in schools and post-school education (including TAFE and VET).
- Fund the TAFE/VET sector adequately to ensure that there are appropriate and accessible programs nationally for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds (including asylum seekers and TPV/SHEV holders).
- Ensure that teachers have adequate training and resources to understand and respond to pre-arrival trauma and the complexities of settlement. This includes resources to support engagement with family members.

## 2. EMPLOYMENT



### SETTING THE SCENE

Economic participation - including access to employment - is fundamental to the successful settlement for all migrants and refugees, particularly young people, who will spend the majority of their working life in Australia.

Youth unemployment for the general youth population is over 10% - almost three times the rate for the general population aged 25 and over<sup>1</sup>. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face particular disadvantages in accessing employment due to:

- Limited English language skills
- Lack of understanding about post compulsory training options/pathways
- Lack of awareness about Australian workplace culture and expectations
- Lack of familiarity with employment services and Australian systems
- Negotiating family expectations regarding training and career options
- Experiences of racism and discrimination in looking for work and at work
- Limited social capital and networks, including links with employers
- Limited exposure to a range of career options
- Lack of recognition of prior learning and/or training
- Racism and discrimination in the labour market and unconscious bias from employers in relation to the capabilities and assets of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds need targeted programs that are responsive to their needs and context.

Read MYAN's submission to the Inquiry on Settlement/Integration with Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes [here](#).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Ensure that any future federally funded employment services incorporate specialist services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Incorporate accountability measures for cultural competency into funding guidelines and agreements for all federal-funded employment programs.
- Expand the Youth Transition Support Services to be delivered in all states and territories as a fully funded program.

### 3. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING



#### SETTING THE SCENE

English language acquisition is a critical part of settlement for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Their access to education and employment is highly dependent on their being able to successfully acquire English language skills.

Young people who come to Australia as refugees or migrants commonly demonstrate a remarkable capacity to learn English and succeed in education and employment regardless of their English language capability prior to arrival.

The previous level of education and the level of literacy in one's mother language both have a major impact on the rate at which a young person learns a new language. In addition, young refugees and migrants who have experienced trauma and loss (which is not uncommon for refugees) may experience ongoing impacts on their learning. As such, young people may require specific interventions in order to improve language learning.

Young people have access to English language tuition either in schools, via the English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) program provided to school aged students in Australia and delivered through specific English Language Schools (ELSs) or Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs) in each state and territory, or through youth-specific Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) (those post-school age and/or aged 15 to 17 who are out of school). However, the set periods and/or number of hours young people can access English language tuition via these programs, and limited funding provision and accountability structures for funding, fail to provide young people with adequate tuition to acquire proficiency in English to successfully negotiate Australia's mainstream education and training or employment systems.

In order to acquire sufficient levels of English for successful engagement in mainstream education and the transition to further education, training and employment, young people need targeted and responsive supports. This includes provision of professional development to teachers /other school staff.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Develop a National EAL/D Framework to guide, direct and monitor funding allocations for English language learning in schools, including:
  - Increased funding transparency, accountability and utilisation for schools with an EAL/D cohort.
  - Nationally consistent definitions, measurements and cost structures that reflect the education needs of students and ensure the most vulnerable students receive the support they need.
  - Supporting EAL learning in and outside the classroom.
  - Removing restrictions on the maximum period young people can attend English Language Schools (ELSs) or Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs).
- Provide employment-specific and industry-specific opportunities for language learning for young people in and out of schools.
- Develop a national youth strategy for AMEP to ensure that young people's needs are adequately met through the program, including:
  - Targeted funding for the delivery of youth-specific courses by AMEP service providers nationally, for clients under the age of 25 out of school or post school.
  - Investment in greater linkages between AMEP and youth settlement services as essential to the provision of AMEP.
  - Increased flexibility and expanded eligibility for all young people to access AMEP within the first five years of arrival.

## 4. HOUSING



### SETTING THE SCENE

Children and young people make up over 40% of Australians facing homelessness. In 2017-2018, 15% of Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) users presenting alone were young people, and Sudan was the country of origin of the third highest population group accessing services<sup>2</sup>.

While there is no clear homelessness data on young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are overrepresented in presentation to SHS and we do know that this group of young people face a complex mix of factors that may mean they are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

These include:

- Challenges understanding and accessing services and support often impacted by disrupted education, managing language acquisition and cultural adjustment
- Lack of family and/or extended social support networks
- Lack of financial and material resources
- The challenges of changed family composition and/or family breakdown
- Overcrowded housing

Given the vulnerability to social exclusion and homelessness, it is vital that the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are explicitly recognised and addressed in any policies, programs and plans to tackle homelessness.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2017-18/contents/clients-services-and-outcomes>

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Continue funding for the Reconnect Specialist program beyond June 2021 and further expand specialist Reconnect providers in high/new settlement areas.
- Develop a National Housing Strategy that includes suitable social housing options / models specifically for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Reinstate data collection in homelessness services on age, country of birth and ethnicity to measure and improve program delivery for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Incorporate accountability measures for cultural competency into funding guidelines and agreements for specialist and mainstream homelessness agencies.
- Include targeted approaches to address the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in future policy and programming for homelessness services.

# DOMAINS: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

## 5. SETTLEMENT SUPPORT



### SETTING THE SCENE

Young people make up a significant proportion of Australia's Migration Program and Humanitarian Program. In the 2017/18 financial year, young people aged 12 to 24 made up 26% of all arrivals under the Humanitarian Program, 21% of the Family stream and 7% of the Skill stream of the Migration Program. They comprise 14% of all arrivals under all migration categories. Young people aged 18 to 24 made up 59% of youth arrivals in all migration categories and more than half (51%) of the humanitarian youth arrivals<sup>3</sup>.

Young people have particular settlement needs and face particular barriers in accessing the support they require to ensure their full participation in Australian society. They experience settlement differently to adults due to their age, developmental stage and role within the family, and commonly face additional and more complex transitions than their Australian-born, non-immigrant counterparts.

Unaccompanied minors face additional vulnerabilities. Australia is one of very few resettlement countries that resettles unaccompanied minors, and has a long history of providing support to this cohort to settle well.

Australia has a well-established and globally recognised settlement services system, and the last five years has seen an increase in youth-focused settlement support. MYAN has developed the National Youth Settlement Framework to support and measure good practice in youth settlement and continues to support its implementation across Australia.

However, MYAN is concerned that the youth focus in generalist settlement services is not matched with adequate resourcing to ensure their needs are met. Targeted, flexible, resourced and coordinated support from the early stages of settlement is critical to ensuring that young people receive the support they need to build a successful life in Australia.

Youth participation and engagement are essential for strengthening (and better coordination of investment in) youth-specific settlement supports. Young people have valuable opinions and insights which they are most capable of sharing provided they are given the space and support to do so.

MYAN was also disappointed to see the decommissioning of the Settlement Reporting Facility as this was the only publicly available source of detailed data on settlement arrivals to inform adequate allocation of resourcing, especially to areas of new/high settlement.

Read MYAN's submission to the Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes [here](#).

Read MYAN's submission to the Federal Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes [here](#).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Continue to fund MYAN Australia and invest in MYAN state/territory partners as coordination mechanism for strengthening youth settlement support.
- Adopt and implement a National Youth Settlement Strategy to guide and support the effective settlement of young people, including in any regional settlement plans.
- Ensure that all settlement support programs include guidance, using the NYSF, as well as adequate resourcing to deliver youth-specific support.
- Ensure all migrant young people who are facing situations of vulnerability are eligible for settlement support, regardless of the visa sub-class of their parents.
- Increase the size of the Humanitarian Program and establish a pilot resettlement program for unaccompanied children and young people.
- Ensure that Australia meets all its obligations as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) in relation to the care and support of children and young people, including those in immigration detention and/or those seeking asylum.
- Restore the availability of current settlement data via an online platform.

## 6. CIVIC & SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



### SETTING THE SCENE

Australia benefits greatly from the economic, social and cultural advantages gained from a diverse, socially cohesive society. The successful settlement of refugees and migrants is a two-way process, requiring active commitment both by new arrivals and also by the Australian community.

Disengagement and disadvantage of individuals and communities in our society directly threatens our social cohesion, and the benefits our diversity brings. Negative experiences such as racism and discrimination can have a devastating impact on individuals and their chances of achieving successful settlement in Australia. Experiences of racism and discrimination can lead to mental health and wellbeing problems for young people, including anxiety, stress, depression and poor quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the reported experience of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin and religion to 19% in 2018 from 9% in 2007.<sup>5</sup> Around a quarter of young people between 18 and 24 years of age reported experiencing discrimination with people from non-English speaking backgrounds reporting the highest experience of discrimination (25%).<sup>6</sup>

Negative public sentiment and media significantly influence young people's views of themselves, their sense of belonging and inclusion/exclusion in Australian society. The impact of leadership statements on community harmony and social cohesion should not be underestimated, especially those that misrepresent and stereotype refugee and migrant young people in public narratives. Conversations and debate should be evidence-based, focus on the successes and positive contributions of migrants to Australia and include the voices of young people.

Investment in programs and policies that not only discourage discrimination but that promote social cohesion and cultural diversity is required. Wherever possible these should be co-designed with young people to ensure they are relevant to their needs and build on their capabilities and existing leadership in this area.

One important avenue is sport and recreation as a tool for inclusion and social cohesion.

Read MYAN's guide to Youth Participation with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds [here](#)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Extend investment in initiatives that have demonstrated success in developing young people's leadership skills and facilitate their civic and social participation.
- Develop a National Youth Leadership Initiative to support young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to develop and implement strategies that build social cohesion, civic and social participation.
- Develop a national sport and recreation inclusion program to facilitate partnerships between the sporting industry and multicultural sectors.
- Re-invest in and expand the national Anti-Racism Strategy and related campaigns and programs, including a wide range of community and school-based programs.
- Reject misrepresentations and stereotyping of refugee and migrant young people in public narratives and ensure strong political leadership to support rather than undermine social cohesion.
- Cease using the visa cancellations regime to respond to youth offending, especially for young people under 18 years.
- Explicitly exclude children/young people under the age of 18 in any reference to visa cancellations in legislation and guidance.

<sup>4</sup> VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO & MYAN (2017) Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Markus, A (2018), Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2018. Caulfield East: Monash University, pp. 68-69.

<sup>6</sup> Markus, A (2018), Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2018. Caulfield East: Monash University, p. 67.

## DOMAIN: PERSONAL WELLBING

### 7. HEALTH & WELLBEING



#### SETTING THE SCENE

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face a number of health risk factors in addition to those of the general youth population. Young asylum seekers and those from refugee backgrounds may face additional health issues as a result of lack of access to inadequate or timely health care over many years prior to arriving in Australia. This can be complicated by an unfamiliarity with and access to Australia's healthcare system.

The mental health of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds can be impacted by:

- Pre and post arrival traumatic experiences (including experiences in immigration detention)
- Experiences of racism and discrimination in Australia
- Unemployment and financial stress
- Challenges in learning a new language, navigating a new education system
- The impact of settlement on family dynamics and intergenerational conflict
- Negotiating issues of belonging and identity in a cross-cultural context
- Different understandings of mental health and associated stigma
- Limited understanding of the service system and/or access to culturally and youth appropriate support

We know that access and participation in sports, arts, and recreational programs is an important social determinant of health. Providing accessible, youth-focused health services can help to address these issues. Building a young person's sense of social connection and inclusion in the Australian community is also a critical part of improving health and wellbeing.

*Read more about improving the health and wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds [here](#).*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- Ensure Federal funding for youth health and mental health services (i.e. headspace) includes dedicated resources and specialised staff to build cultural capability using the National Youth Settlement Framework, to meet the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Incorporate accountability measures for cultural competency into the funding guidelines and agreements for all youth health and youth mental health services.
- Develop and invest in best practice models/initiatives that strengthen the protective factors for the physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Ensure that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have equal access to NDIS, including ongoing access to NDIS for unaccompanied minors on temporary protection visas (TPVs and SHEVs) after they turn 18 and exit the UHM Program.
- Research and address the specific impacts of domestic and family violence (DVE), forced marriage and forced servitude on young people.
- Develop a national youth health policy that recognises the specific needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and includes a focus on the social determinants of health.

# SPOTLIGHT: ASYLUM SEEKERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON TEMPORARY PROTECTION VISAS



## SETTING THE SCENE

Young people who are seeking asylum in Australia and those on temporary protection visas (TPVs and SHEVs) commonly have complex and diverse needs due to the acute uncertainty of seeking protection and vulnerabilities due to their immigration status.

These young people commonly experience high levels of stress and a complex mix of mental and physical health issues that often continue beyond the granting of a visa. Of the young people living in the community on bridging visas and temporary protection visas, most would have experienced some form of detention since seeking asylum in Australia.

Young people who are seeking asylum and on temporary protection visas face additional health issues due to a range of factors including time spent in detention, separation from family and community, stress caused by their uncertain future, financial pressures, and lack of access to health services.

Current policy means that these young people have very little to no chance of family reunion. Separation from family can add significantly to the challenges of settlement and have negative impacts on health and wellbeing, education and employment.

For young people, being in limbo for long periods of time as asylum seekers and then on temporary protection visas:

- Compounds the effects of trauma and impedes recovery
- Hinders their capacity to establish long term goals and settle, and
- Inhibits their sense of security and belonging.

Recent changes in the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program have left many asylum seekers destitute. MYAN is especially concerned about the likely impacts these changes will have on the long-term health and wellbeing of young people.

While MYAN is pleased to see that children have been removed from Nauru, some of those still held in detention on Nauru and Manus Island are aged between 18 and 30. They remain with no clear pathway out of offshore detention and, many have spent critical developmental years in this environment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Government should:

- End mandatory immigration detention in Australia and offshore both in legislation and practice for children and young people.
- Immediately restore access to the SRSS program for all people seeking asylum until a resolution of their status is complete.
- Abolish the temporary protection visa system and reinstate permanent protection visas for all people seeking asylum consistent with Australia's international obligations under the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees.
- Ensure that Australia meets all its obligations as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) in relation to the care and support of children seeking asylum.

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