

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN Australia)

Submission to Discussion Paper: Next
steps to improve Australia's settlement
and integration of refugees

May, 2022

About MYAN

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people aged 12-24 from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Our vision is that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are supported, valued and thriving in Australia. MYAN works in partnership with young people, government, and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure the particular needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised in policy and service delivery.

MYAN provides expert policy advice to government, undertakes a range of sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership and advocacy skills. MYAN affirms the importance of recognising and building on young people's strengths and capabilities, and working with them as partners in service planning and delivery.

We have developed the National Youth Settlement Framework which is the first and only framework to guide and measure integration and settlement support for young people, providing an evidence-based approach to good practice. It is designed to build the capacity of government and non-government sectors, enabling them to better respond to the needs of young people in the settlement and integration context. Since its release in 2016, MYAN has worked with a range of government and non-government stakeholders to support the implementation of the Framework in policy and service delivery through a range of sector capability building activities.

Our work in strengthening the settlement service system with respect to young people includes:

- Working with Unaccompanied Minors, providing policy advice and sharing good practice with other settlement countries
- Chairing and participating a broad range of national working groups focused on improving settlement outcomes for young people
- Developing and implementing the world's first Youth Settlement Framework
- Hosting Australia's only national multicultural youth forum 'FUSE' which builds the leadership capacity of young migrants and refugees.
- Contributing to key international reports including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 25 years Australian Progress Report
- Delivering national training on supporting young people seeking asylum and the National Youth Settlement Framework
- Commissioning the CALD Youth Census Report: Australia's first-ever census analysis of culturally diverse young people
- Coordinating the Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC) in Australia with Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)
- Supporting young leaders to participate in a range of international forums, including UNHCR international meetings

Youth settlement

The Australian Governments continued investment in and support of settlement services has ensured that Australia delivers some of the world's best settlement practice. A noteworthy evolution in Australia's settlement service system is the development of youth specific settlement programmes to support positive settlement outcomes for young people; a response made in recognition of the complexity of adolescent development and, it is complementary to settlement programmes for adults.

We welcome this opportunity to provide feedback about how changes to settlement services and how they are delivered could continue to further improve settlement outcomes, with a particular focus on optimal youth settlement outcomes. Supporting effective youth settlement is critical to ensuring that young people from refugee backgrounds reach their potential as active citizens, and are able to fully contribute to, and benefit from, Australian society. Young people have their own unique challenges within the settlement journey, and therefore need a distinct and targeted approach to settlement.

As Australia plans to recover from the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, and as our Migration Program prepares to once again respond to existing and emerging migration crises across the world, MYAN believes now is an opportune time to reflect on, and review the existing successes, strengths, and gaps of the current settlement service system.

Why is it important to apply a youth-lens to settlement?

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are a diverse group who are immensely resilient, with an array of strengths and resources. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds arrive in settlement countries with a range of capabilities and are important actors in building strong and resilient communities. However, they often face particular challenges in realising their potential – in accessing the support and opportunities they need, and to which they are entitled, to navigate the demands of settling in a new country.

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds experience settlement differently to adults and younger children due to their age, developmental stage, role within the family and the role they play in supporting their family and community in the settlement journey. Their settlement needs are distinct from, and sometimes more complex, than those of adults and younger children. These needs often go unrecognised and unmet as they are commonly seen as a sub-set of the broader youth and settlement sectors. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds require a targeted approach in policy and service delivery in order to most effectively capitalise on their strengths, address their particular needs, and ensure they are able to realise their potential. Achieving good settlement outcomes for young people benefits the whole of society – individuals, families and communities – and supports cultural diversity, social cohesion and inclusion.

Response to discussion paper questions

1. How do we ensure there is good coordination between our settlement services and English learning, employment and health services, to ensure an end to end approach to service delivery?

Improved coordination and referral pathways

After HSP ceases, some young people require no further support, while others will be referred to the SETS and mainstream services to meet ongoing or future needs. MYAN is aware that the transition from HSP can be especially challenging for young people, leading to disengagement, poor service utilisation, and some young people falling through service gaps.

There is currently no overarching plan or strategy to guide services in a coordinated approach to the support and referral of newly arrived young people as they settle over time (i.e. from 'on-arrival' through to the 5-year limit of Commonwealth settlement services). This is particularly apparent for young people who have transitioned out of HSP and are in the early stages of needing multifaceted support interventions.

While there is focus on youth and youth services within SETS, MYAN is concerned that in the states and territories where there are no multicultural youth specialist service providers, young people are not being referred into this important source of support.

Alternative models, based on collaboration and coordination across and within settlement systems and mainstream services, do exist and provide a continuity of services to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds throughout their settlement journey, preventing and reducing crisis events. However, these multicultural youth specialist models are not nationally consistent.

We recommend the development of a national youth settlement strategy to support a more targeted, consistent and coordinated approach to meeting the settlement needs of young people.

See Appendix 1.

MYAN Proposal Summary

As national leaders in the youth settlement space, MYAN has prepared a proposal for an innovative approach to youth settlement that capitalises on the existing successes of Australia's globally renowned settlement service system, and responds to existing and emerging service system gaps.

The Multicultural Youth Settlement Services (MYSS) model applies a national youth settlement lens to the entirety of the settlement service system. The model proposes a consultative and collaborative approach to an integrated service model that provides for a specialised approach to youth settlement.

1. Invest in multicultural youth specialist services in each state and territory to facilitate a nationally consistent and coordinated approach to youth settlement.
2. Improve youth-focused support in the HSP through capacity building.
3. Invest in support to assist families and communities to help young people in their settlement journey.

Improved capacity of mainstream services and collaboration between settlement and mainstream services

MYAN is aware that some young people from refugee backgrounds ‘fall through the gaps’ of existing systems and supports because services are not funded or equipped to work with particular groups of young people. MYAN also hears too frequently that referrals are not effective. This may be because young people are referred to supports after they are already in crisis, or because the young person was not supported in the referral pathway. Collaboration between settlement and mainstream services is essential to ensuring young people from refugee backgrounds have access to effective, timely and appropriate service systems and supports, and that they are supported to take these up.

Increased collaboration would strengthen referral pathways, and provide two-way communication of specialist information – ensuring the service in contact with the young person - mainstream or settlement - can identify and address the young person’s needs, while also enabling young people to build on the trusting service relationships they have established and to benefit from the input of specialised knowledge and support early. It is important that adequate time and resources are allocated to develop strong and effective partnerships and investment is made to support young people to navigate the transition from one service system/provider to another.

Mainstream services need to ensure they have a workforce skilled in cultural competency and youth-focused approaches that is well-equipped to identify and meet the diverse and complex needs of young people from refugee backgrounds. Young people should not be disadvantaged by their location or the type of service they are accessing. If the expectation is that young people are to be serviced by mainstream programs, then this needs to be universal and services previously underutilised by refugee young people need to be equally equipped with the skills and resources to work with refugee young people. This includes mental health, sexual and reproductive health or LGBTQI+ services, those in regional and rural areas, as well as areas with less concentration of new arrivals.

This currently is not happening, despite the creation of policies and guidance to direct culturally responsive practice and improve service accessibility for refugee communities. An example of where clear policy exists, but is not routinely followed, is the use of interpreter services. While there are industry standards and guidelines around the use of interpreters and the provision of translated materials, including in the national Multicultural Access and Equity Policy, communities and young people continually report a failure of basic practice in this regard across most sectors, from health and education to justice.¹

¹ As a result of this young people are often required to be stand-in interpreters for their parents, impacting this relationship negatively, and repeatedly report that they experience challenges accessing the information and level of detail they need because translated information and interpreters are not utilised consistently. FECCA have reported that this is a key barrier to CALD community utilisation of mainstream services such as Centrelink and jobactive. FECCA (2012). *Opening the door to access and equity: FECCA Access and Equity Report 2011/12*. Canberra:

MYAN recognises that many mainstream services are already experiencing challenges meeting need (with often extensive waiting lists) and that often a reluctance to adapt practices in order to be more culturally relevant and responsive is related to not having the capacity or support to invest in this. However, a quarter of Australian youth are from a refugee or migrant backgrounds and the failure to address barriers to service utilisation for this group is unacceptable. It will likely have long term consequences for young people, their families, and the broader Australian community, and thus must be a priority.

Wherever possible, settlement programs should be designed with the participation of and feedback from young people who have previously been resettled.

Multicultural youth specialist approach in each state and territory

A multicultural youth specialist approach supports a targeted and responsive approach to meeting the needs of young people in settlement. MYAN has supported the development of multicultural youth specialist organisations and networks across Australia in order to facilitate a nationally consistent approach to youth settlement. These organisations and networks facilitate coordination and networking and referral pathways within and between settlement and mainstream organisations, as well as engaging in advocacy on issues facing young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and undertaking sector development activities across the youth and settlement sectors.

These specialist organisations and networks also support the development of young people's advocacy and leadership skills. They are guided by the principles and practice outlined in the National Youth Settlement Framework.

MYAN believes that in order to address factors related to refugee and migrant youth disengagement and marginalisation, and to ensure services and systems are effectively supporting outcomes, there is a need to take a long-term view of settlement that goes beyond Federally-funded (settlement) services during the first five years to how the broader systems and supports facilitated social cohesion and empower young people to become active citizens.

In the current service system there remains a need for stronger generalist youth support that is culturally relevant and capable of responding to the needs and concerns of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In addition to delivering targeted programs for young people, and supporting training and capacity building with mainstream and settlement services, multicultural youth specialists are also well-placed to offer complimentary specialist service support within mainstream youth programs and systems.

FECCA; Australian Survey Research Group (2011). *Settlement outcomes of new arrivals*. (DIAC). Available at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/settlement-outcomes-new-arrival_access.docx; VFST (2013). *Promoting the engagement of interpreters in Victorian health*. Melbourne: VFST.

Youth-centered and family aware approaches in policy and service delivery

Providing support to refugee families and parents is a vital strategy to facilitate the integration of young people. The needs of young people in settlement differ from those of adults and this must be reflected within settlement services. The current approach in the HSP is based on the needs-based casework model. While this model recognises that different people have different needs, services should adjust their service delivery models and responses, and invest in building the skills and knowledge of staff to engage directly with young people (this may include outreach and/or communicating with parents/carers). This ensures young people are able to access key supports and the services they need during early settlement.

Family-aware approaches are critical to supporting young people effectively. Positive relationships are key protective factor supporting young people in settlement. However, parenting in a new culture can be challenging and the settlement experience can place significant pressures on families. Factors known to impact family relationships and disrupt family dynamics include:

- Varying rates of acculturation and language acquisition between children and parents - children and young people commonly have a faster rate of acculturation and language acquisition
- Conflicting/divergent values, influenced by a new set of legal rights for young people and expectations of independence
- Economic stress and disadvantage), and
- The change in expectations on parents (recognising there is a wide diversity of parenting approaches in families of diverse cultures).

Intergenerational conflict, and in the worst cases family breakdown, is experienced more acutely by families that encounter multiple and complex settlement barriers.

All families and communities have strengths which they use to their best abilities to nurture and support their children and young people. But families, and parents and carers in particular, need support to manage the challenges of settlement and maintain positive relationships with their young people during settlement. This includes access to services and supports that can help them manage the role of parenting in the settlement context, including understanding and engaging with the services and systems with which their young people are engaged (such as schools and youth services or programs), but also to understand how their young people may be experiencing settlement in ways different to themselves, and how they can best support them.

Families, who are often navigating their own settlement journeys without the support of extended family, need culturally appropriate support and information on how to address parenting challenges in a new country. Support could include:

- Information about social and cultural norms, including expectations of young people and their parents and guardians, and
- How to manage cultural expectations and potential conflict in supportive and positive

ways to help alleviate concerns and anxieties that parents may be experiencing.

Supporting young people in the context of their community is equally important. Positive connection to community and identity are critical to young people managing the challenges of settlement. Bonding relationships – the close connections with those of similar backgrounds – and intra-cultural connections are important for creating strong, supportive networks and a sense of identity for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Nationally consistent data collection and dissemination specific to young people

MYAN would like to reiterate the importance of data collection on youth² with specific data gathered to capture the experiences of young people as a distinct population group (12 to 24 year olds). The absence of such data results in a lack of targeted age and developmental stage appropriate protection and assistance programs, and capacity to measure impact and outcomes. This includes initiatives to ensure their engagement in secondary and tertiary education, and vocational training opportunities, on the pathway to employment.³

While there are various surveys of Australian Bureau of Statistics collecting data in areas concerning young people, it is not possible to find publically available data specific to refugee and migrant youth in those surveys disaggregated by age and visa status for the youth cohort. Similarly, while various filters exist to capture multicultural communities in Australia such as ‘overseas born’ and ‘speaking language other than English at home’ categories, such filters remain vague to capture specific information on current immigration status in Australia, including visa status.

When data doesn’t accurately capture the specific experiences and insights of this group of young people, services lack a sound evidence-base on which to design and deliver policy and service responses to address their specific needs and contexts. It can also act as a disincentive to the development of more specialised services for this group.

To develop stronger empirical evidence about how the settlement needs of young people are being met, and assist policymakers and service providers in achieving successful settlement outcomes for this group we recommend:

- Reporting on young people from refugee backgrounds as a distinct group (12 to 24 year olds) in all data collection and dissemination-related exercises undertaken and/or funded by the Australian Government (while also recognising the need to continue to capture data specific to children, adolescents and young people under the age of 18 as a distinct group).
- Investing in research that examines the factors that contribute to and support successful settlement outcomes for young people, their families and communities, including the funding

² Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) Australia (2018) *Advocacy Brief Youth Rights in the Global Compact on Refugees*. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/5a562f9a7/myan-australia-advocacy-brief-youth-rights-global-compact-refugees.html>, pp. 14-15, 18-20.

³ UNHCR (2016) *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme conclusion on Youth, 31 May 2016, EC/67/SC/CRP.17*. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5800cdea4.html>, p.3.

of a yearly national survey that collects data on the migration and settlement experiences of young people aged 12-24.

A coordinated response to recognise and respond to the specific challenges faced by particular cohorts of young people.

Settlement services delivery to young people must be flexible, tailored and responsive in order to be able to recognise and respond to their particular and individual needs. Progress has been made in Australia to address the particular settlement needs of young people in recent years, but more is required. Fundamentally, this involves a more targeted focus on youth in settlement policy, systems and programming, recognising that multicultural youth specialist services play a critical role in delivering and supporting this targeted approach.

It also requires all service providers to build their knowledge and skills for engaging meaningfully with refugee and migrant young people, and to work collaboratively in their approaches in order to meet discreet and intersectional needs. This includes working with settlement service providers to better recognise and respond to the specific settlement challenges faced by particular cohorts of young people, including young people arriving on the Women at Risk Visa and LGBTQI+ asylum seekers, and include opportunities for co-design.

2. Given the pressures in finding affordable housing in Australia, are there any changes we need to make to settlement services' approach to housing refugees?

Housing affordability affects low-income and disadvantaged Australians; however, refugees face additional challenges such as discrimination, lack of knowledge of the housing market and complex renting processes with checks that they systematically are less likely to pass. The pervasive issue of undersupply of adequate and affordable rental housing is a structural one that is usually beyond the scope of settlement services and must be addressed at a state and federal level.

While there is support to purchase a home or to afford rent as an Australian, refugees are usually not eligible to benefit from many of these programs (e.g. National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) and Rent Assistance).

There needs to a focus on strengthening such frameworks to support refugees:

- Initial housing and renting market orientation and education for new entrants.
- Rent subsidies with less prohibitive eligibility criteria that can meaningfully assist refugees in their settlement process.
- An increased supply of suitable social housing that considers the needs of families, single parents, and single tenants.

- Real estate agents must seek to have a more multidimensional view of tenants of refugee background and given incentives by settlement services to deconstruct the tenancy risk perception they hold towards the refugee community.
- Investment in innovative HSP on-arrival accommodation solutions in regional areas.

3. How could we create greater opportunities for all refugees to build deeper relationships and friendships with the wider Australian community?

To continue to benefit from the economic, social, and cultural contributions of migration to Australia, any migration planning must include considerations on how to combat racism and discrimination.

Australia is one of the most successful multicultural countries in the world, and cultural diversity has become one of this country's most defining contemporary characteristics.⁴ In 2019, every single country around the world was represented in Australia's population.⁵ Multiculturalism is a central tenet of Australian national identity and an asset to the country in an era of globalisation and our migration program brings enormous social, cultural, and economic benefit to this country.

Despite the diversity of the Australian community, national research demonstrates that racism is an everyday reality for young people from migrant backgrounds. Mission Australia's *Youth Survey Report 2020* highlights that young Australian's see discrimination as a major issue and are experiencing and seeing racial injustices in their day-to-day lives.⁶ A recent study of racism in Australian schools found young people are facing 'confronting' levels of racism, with one in three students from non-Anglo or European backgrounds experiencing racial discrimination by their peers and experiences of racial discrimination in wider society.⁷

Racial abuse towards Asian Australians increased during the pandemic, with one third of all racism-related complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission since the start of February 2020 relating to COVID-19.⁸ In addition, the Scanlon Foundation's 2021 Mapping Social Cohesion Report, a report that provides vital insight into contemporary social cohesion and population issues in Australia found that one significant change in the survey was a major increase in people's perception of how big a problem racism is. The report shows a dramatic 20% increase in people who believe that racism in Australia is a very big or big problem-from 40% in 2020 to 60% in 2021.⁹

⁴ Rajadurai, E (2018) *Success in Diversity-The Strength of Australia's Multiculturalism*

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019) *Australia's Population by Country of Birth* Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au>

⁶ Tiller, E., Fildes, J., Hall, S., Hicking, V., Greenland, N., Liyanarachchi, D., and Di Nicola, K. 2020, *Youth Survey Report 2020*, Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia.

⁷ N Priest et al (2019) *Findings from the 2017 Speak Out Against Racism (SOAR) student and staff surveys* Available at https://csrcm.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2019/9/CSRM-WP-SOAR_PUBLISH_1_0.pdf

⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission (2020) Where's all the data on COVID-19 racism?, accessible at <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/wheresall-data-covid-19-racism>

⁹ Markus, A. (2021) Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2021. Available at: <https://scanlonfoundation.org.au/2021-mapping-social-cohesion-report/>

Racism is even affecting the Australian economy, with one recent study discovering that the annual cost of racism¹⁰ results in more than 3% of Australia's Gross Domestic Product, ¹¹adding unnecessary costs to the Australian workplace and economy.

This is seriously concerning. The Scanlon report states that "An increase of 20 percentage points in response to a general question of this nature is almost unprecedented in the Scanlon Foundation surveys." These findings highlight the systemic racism and discrimination that is still prevalent in Australia with far-reaching implications for all Australians. This is particularly the case for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Racism works against Australia's goal of building a fair and inclusive society. Experiences of racism and discrimination are a key barrier to social inclusion, diminish a young person's sense of connection and belonging, contribute to marginalisation and isolation, and diminish participation in education, employment, and recreational activities and the creation of new friendships and networks. ¹²

Social cohesion asserts that greater benefits, satisfaction, and security are achieved when community or society 'sticks together', and welcomes diversity, rather than focusing on differences. Investing in social cohesion is vital to achieving this and creating the conditions for a productive society and a stronger sense of safety for everyone living in Australia.¹³ While there is often scrutiny of the ability of migrants to successfully integrate and participate in Australian society as quickly as possible, we know this a two-way process. A safe and welcoming community is crucial for positive settlement outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and is vital to creating the conditions for a cohesive, productive society and a stronger sense of safety for everyone living in Australia. ¹⁴

Initiatives against racism and discrimination to support, rather than undermine social cohesion include:

- Investing in, and implementing the National Anti-Racism Framework.
- Implementing a national framework for guiding migration policies based on optimal social cohesion outcomes.
- Ensuring national conversations take place in different domains (including in schools, work places, local councils, etc.) in respectful and constructive ways, are evidence-based and include the voices of young people.
- Promoting the documented benefits of diversity to all of Australia and reiterate that successful settlement is a two-way process - equally dependent on the host communities 'reception' or welcome as it is on new arrivals' skills and attributes.

¹⁰ Racism contributing to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychological disorders

¹¹ Elias. A (2015) *Measuring the economic impacts of racial discrimination* Available at <http://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30079135/elias-measuringthe-2015A.pdf>

¹² MYAN (2020) *Covid-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds: Policy Platform* Available at: <https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf>

¹³ M. Grossman (2020) *Against retrotopia: Young people, social futures and a resilience to extremism* Available from <https://www.crisconsortium.org/cris-commentary/against-retrotopia-young-people-social-futures-and-resilience-to-violent-extremism>

¹⁴ Holton. R (1997) *Immigration, Social Cohesion and National Identity* Available at: https://www.apf.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/rp/rp9798/98rp01

- Ending continual referral to broad characteristics and particular cultural groups as ‘problematic’, avoiding inaccurate stereotypes, harming young people, their families and communities.
- Politicians must deliver balanced messaging about migration, highlighting that diversity is an opportunity for growth for both migrants and for Australia as a recipient country and avoid misrepresentations and stereotyping of refugee and migrant young people in public narratives.
- Ensuring involvement of youth and peer facilitation for young people from refugee backgrounds to have their voices heard and a role in representing themselves in local communities e.g. MY Community Champions, see case study below.
- Extending investment in initiatives that support the development of young people’s leadership skills and facilitate their civic and social participation.
- Continuing to celebrate different cultures and create regular opportunities to bring different communities living in Australia together.

4. How could we improve refugee health outcomes?

Adolescence is the peak time of onset for many mental health disorders. Though half of all mental illnesses appear before the age of 14 and three-quarters by the age of 25, young people in Australia still face barriers to appropriate mental health care, including considerable gaps in services, costs, long waits and often a lack of continuity of care.¹⁵

Although there is minimal research on the mental health of young people from refugee backgrounds, literature suggests higher rates of psychiatric disorders amongst this group compared with the adult population, and highlights that they also face a high risk of suicide.¹⁶ The Building a New Life in Australia study revealed that young people from humanitarian backgrounds have much higher levels of psychological stress – 31% of young men and 37% of young women – than the general youth population in Australia.¹⁷

Despite this, there are lower than expected numbers of young people from refugee backgrounds presenting to mental health services. In the context of Australia, children and young people generally have relatively low levels of service usage (despite high levels of mental health issues), while refugee children and young people have even lower rates of utilisation of mental health services compared with young people more broadly.¹⁸

¹⁵ Mental Health Victoria (2021) 2021 Federal Budget Submission.

¹⁶ CMY (2019) Submission to the Productivity Commission’s Inquiry into the Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health. Available at: https://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/241175/sub446-mental-health.pdf

¹⁷ Commissioner for Children and Young People- Western Australia, (2013). The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people: Children and Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Policy brief.

¹⁸ Ibid.

There is wide consensus that early, specialist intervention can reduce the severity and duration of young people’s mental ill-health¹⁹ yet despite this, many young people and their families still lack access to appropriate specialist mental health services. Providing early, targeted, accessible, and youth-focused mental health services may circumvent the short term detrimental effects of mental health disorders, and safeguard young people from longer term, ongoing cycles of dysfunction and disadvantage that may result when mental health disorders remain untreated into adulthood.²⁰ The short and long term consequences of untreated mental illness include impaired social functioning, poor educational achievement, substance abuse, self-harm, suicide and violence.²¹

It also has a crushing economic impact-for example, 2018 estimates indicated that workplace disengagement due to mental health issues cost the Australian economy \$12 billion annually.²² Almost half (46%) of Australia's young people are first or second-generation migrants- cultural diversity must be regarded as an integral component of mental health practice as a whole, rather than as an adjunct to service delivery. There is an urgent need to ensure that mental health programs are designed and funded in response to the cultural, social and health disparities experienced by refugee and migrant communities (including health and mental health literacy). This should occur in collaboration with trusted (multicultural youth) services with expertise and networks with this youth cohort.

Although young refugees and humanitarian entrants usually have access to health services and refugees have access to more intensive health assistance such as trauma counselling, young people continue to report that the level of understanding of health providers and other service providers is often inadequate to meet their particular and often complex needs.²³ Despite the complex health needs of this group of young people, service delivery is fragmented and there are many barriers to providing the most effective health care.

Areas for improvement:

- Culturally-tailored models of care embedded within GP services and school systems
- Improved data collection, the promotion of research and development of the evidence base on the specific experiences of young people from refugee backgrounds.
- Building a young person’s sense of social connection and inclusion in the Australian community is an important component of building wellbeing and resilience in relation to mental and overall health.²⁴ See response to Question 3.

¹⁹ Correll CU, Galling B, Pawar A. 2018. Comparison of Early Intervention services vs Treatment as Usual for Early-Phase Psychosis – A Systematic Review, Meta-analysis, and Meta-regression, *JAMA Psychiatry* 75(6):555-565.

²⁰ Mission Australia (2016) Youth mental health report Youth Survey 2012-16. Available at:

http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2020/04/2017-youth-mental-health-report_mission-australia-and-black-dog-institute.pdf?sfvrsn=6.

²¹ McGorry.P & Goldstone.S (2011) Is this normal? Assessing mental health in young people. Available at:

<https://www.racgp.org.au/getattachment/584cac98-afb8-4f0c-88a5-f0d8526d1542/Is-this-normal.aspx>

²² Roxburgh, Nina (2018) Youth mental health and the impact on Australia’s economy. Available at: <https://nycinquiry.org.au/youth-mentalhealth/>

²³ Spinks (2009), *Australia's settlement services for migrants and refugees*. (Social Policy Section, Research Paper no. 29 2008–09). Canberra: APH.

²⁴ 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.

- Provide publicly funded health care to all asylum seekers and refugees independent of their visa status.
- Provide high quality, accessible, culturally respectful and affordable health care.
- Engage young people and service providers to design and pilot ideas that address the barriers to help-seeking behaviour in mental health.
- Investment in long-term research around the efficacy of mental health policies and mainstream youth mental health in meeting the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, specifically identifying the factors that help or hinder their use.
- Increased funding for tele-health or tele-psychiatry for young people in rural and remote areas that have limited access to onsite mental health specialists.
- Pilot innovative strategies to promote mental health that are co-designed, led and facilitated by young people.

MYAN CALD Youth Mental Health Traineeship pilot-proposal

MYAN has developed a unique and innovative proposal for a CALD youth mental health traineeship pilot.

This initiative would seek to address key issues, including the underrepresentation of young people from CALD backgrounds accessing youth mental health services and barriers to economic participation. It would do this by:

- (i) Responding to the existing workforce gap in the youth mental health sector of staff trained in CALD responsive support.
- (ii) Addressing the current workforce gap in youth mental health services by creating entry-level jobs.
- (iii) Addressing the urgent need for more targeted approaches in training and employment pathways to facilitate CALD youth labor market participation.

This proposed initiative intentionally builds on recent Government investment - traineeships/apprenticeships (skills package and subsidies) and youth mental health - and existing infrastructure and expertise in the VET sector, in Government and the non-government sector. We have been working with Orgyen, National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health, in the development of the initiative.

5. What opportunities are there for the wider community to help refugees and humanitarian entrants settle?

Settlement orientation in the local context is important for newly arrived young people. Successful settlement and refugee integration relates to the 'equitable access to opportunities and resources, participation in the community and society and feelings of security and belonging in their new homes²⁵'

²⁵ See Pg 267, Refugee Integration, Para. 2, Lines 1-4.

Hynie, M. (2018). Refugee integration: Research and policy. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 24(3), 265-276. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pac0000326>

Inclusion in the broader community and a sense of belonging is crucial for young people to successfully navigate settlement in a new country. Both newly arrived young people and resettlement communities benefit from finding opportunities to engage with, and learn from one another.

The wider community can play an essential role in supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants in this process. Opportunities to engage in the community are important - both in terms of building reciprocal cultural awareness and providing opportunities to make friends and build networks. This facilitates good social cohesion, and positive cultural awareness and community engagement.

Opportunities include:

- Implementing community refugee sponsorship streams, which should be in addition to the current refugee intake.
- Mainstream community services must have the relevant capacity building to recognise and adapt to the unique needs that humanitarian entrants may have.
- Develop partnerships for local sports and recreational opportunities which provide an important context for engagement of youth in the wider community.
- Ensuring schools are equipped to support young people from refugee backgrounds - for example, more training for teachers around cultural competence and understanding the impact of torture and trauma, including having partnerships between schools and settlement agencies to support settlement workers in schools to support newcomer families as they arrive in the school and provide them with settlement information and referral to education and community resources.
- Building the capacity of mainstream organisations/general services to support young people from refugee backgrounds, including training on the National Youth Settlement Framework
- Targeted community support for young people to meet important milestones such as free driving lessons, tutoring, and industry mentorship
- Funding community programs that specifically bring together young people from refugee backgrounds and local young people to interact.
- There should be more widespread education about the systemic barriers that contextualise the difficult integration of humanitarian entrants and hence broaden the understanding of the wider community about the importance of supporting the settlement of humanitarian entrants. For example, awareness raising activities, including community information sessions about settlement programs e.g. 'Shout Out', see case study below

6. How do we design programs to take into account the large differences between settlement locations?

There needs to be a more coordinated approach to the settlement of refugees in regional communities. For regional settlement to be a long-term success, government support is needed to encourage refugees to settle in regional Australia, and to help ensure that communities are able to provide the services that are necessary to make settlement a long-term success.

MYAN believes that migrant settlement in regional areas, including skilled workers, temporary migrants, and refugees, has the potential to provide multiple benefits to individuals and communities, both economic and social. These include the stimulation of local economy and ease of pressure on urban infrastructure and services, improved acceptance of diversity resulting in improved social cohesion, and help to offset the impacts of ageing populations.²⁶

MYAN's position is that realising these benefits first requires careful planning and an understanding of what works, and depends on the capacity of local settlement services to respond, particularly within the domains of employment, education and training, housing and health and well-being. A For example, finding work in regional areas is particularly challenging due to limited English language classes, and a lack of specialist support services like torture and trauma counselling.ⁱ

As the settlement experience is unique to each person, services will be most effective when they are tailored, flexible, and responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of migrants.²⁷ We know that when young people settle in areas experiencing persistent issues around housing affordability, high rates of youth unemployment and low numbers of humanitarian migrants, settlement challenges are exacerbated for these young people.²⁸

MYAN believes that in order to support optimal regional settlement outcomes, people must be settled in towns where:

- There are opportunities for meaningful local work and business opportunities
- There is adequate stable accommodation available
- Schools are equipped to respond to the diverse learning needs of migrant children
- They are able to maintain links to their culture and community alongside opportunities to participate in civic life
- Service gaps and response strategies have been identified
- There are flexible and responsive English language supports available
- Settlement services are available and have the capacity to provide targeted and flexible support
- Local community organisations are involved in the planning and delivering of support services
- Local communities are informed about the migration program, and community concerns have been gauged.²⁹

²⁶ Rural Australians for Refugees (20* 17) *Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes*

²⁷ Musoni, E. (2019). *Understanding regional settlement in Australia: Key learnings from past experiences*. Canberra, the Regional Australia Institute.

²⁸ MYAN & MCA (2021) *Women at Risk Visa Holders (Subclass 204) Consultation Report Available at: myan.org.au*

²⁹ SCoA (2017) *Regional Settlement Policy Paper Available at: <https://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SCoA-Regional-Settlement-Policy-Paper.pdf>*

It is important to take into consideration that the settlement needs of young people will differ from those of adults and children, and young people will need targeted, specialised supports to assist in their navigation of their settlement journey.

MYAN recommends that when planning for regional migration, the Department of Home Affairs:

- Thoroughly assess regional settlement locations to determine local workforce needs, assess availability of appropriate housing, and to identify service gaps, response strategies, measure community attitudes, and concerns towards migrants.
- Fund regional settlement service providers to provide analysis on settlement outcomes of migrants and refugees in suggested migration locales, to ensure that settlement support and programs in regional towns are prepared for new migrant settlement and are as effective, responsive and efficient as possible

7. How do we design programs to respond well to people's individual needs and aspirations, and to help strengthen their capability and self-agency?

Refugee settlement approaches need to recognise the agency of refugee youth and include them on their own terms. There is great potential in co-designing programs that allow refugees to participate meaningfully in and exert influence on decision making processes that affect their lives at different levels. Refugees are best placed to understand their own needs and aspirations; therefore, it is crucial to empower these communities and facilitate the pathways to self-agency.

Youth participation has significant benefits, both for the young people who are engaged in decision making processes, as well as for the organisations and communities that engage and support young people to participate and settle well in Australia. 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.³⁰

Settlement services can help design pertinent and effective programs by creating the space for grassroots programs that allows for the voice of refugees to be at the centre of the design.

- Refugee-led organisations need to be valued and supported through adequate funding that will allow them to implement projects and facilitate the supply of goods and services that are most relevant to their communities.
- Invest in research/service review with newly arrived young people that identifies how they think of and have experienced settlement support services. Use co-design methods to identify new ways to improve settlement services based on the needs and desires of the young people themselves.

³⁰ MYAN (2018) *Not "Just Ticking A Box": Youth participation with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds*. Available at: <http://myan.org.au/file/file/MYANYouthParticipationResource.pdf>, p. 5.

- There must be a framework that helps address the challenges presented by the languages barrier to allow these programs to reach their full potential.
- It is important to legitimise refugee-led organisations in broader social institutions and government at various levels to promote their strategic engagement in advocacy and policy.
- Implement practical employment strategies that respond to needs and aspirations. Research has found that Policies that successfully create parity of labour force participation between young migrants and the Australian born population could increase the size of the Australian economy by \$44 billion from 2022-23 to 2031-32 and create 54,000 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs.³¹
- Introduce measurement tools to ensure assistance isn't reduce before refugees are ready.

8. What are the biggest existing barriers to the delivery of good outcomes in our current services?

Please see responses to previous questions that respond to existing barriers including:

- Inconsistent services
- Lack of coordination
- Lack of comprehensive national data
- Limited availability of youth services nation-wide
- Coordination of regional services

9. Are there any examples of innovative programs operating at a state, local or community level that we can learn from?

MYAN-Not Just Ticking a Box: Youth Participation with Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds

MYAN's Not Just Ticking a Box: Youth Participation with Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds is a publication which serves as a comprehensive guide for organisations in engaging and enhancing the participation of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Converging theory and practice, the resource includes a participation model outlining barriers, opportunities and ways to address barriers to the participation of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, examples of good practice through national and local case studies and a practical top tips and checklist section.

Centre for Multicultural Youth - Employment Empowers

³¹ Deloitte Access Economic (2021) Covid-19 and Young Migrants-Impacts and Solutions Available at: <https://myan.org.au/reportspublications/accessreport/>

The Employment Empowers program supports newly arrived young people (6 months – 5 years in Australia) from refugee backgrounds who are looking to secure meaningful work and fulfil their potential. The program engages volunteer mentors to work 1:1 with young people, supporting and encouraging them towards finding employment, pursuing their career goals, and succeeding in the Australian workplace. The program aims to build ‘bridging social capital’ – helping young people establish networks that assist them to ‘get ahead’, which is a particular barrier for newly arrived young people.

Volunteer mentors with at least 3 years professional experience in Australia undertake extensive training and are supported by CMY to work with young people to increase their short and longer term employment goals. Volunteers meet regularly with young people to:

- Help them explore career options in Australia
- Assist in looking for and applying for jobs
- Share industry experience and knowledge about working in Australia

Since the program began in 2019, 79 newly arrived young people have been matched with a mentor, and 61 of these young people have gained employment as a result.

To learn about Rahaf’s story (a young woman from Syria) on how Employment Empowers and a volunteer mentor has helped her, see [here](#)

Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) - Shout Out

Delivered by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) in Victoria, Shout Out is an innovative public speakers agency supporting young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to share their stories and perspectives with a wide range of audiences and help shift public discourse on various issues.

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have a wealth of perspectives and unique ideas to contribute to Australia’s rich diversity. However their voices are often stereotyped, marginalised or invisible in mainstream culture and this can damage their ability to feel like they belong.

Shout Out is an opportunity for young people to redress the balance and present their stories to audiences who may not usually have the chance to hear them.

Speakers have been trained and supported to deliver fresh, engaging and thought-provoking perspectives as keynote speakers, panel members and emcees for a range of settings across Victoria including:

- Schools
- Local Councils
- Community events
- Media
- Business and Corporate Sector

- Community Organisations and Groups
- State and Federal Government Departments

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas) - Multicultural Housing and Learning Program

The Multicultural Housing and Learning Program supports people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to find employment, connect to their local community and transition into stable housing. The accommodation centre provides on arrival transition housing for newly arrived refugees and people from multicultural backgrounds at risk of homelessness.

It provides case management and support for people to find employment, connect to their local community and transition into stable housing. Intensive onsite support for learning, housing and employment has enhanced newly arrived participants ability to navigate education and employment opportunities. The centre has also improved coordination of referrals and support across HSP, SETS, employment and education providers partnering in the program.

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas) - Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) Community Champions program

Multicultural Youth Tasmania's MY Community Champion program works to build an inclusive and active local community and increase diversity in the community sporting sector in Tasmania. The project employs young people from refugee backgrounds as 'Community Champion' Peer Workers to promote local sport and recreation activities to their community.

The program provides professional development in facilitation, project and event management, public speaking, and media training. Peer Workers have collaborated with local sport and recreation clubs and organisation to deliver over 50 community events to more than 300 people in Tasmania. Community Champions Peer Workers have co-designed and delivered the 'Championing Diversity and Inclusion in Sport training' to over 10 local sport and recreation clubs and organisations. The program has established lasting and sustainable links between new and emerging communities.

"Working as a Peer Worker for MRC Tas has opened up many opportunities for me and my community. Being able to work amongst and with other multicultural people allows me to see Tasmania's growing diversity. Working with MRC Tas has allowed me to incorporate the love I have for sport with my passion for working with young people and women to help increase the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse people. Working here has also helped me to strengthen the bond I have with my community and help empower them on their journeys to find their place in society."

Diana Obeid- Community Champion Peer Worker, Launceston

¹ Reilly, A (2018) *The Vulnerability of Safe Haven Enterprise Visa Holders: Balancing Work, Protection and Future Prospects* [2018] UNSWLawJl 30; (2018) 41(3) UNSW Law Journal 871