

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN)

Response to the Department of Home Affairs 'Australia's Humanitarian Program 2024-25 Discussion Paper'

June, 2024

About the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN)

MYAN is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia, and those who work with them. MYAN provides expert policy advice, undertakes a range of sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government, and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure that the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised and addressed in policy and service delivery. We are also a committed member of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRNN).

MYAN has developed the *National Youth Settlement Framework* to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

Our vision is that all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are supported, valued, and thriving in Australia.

MYAN Australia is available to work with the Department of Home Affairs to provide further information in relation to this submission. For further information on this submission please contact:

Rana Ebrahimi, MYAN National Manager
rana@myan.org.au

Shannon White, National Policy & Advocacy Lead
shannon@myan.org.au

MYAN recognises and pays respect to the First Peoples of Australia, who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work, and acknowledge that Sovereignty was never ceded.

About this submission

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Home Affairs' discussion paper 'Australia's Humanitarian Program 2025-25.' This submission has a focus on the rights and interests of young people (12 to 24 year olds) arriving in Australia through the Humanitarian Program and provides a national perspective. MYAN would like to acknowledge the young people in our networks, especially those with lived experience of forced migration, who generously share their experiences and their insights with MYAN and help to inform our policy work.

The questions and considerations raised in the *Discussion Paper* are important issues for the young people we work with, as well as their families and communities. There are a number of important intersecting issues arising from these topics in the *Discussion Paper*, and this submission responds to these key areas more broadly, namely:

- Humanitarian crisis response
- Vulnerable cohorts
- Complimentary pathways
- The Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot
- The Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)
- Settlement assistance

Response to the Discussion Paper

1. Young people arriving via the Humanitarian Program

Australia's Humanitarian Program plays a crucial role in providing protection and resettlement opportunities for vulnerable populations. Children and young people are among the most vulnerable groups within the vast population of forcibly displaced individuals worldwide.

Between 2010 and 2022, **the global number of forcibly displaced child refugees and asylum seekers** more than doubled from around 20.6 million to the current estimate of **43.3 million**.¹ They are often forced to flee their homes due to conflict or physical violence inflicted by parents, caregivers, or local authorities. As a result, refugee children and young people face a multitude of protection risks, including gender-based violence, exploitation, and abuse, smuggling, and trafficking.

Moreover, refugee children and young people often experience significant disruptions to their education and may struggle to self-advocate or navigate the complex process of seeking refuge and

¹ UNICEF (2023) *Child Displacement* Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/#:~:text=Between%202010%20and%202022%2C%20the,current%20number%20of%2043.3%20million>

applying for resettlement. These challenges can have long-lasting effects on their physical, emotional, and mental well-being, as well as their future prospects.

It is crucial to recognise the unique needs and vulnerabilities of refugee children and young people and to provide them with the necessary support and protection. This includes access to education, healthcare, and legal assistance, as well as safe and secure living conditions. By prioritising the well-being of these individuals, we can help them rebuild their lives and contribute to the communities in which they reside.²

Australia has a well-established and well-regarded resettlement program that has consistently included large numbers of children and young people (including unaccompanied and separated minors). Over the past five years, Australia has resettled 10,381 young people aged between 12 and 24 through the Humanitarian Program. The number of young people arriving through this program peaked in 2018-19 with 4,059 arrivals, but drastically decreased to 123 in 2020-21 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, however the proportion of young people within the Humanitarian Program has remained relatively stable at an average of 25% of the total Humanitarian Program.

The Australian Government's 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.

The Australian Humanitarian Program has a significant role to play in supporting refugee and globally children and young people who are among the most vulnerable. An **important consideration is the need for robust protection measures**. Young refugees are often at heightened risk of exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. Humanitarian programs should implement strong child protection policies and create safe spaces where young refugees can seek help and support. This includes training staff to recognise and respond to signs of abuse and providing legal assistance to ensure that young refugees' rights are upheld. Collaboration with local communities and authorities is essential to create a protective environment that minimises risks and promotes the well-being of young refugees.

To better reflect and consider their needs, **the program could implement a more child-centric approach**, ensuring that policies and practices prioritise the unique challenges facing young refugees. This can include increasing the allocation of visas for children and families, ensuring that resettlement processes are streamlined to minimise the time children spend in precarious situations. Additionally, providing streamlined specialised support services upon arrival, such as trauma-informed/healing centred counselling, and educational assistance, can help young refugees settle more successfully into Australian society.

² MYAN (2017) *Submission- Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2017/18 humanitarian program*. Available at myan.org.au

Recommendations:

- Prioritise family reunification for the 17,000 unaccompanied and orphaned children in Gaza who have relatives living in Australia in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which emphasises the need to provide special protection and assistance to children who are separated from their families.
- Work with MYAN to develop an innovative approach to youth settlement that is designed to respond to the specific needs, context, and strengths of young people in settlement.

2. The Humanitarian Program

2.1 Timeframes

To address current delays in the program, the government could introduce a pre-screening process to quickly identify and prioritise the most urgent cases. This initial assessment could help streamline the application process by categorising applicants based on the severity of their need and the urgency of their resettlement requirements. Additionally, offering detailed guidelines and comprehensive information on the eligibility criteria and necessary documentation can help applicants prepare more effectively, reducing the number of incomplete or ineligible applications.

2.2 Humanitarian Crisis Response

In the discussion paper, the government states that Australia's Humanitarian Program aims to operate flexibly to respond effectively to evolving humanitarian emergencies, such as the situation in Gaza, and global resettlement needs. The program must be flexible enough to provide additional intake when humanitarian emergencies emerge in a consistent, fair and humane manner. For Australia's Humanitarian Program to be truly flexible and responsive to changing global resettlement needs an increase in the humanitarian intake is essential as is the need for a well-structured and principled strategy for addressing emergency humanitarian responses to forced displacement.

While being sustainable and manageable for community and service providers, the intake numbers must reflect the increase in globally displaced people and represent a minimum number, not a ceiling or a cap. In recent years, the global refugee crisis has reached unprecedented levels, creating an increasing need for comprehensive support across various cohorts of refugees. This includes individuals fleeing conflict in Syria, Yemen, and South Sudan, among others. Each of these groups faces unique challenges, requiring tailored solutions to ensure their safety and integration into host communities. Similarly, the Palestinian refugee cohort, which has been enduring prolonged displacement and hardship, remains in dire need of sustained international assistance.

One potential strategy to address these pressing needs is the consideration of resettlement (RST) programs from countries like Jordan and others in the region. Jordan, in particular, has been a significant host for refugees and could benefit from increased international cooperation to alleviate the pressures on its resources. Expanding resettlement opportunities to other countries would not

only distribute the responsibility more evenly but also provide refugees with more chances for a stable and prosperous future.

The Australian Humanitarian Program is a crucial lifeline for many refugees around the world, including Palestinian refugees who currently face significant humanitarian challenges. Tourist visas are inadequate for Palestinian refugees coming to Australia primarily because they fail to address the unique and pressing needs of individuals fleeing severe persecution, conflict, and statelessness. Tourist visas are designed for short-term visits, typically for leisure, business, or family visits, and they do not provide the legal protection or stability that refugees require. Palestinian refugees are currently facing relentless and systemic threats to their safety and well-being, and a tourist visa does not offer the long-term security or legal rights needed to rebuild their lives.

Furthermore, tourist visas come with strict conditions and time limitations, which can exacerbate the precarious situation of refugees. These visas do not allow for employment or access to essential services such as healthcare and education, which are critical for the integration and well-being of refugees. Without the right to work, refugees are unable to support themselves and their families, leading to increased vulnerability and dependence on informal or precarious means of survival, which also increases the pressure on charitable and community services who are already doing it tough in a cost of living crisis. This lack of stability can hinder their ability to recover from trauma and establish a new life in a safe environment.

Protection visas, on the other hand, are specifically designed to address the needs of refugees. By granting protection visas, Australia can uphold its international obligations under the Refugee Convention and contribute to global efforts to provide a humane and sustainable solution for individuals fleeing persecution. Protection visas not only safeguard the basic human rights of refugees but also enable them to contribute positively to the host society, fostering mutual growth and understanding.

When people are seeking to visit Australia to escape an immediate crisis while they assess whether and when they can return in safety, they should be allowed to apply for a visa which is relevant to their circumstances, such as a Subclass 449 Humanitarian Stay Visa. When it is apparent that safe return is unlikely in the foreseeable future, people should have access to permanent visas.

Providing a clear and urgent pathway for Palestinians to apply for the 786 Safe Haven visa would provide more individuals and families with the opportunity to rebuild their lives in a safe and supportive environment. This increase should be accompanied by targeted outreach and partnerships with organisations that have deep ties to Palestinian communities to ensure that those most in need are aware of and can access the program.

Enhancing integration and support services for Palestinian refugees upon arrival in Australia is essential. This could include providing specialised language and cultural orientation programs, mental health support tailored to the trauma many have experienced, and vocational training to help them

enter the Australian workforce. Collaboration with local Palestinian communities and existing refugee support organisations can help create the community infrastructure to support this.

Recommendations:

- Expand Australia's response to global resettlement needs by increasing the size of the Humanitarian Program.
- Consider resettlement (RST) programs from countries like Jordan and others in the region.
- Establish safe emergency visa pathways for people fleeing war, with clear paths to permanency.
- Upon arrival, provide comprehensive support tailored to the specific needs of emergency entrants. This support should encompass social security, health services, housing, education, and employment opportunities to ensure their successful integration into society.
- Provide a clear and urgent pathway for all Palestinians who have arrived since October 7 2023 to apply for the 786 Safe Haven visa.

3. Vulnerable Cohorts

MYAN welcomes a focus on vulnerable cohorts within refugee populations, including women and children, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ and other identified minority groups. We recommend extending this to explicitly include people with disabilities and stateless people. This requires responsive and targeted settlement support to ensure these groups are appropriately supported on arrival. I.e. 'one size settlement does not fit all.'

3.1 Stateless people

Stateless individuals often face unique challenges that require tailored solutions. To better consider the needs of stateless people, we recommend the Humanitarian Program incorporate several targeted strategies.

Firstly, the Humanitarian Program could enhance its identification and documentation processes. Stateless individuals frequently lack legal recognition and documentation, which exacerbates their vulnerability. Implementing thorough and sensitive screening procedures can help identify stateless persons accurately. Collaborating with international organisations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) could provide the necessary expertise and support in this area.

Secondly, Australia could offer more specialised legal assistance and pathways to citizenship for stateless individuals. Statelessness often results in limited access to basic rights and services, making legal support critical. Providing dedicated legal aid and creating streamlined, accessible processes for applying for permanent residency or citizenship can significantly improve the lives of stateless persons. Additionally, establishing clear and humane policies for the resettlement and integration of stateless individuals would foster a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Lastly, raising awareness and fostering partnerships are essential components of a comprehensive approach. Public awareness campaigns can help reduce stigma and discrimination against stateless people, while partnerships with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups can offer additional resources and support networks. By integrating these strategies, Australia's Humanitarian Program can more effectively address the unique needs of stateless individuals, ensuring they receive the protection and opportunities they deserve.

Perhaps the most significant gap in Australia's protection of stateless people is the lack of a statutory statelessness status determination procedure, attached to a clear visa outcome. Without such a procedure in place, stateless people who are found not to be in need of Australia's protection face prolonged indefinite detention or a precarious existence on a temporary bridging visa. The primary recommendation of this report, therefore, is to establish a statelessness status determination procedure in Australia.

Recommendations:

- Enhance identification and documentation processes to better support stateless individuals.
- Offer specialised legal assistance and pathways to citizenship so that stateless individuals can access basic rights and services.

3.2 LGBTQI+ refugees

It is crucial to recognise the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI+ refugees. These individuals often flee from countries where their sexual orientation or gender identity is criminalised, and they may continue to face discrimination and violence in refugee camps or transit countries. To address this, the Australian Humanitarian Program should establish dedicated pathways and quotas specifically for LGBTQI+ refugees, ensuring that their applications are prioritised and processed with sensitivity and urgency.

Recent research undertaken by MYAN found that LGBTQI+ young people from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds face additional challenges in their migration and settlement journey compared to their non-LGBTQI+ peers due to additional safety risks, lack of family/community social support, and multiple layers of discrimination and face additional barriers to accessing services including health care services, housing, and meaningful employment. As a result, LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers require specific settlement supports that ensures their privacy, safety, and health needs are met and to help them settle without experiencing discrimination and stigma.

To improve the resettlement process, it is crucial to provide specialised training for staff and partners involved in supporting LGBTQI+ refugees. This training should address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of LGBTQI+ individuals, ensuring that personnel are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to offer appropriate support.

Additionally, the program should collaborate with LGBTQI+ advocacy organisations to establish a network of resources and safe spaces for refugees upon their arrival in Australia. These partnerships will be instrumental in facilitating access to mental health services, legal aid, and community support groups, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging and security for LGBTQI+ refugees.

By implementing these measures, the program can significantly enhance its support services, providing a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQI+ refugees.

Recommendations:

- Establish dedicated pathways and quotas specifically for LGBTQI+ refugees in recognition of the unique and heightened dangers they face.
- Review existing HSP and SETS policies to ensure that considerations for the needs and safety of LGBTQI+ young people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds are embedded.
- Provide specialised training to Department staff and service providers to enhance understanding of the specific protection needs of LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers.

3.3 Women at Risk

Despite the inherent and gender-specific pre-arrival trauma and vulnerability for this cohort, there is a distinct absence of support that specifically target those arriving through this stream³ and MYAN would like to highlight the need for a more specialised gender-responsive and trauma-informed approach to settlement for this group.

For example, while all young people arriving in Australia can face similar challenges during the resettlement process, WaR visa holders share common pre-arrival vulnerabilities, including exposure to physical and sexual violence, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which contributes to the heightened vulnerability of this cohort, leading to additional settlement challenges, including for young people. These challenges include increased adult responsibility due to single headed households which impacts on their education and employment prospects, housing insecurity, and limited sexual health knowledge. This group of young people can also experience particular social challenges, including exclusion from their communities due to their mother's, or their own experiences prior to arrival in Australia.⁴

Improving the family reunification process can offer significant emotional and practical support to Woman at Risk visa holders. Allowing expedited processing of family reunification applications and providing clear information on the process can reduce the stress and uncertainty faced by these individuals. This would not only enhance their quality of life but also contribute to their overall sense of security and belonging in their new environment. By implementing these strategies, the Australian

³ MYAN & MCA (2021) *Women at Risk Visa Holders (Subclass 204) Consultation Report* Available at: myan.org.au

⁴ Ibid.

Government can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for those who have faced exceptional hardships.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritise family reunification for Women at Risk visa holders given the significance of family reunification to successful settlement outcomes and, more specifically, so that they and their dependants may be better supported by extended family.
2. Adopt a broader definition of 'family' to prioritise the reunification of older siblings and extended family members so that individuals and their dependants can be supported by extended family.

3.4 The Offshore Component

The processing times for asylum applications need to be significantly reduced. Long waiting periods not only add to the stress and uncertainty faced by asylum seekers but in some cases can also lead to prolonged periods of detention. Implementing more efficient processes and increasing resources for the Department of Home Affairs could help speed up decision-making while ensuring that each case is thoroughly and fairly assessed. There is room for improvement, particularly in the area of family reunification. One of the primary enhancements could be streamlining the application process for family reunions. Many families face lengthy wait times and complex bureaucratic procedures that delay reunification. Simplifying forms, improving communication between applicants and the Department of Home Affairs, and ensuring that caseworkers are adequately trained to handle sensitive cases could significantly alleviate the stress and uncertainty for families.

Another key improvement could involve increasing the annual quota for family reunion visas. Currently, the demand for these visas far exceeds the supply, leading to separations that last for years. By raising the cap on family reunion visas, Australia could better honour its commitment to humanitarian principles and support young refugees for whom family reunification is a cornerstone for their mental health and wellbeing, successful settlement, and future success.

Recommendations:

- Implement more efficient processes and increase resources for the Department of Home Affairs, so that decision-making can be expedited while maintaining thorough and fair assessments of each case.
- Streamline the family reunion application process, simplifying forms, and improving communication between applicants and the Department of Home Affairs.

4. Complementary Pathways

We are pleased to see that the Australian Government pledged to work with a range of non-government organisations to gradually increase community sponsored and other complementary places to 10,000 per year, in addition to the core humanitarian intake and look forward to this being implemented.

Complementary pathways, such as community sponsorship or labour schemes, can provide valuable opportunities for refugees, and these pathways provide additional opportunities for refugees to find safety and stability outside the traditional humanitarian intake, which can often be limited and highly competitive. By opening up alternative routes such as educational scholarships and labor mobility schemes, Australia can help a larger number of vulnerable individuals escape conflict and persecution, thereby expanding its humanitarian impact.

While it is beneficial to have a multifaceted approach to refugee resettlement that includes complementary pathways, it is crucial to maintain a balanced perspective. The core principle of the UNHCR guidelines is to ensure that the most vulnerable and those in the greatest need of protection are prioritised. When complementary pathways are overly highlighted, it risks creating a tiered system where refugees who have specific skills, educational backgrounds, or community connections are perceived as more 'worthy' of resettlement. This could undermine the humanitarian principle of impartiality, which dictates that aid and protection should be based solely on need, without discrimination. The Humanitarian Program should ensure that these pathways do not detract from the primary goal of addressing the urgent needs of the most vulnerable refugees as identified by the UNHCR.

4.1 Incentivising financial and in-kind contributions from the private and community sectors

To effectively incentivise financial and in-kind contributions from the private and community sectors for scalable complementary pathways for humanitarian entrants, the Australian Government can implement a multifaceted approach. One primary strategy could be the introduction of tax incentives and financial grants. By providing tax deductions or credits to businesses and individuals who contribute to humanitarian initiatives, the government can make charitable contributions more attractive. Additionally, offering matching grants could further encourage donations, as contributors would see their impact doubled, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective effort.

Promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) is another possible strategy. The government can facilitate and encourage collaborations between private enterprises, NGO's and community groups.

Establishing a dedicated task force or a coordination office within relevant government departments could serve to streamline these partnerships, providing a centralised platform for aligning efforts, sharing resources, and ensuring that contributions are effectively utilised.

Creating an enabling environment also involves building capacity within the community and providing robust support structures for humanitarian entrants. This includes investing in infrastructure, such as housing and education, and ensuring access to essential services like healthcare and employment opportunities. The government can collaborate with educational institutions to provide training and skill development programs tailored to the needs of humanitarian entrants, thus facilitating their integration and self-sufficiency. By addressing these foundational needs, the government can demonstrate a commitment to long-term success, encouraging further contributions from the private and community sectors.

4.2 The Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot

Through concessions to standard skilled visa eligibility requirements, the Pilot has the potential to significantly reduce barriers faced by skilled refugees and displaced people when trying to access skilled visas and we appreciate that this pilot program acknowledges the untapped potential and diverse skill sets that refugees bring to the table, which can significantly contribute to the country's economic growth and social cohesion. By providing a pathway for refugees to utilise their skills and secure meaningful employment, the program not only supports the refugees' self-reliance and dignity but also addresses skill shortages in various industries across Australia.

We suggest that the program ensures collaboration between government agencies, non-profit organisations, and private sector employers to create a more robust support network for refugees. This collaboration could include mentorship programs, job placement services, and tailored training initiatives that help refugees adapt their skills to the job market. Additionally, ensuring that refugees receive adequate language training and cultural orientation will enhance their ability to thrive in their new work environments.

The program should incorporate mechanisms to address potential barriers that refugees might face, such as recognition of overseas qualifications and work experience (mechanism which should be available to all refugees arriving in Australia). Streamlining the process for validating foreign credentials and providing bridging courses or certification programs can help refugees gain the necessary qualifications to work in their fields of expertise. By continually evaluating and refining the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot based on feedback from participants and stakeholders, this pilot has the potential to create a more inclusive and effective pathway for skilled refugees to settle in safety.

4.3 The Refugee Student Settlement Program (RSSP)

We would encourage the government to reconsider funding the RSSP pilot as a viable and additional complimentary pathway for refugees. The RSSP could offer an important opportunity for the

government to meet its stated aspiration of increasing the number of refugees who permanently resettle in Australia via community sponsorship and complementary pathways, in addition to traditional government-led humanitarian migration programs. A program like the proposed RSSP would offer refugees the opportunity to pursue resettlement using their skills, experience, and academic potential. The benefits of such a program could extend well beyond the classroom. By providing academic opportunities for young refugees, the RSSP could leverage university support to aid smooth transitions into local communities, enhance social cohesion, fill key skills shortages and employment needs, and contribute to Australia's rich multicultural society.

5. The Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)

We are pleased to see that the Australian Government pledged to work with a range of non-government organisations to gradually increase community sponsored and other complementary places to 10,000 per year, in addition to the core humanitarian intake and look forward to this being implemented.

While the program holds great promise, it must be carefully managed to prevent over-reliance on community support. One of the primary concerns is that community sponsorship cannot entirely replace the specialised services provided by settlement services and other supports such as mental health counselling, legal assistance, and language training. These services are pivotal in helping new arrivals integrate into society effectively. Furthermore, the rising cost of living and housing issues have made community participation in the program more challenging. To navigate these complexities, the Australian humanitarian program should diversify its support mechanisms and ensure sustainable funding sources. Increasing government funding and support for refugee and asylum seeker programs can alleviate the financial burden on individual sponsors and community groups.

Meeting the specific needs of young refugees is another crucial aspect of the CRISP program. The program should incorporate specialised youth training for volunteers, utilising resources like the National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF) and local MYAN training providers. This specialised training would enable volunteers to better understand and address the unique challenges faced by young refugees, ensuring a smoother transition and integration process.

Additionally, while having multiple pathways for settlement offers flexibility, it can also dilute resources and create logistical challenges. The Australian government must strike a balance between flexibility and efficiency, ensuring that all refugees receive consistent and high-quality support services. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the CRISP program is essential to assess its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments before considering any expansion. We would also suggest that if program numbers are not met, these places are reallocated to the Humanitarian Program numbers. By addressing these challenges, the CRISP program can better support refugees and enhance their integration into Australian society.

Recommendations:

- Incorporate nationally consistent, specialised youth training for all CRISP volunteers.
- Reallocate any unfilled program numbers to the offshore Humanitarian Program numbers.

6. Settlement

MYAN acknowledges the Australian Government's strong history of addressing global resettlement needs through its Humanitarian Program and its commitment to supporting successful settlement and integration outcomes for those who are newly arrived to Australia via this program. Australia is internationally recognised for its strong settlement services system, including its globally unique targeted investment in youth settlement support.

Australia's settlement service system has been built on learning lessons from each successive wave of new migrants resulting in a range of settlement supports and services that not only support new arrivals to settle in, but promote community connectedness and drive the national narrative on social cohesion.⁵

However, though Australia's settlement service system is advanced by global standards, there are areas in which improvements can be made. There is the capacity and the resourcefulness within the system overall to continuously improve, practically apply lessons learned, and meet contemporary challenges by finding new and better ways to work together and utilise shared knowledge and insights.

5.1 Supporting the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants

Australia can best support the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants by implementing a multi-faceted approach that includes targeted education and training programs, robust employment support services, and inclusive community engagement initiatives. These measures will not only assist humanitarian entrants in overcoming initial settlement challenges but also enable them to contribute significantly to the country's economic prosperity.

First and foremost, providing targeted education and training programs is crucial. Many humanitarian entrants may possess valuable skills and qualifications from their home countries that are not immediately recognised in Australia. Establishing pathways for credential recognition and offering tailored vocational training can help bridge this gap. Additionally, language proficiency is a significant barrier; therefore, intensive English language courses that are integrated with job-specific terminology and skills can enhance employability. These courses should have a youth-focused model as well. Existing partnerships with educational institutions and industry bodies can facilitate these programs, ensuring they are relevant and effective.

Employment support services play a critical role in helping humanitarian entrants navigate the job market. Creating specialised job placement agencies that understand the unique challenges faced by

⁵ CMY (2017) *Settlement outcomes of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. A submission to the Federal Government's Inquiry into Settlement Outcomes* Available here: cmy.net.au

these individuals can lead to better job matches and higher retention rates. Mentorship programs, where established professionals provide guidance and support, can also be invaluable. Furthermore, promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace through awareness campaigns and incentives for employers to hire humanitarian entrants can foster a more welcoming employment environment.

It also requires all service providers to build their knowledge and skills for engaging meaningfully with refugee young people, and to work collaboratively in their approaches in order to meet discreet and intersectional needs. Youth specific settlement services are critical in addressing youth specific barriers and supporting positive settlement outcomes and has significant and long-term benefits for young people, their families and communities, and for a diverse, socially cohesive Australia. Youth participation is essential in this process, as it provides valuable insights and opinions that can inform decision-making at all levels. Engaging young people in decision-making processes also has significant benefits for the young people themselves, as well as for the organisations and communities that support them. Therefore, it is crucial to empower these communities and facilitate pathways to self-agency.

