



Refugee resettlement in Armidale

The Armidale community will soon welcome a number of families from refugee background who are beginning their new lives in Australia. Here are some things you may like to know about your new community members.

Why are refugees coming to 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. 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.

What do we know about them?

Next year, Armidale will welcome newly arrived refugees, most of whom are coming to Australia as part of family groups. These families will begin arriving in Armidale in February. Like most of the refugees who have recently arrived on our shores, these families are 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 and everything they know in search of safety.



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What is the difference between a refugee and a migrant?

A migrant is a person who makes a conscious choice to leave their country to seek a better life. They can plan their travel, take their belongings with them and say goodbye to the important people in their lives. They are free to return home at any time if things don't work out or if they get homesick. Refugees are forced to leave their country due to war or persecution. They leave behind their homes, most or all of their belongings, and their family members and friends. They cannot return unless the situation that forced them to leave improves.

Will refugees contribute to our community?

Regional communities like Armidale have much to gain from resettling refugees. New arrivals make important social contributions, such as reviving regional schools and countering population decline. Refugee resettlement also has economic benefits. 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.

Where will refugees find work?

The arrival of refugees will actually create jobs. The more Armidale's population grows, the more services and businesses are required to meet its expanding needs, which leads to job creation. Refugees come from all walks of life — they're farmers, teachers, bakers and tradespeople. They have skills and experience that can be of great value to the community.

Who will help refugees to settle?

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a not-for-profit organisation that will provide settlement support to refugees. This includes airport pick-ups, short-term accommodation, health assessments, linkages to education, English and employment support providers, and orientation to the local community. Refugees are also encouraged to take part in a range of social and community engagement activities to help them integrate into the community. By supporting refugees through the early days in Australia, SSI aims to improve their social and economic participation and, ultimately, sets refugees up to live independent lives in Australia.

SSI's Armidale office will open in 2018, and staff will work hand-in-hand with the community and local organisations such as Northern Settlement Services. 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 super market, or holding an event to welcome refugees to their new home.

Contact SSI:

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Volunteer:

P: 1800 912 823

E: volunteer@ssi.org.au

W: ssi.org.au/support-ssi/volunteer

Donate:

W: ssi.org.au/donate
