



## The facts on refugee settlement in Armidale

Here are some facts about your new community members and how they will settle into life in Armidale.

### Refugees

In 2018, Armidale will welcome a number of families from refugee background who are beginning new lives in Australia after escaping the conflict in Iraq and Syria.

Everyone who comes to Australia as a refugee must pass a series of rigorous health, character and security checks before being granted a visa. These are just regular people who, through no fault of their own, have been forced to leave behind their homes, businesses, studies and everything else they know in search of safety.

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a community organisation and social business that will support refugees through the early days of settlement. For up to 18 months, SSI's Armidale team will assist newcomers to gain the knowledge, skills and experience they need to live independently in the Australian community. This support includes airport pick-ups, short-term accommodation, health assessments, links to education, English and employment support providers, and orientation to the local community.

Refugees don't just want to survive here — they want to thrive. By supporting refugees through the early days in Australia, SSI aims to improve their social and economic participation and, ultimately, set refugees up to lead independent lives.

### Housing

A key priority on arrival to Australia is securing long-term, stable housing. Refugees receive critical information about the local rental market and their rights and responsibilities as a tenant. New arrivals without existing community links are also connected with specialist housing support services to identify and secure long-term housing in the private rental market. Research last year showed almost all people supported by SSI secured private rental accommodation by the time they exited the service.



settlement • support • independence

## Employment and education

SSI assesses refugees' prior experience and helps them to identify suitable pathways to resuming their studies or employment, or pursuing new opportunities in Australia. This includes undertaking bridging courses, taking steps to have prior learning or experience recognised, or connecting with local employment services providers and work experience opportunities. Refugees come from all walks of life — they're farmers, teachers, doctors and tradespeople. Some 75 per cent of refugees arrive with at least high school level education, while 35 per cent have a tertiary qualification obtained either pre or post arrival — compared with 39 per cent of the Australian population. With a little early assistance, refugees go on to make significant contributions to the community.

## English

Each new arrival is entitled to up to 510 hours of English language tuition as part of the government-funded Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). School-age refugees receive equivalent support through Intensive English Centres. SSI ensures all new arrivals are linked with the appropriate language support. Both anecdotal feedback from refugees and research indicates that learning English is a top priority for the majority of new arrivals.

## Community

Refugees are also encouraged to take part in a range of social and community activities to help them integrate into the community. This is a great way for new arrivals to get to know their neighbours and to start rebuilding the social networks they left behind in their native countries. The benefits of this are two way. Regional communities like Armidale also have much to gain from welcoming these new community members. New arrivals make important social contributions, such as reviving regional schools and countering population decline.

Refugees come to Australia as part of our humanitarian intake, so while it's not incumbent on anyone to repay the on-arrival support they receive, research shows there is a significant economic gain associated with refugee settlement in regional areas. With the population growth, comes an increased need for teachers, doctors and other services to support an expanding community. In the Victorian town of Nhill, for example, the net monetary gain of resettling 160 refugees over a five-year period exceeded \$41 million.

## Why Armidale?

The Federal Government carefully selected Armidale as a settlement location for refugees, joining other regional resettlement hubs such as Coffs Harbour and Wagga Wagga. SSI delivers settlement support as part of the government-funded Humanitarian Settlement Program.

The push for Armidale to become a settlement location for refugees has been driven from within the community itself. The Armidale Regional Council has, for example, unanimously voted to support such settlement on two occasions. Refugees and migrants are not new to Armidale. Many friends and neighbours are themselves of refugee background or descended from earlier groups of refugees and migrants who built new lives in Armidale. Refugees have made important contributions to the social and economic fabric of the Armidale community and will continue to do so.

## How can I help?

Continued support from the community is critical to ensuring refugees feel at home in Armidale. This support can take many forms. It might be volunteering with SSI, offering a friendly smile at the supermarket, or holding an event to welcome refugees to their new home. Get in touch with SSI to find out how you can get involved with refugee settlement in Armidale.

---

### Contact:

P: 02 8799 6700

E: [info@ssi.org.au](mailto:info@ssi.org.au)

W: [ssi.org.au/services/refugee-support-services](http://ssi.org.au/services/refugee-support-services)

### Volunteer:

P: 1800 912 823

E: [volunteer@ssi.org.au](mailto:volunteer@ssi.org.au)

W: [ssi.org.au/support-ssi/volunteer](http://ssi.org.au/support-ssi/volunteer)

### Donate:

W: [ssi.org.au/donate](http://ssi.org.au/donate)

---