



# Foundations for Belonging 2025

Insights on refugees with disability in Australia



## Easy Read Report

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Culture  
and Society

**SSI** For equality  
of life.

# About this report



Foundations for Belonging is a research project.  
It is about refugees who come from other countries to live in Australia.



It is about their experiences when they settle in Australia.



This part of the research is about refugees with disability.



The research helps us to understand

- different parts of refugees' lives
- how we can support them to settle well.



This report is in Easy Read.

You can ask someone to help you read this report.

# How we did the research



The researchers were from

- Settlement Services International
- Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University.



We talked to refugees with disability and their families.

We asked about their new life in Australia.



Refugees were from countries like Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

They have been in Australia for about four years.



We did interviews with refugees.

They shared their stories with us.



We did surveys where refugees answered questions about life in Australia.



# Settling in Australia



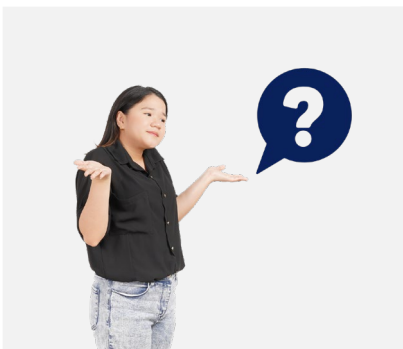
When refugees with disability move to Australia, they start a new life.  
They become part of the Australian community.



There are many good things about life in Australia.  
There is support for people with disability.



But it can also be hard for refugees to settle and be part of the community.



There can be problems with finding a home or learning English.  
Or getting the services they need.



Having a disability can make it even harder to settle in a new country.

# Integration



**Integration** means fitting in and being part of the community.

It is about belonging and feeling at home.



When refugees take part in a new community, they need to:

- have rights like everyone else



- do things to be part of their new community

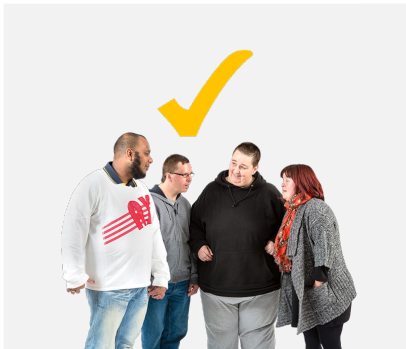


- get the services they need



- share **values** with the community
- Values are things we think are good or important.

# Social connections

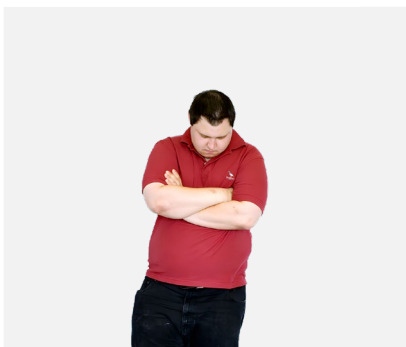


**Social connections** means meeting people, joining in and getting social support.

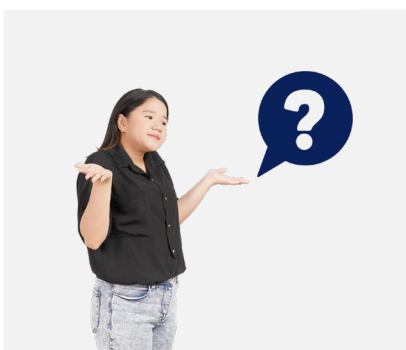


Refugees with disability mostly feel good about settling in Australia.

They feel welcome, and part of the community.

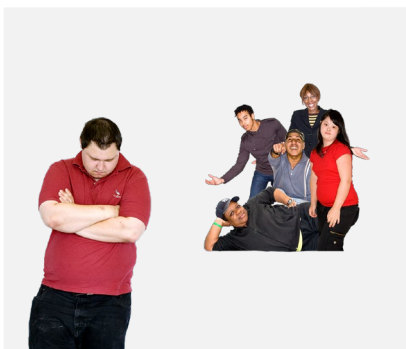


But they say it can be hard to connect with others.  
Or make friends outside their family or community.



They might struggle to learn English.

Sometimes it is hard to understand Australian culture.



Having a disability can make it hard to meet new people.



It can be hard to find and use government services.



This can be because of problems like transport, or language difficulties.



It can also be hard to use apps or the internet.  
For example, for studying or getting services.



But refugees do use technology to talk to family and friends.



This helps them feel less alone and stay connected.

# A home, education, work, and health



Refugees with disability face many problems when they move to a new country.

This affects how they settle into life in Australia.

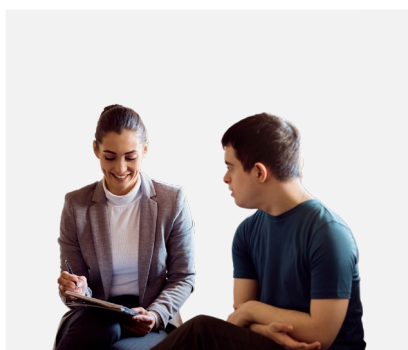


Finding a place to live can be difficult for refugees with disability.



They need homes that they can afford.

They need homes that are suitable for their disability.



Getting a job can also be difficult for refugees with disability.

They need the right support to find work.



Support services must work together to give the right support.

This includes disability employment services.





Learning English is important for refugees with disability.

Many want to learn English, but they can face problems.



Refugees with disability often find it hard to join leisure activities.

Like festivals or community events.



Many refugees with disability said their health was poor or very poor.



Refugees need services to help with their health and wellbeing.

Like NDIS, Medicare, or interpreters.

# Rights and responsibilities



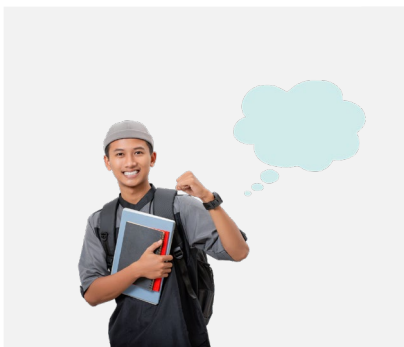
Refugees with disability feel good about their rights and responsibilities in Australia.



Refugees in this study have **permanent residency**.  
This means they can live in Australia.  
They can work, study, and get healthcare.

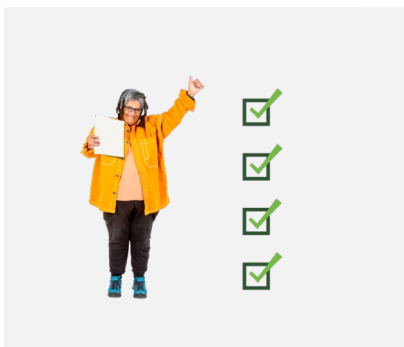


They want to become Australian citizens to have rights and take part in the community.



Refugees with disability have hopes for their life in Australia.

In the future, they hope for:



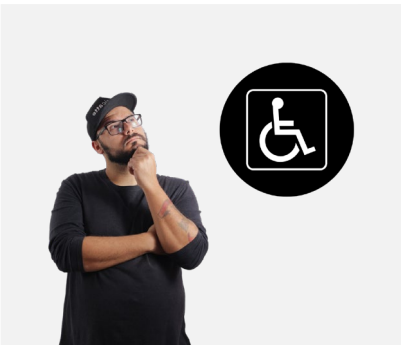
- health
- housing
- family connections
- disability support.

# Getting support



In Australia there are settlement services to help refugees start their new life.

There are also disability services like NDIS.

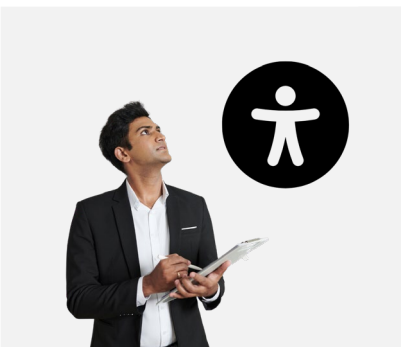


But refugees with disability do not always use disability services.

They might not use NDIS to get support.



Sometimes they do not use health services, education or social support.



We must understand refugees' social connections.  
We must look at how refugees get services.  
And how they use their rights.

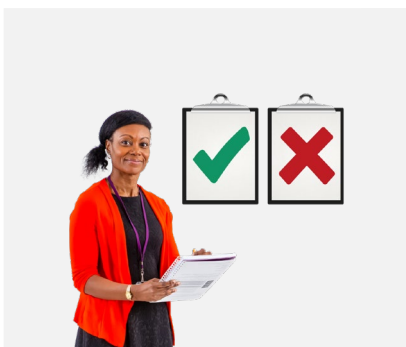


Settlement and disability services must work together when they support refugees.

# What governments can do



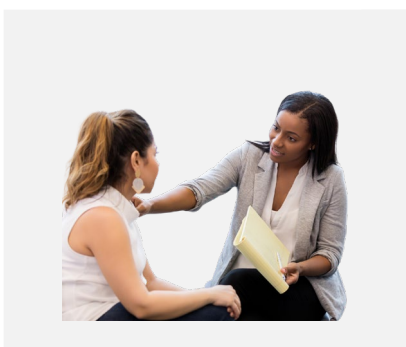
The Australian Government should review its plans and programs to help refugees settle in Australia.



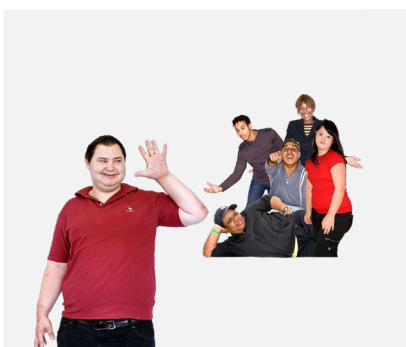
**Review** means to see how well these plans are working.



Government plans must solve the problems that stop refugees from getting government services.



When refugees with disability first arrive in Australia, they must get the right support.



Refugees need support to make social connections and meet people.





Refugees need programs to help them learn English successfully.



NDIS

They need support to use government services. That means disability services and other government services as well.



NDIS

Refugees need to get NDIS and disability support quickly when they arrive in Australia.

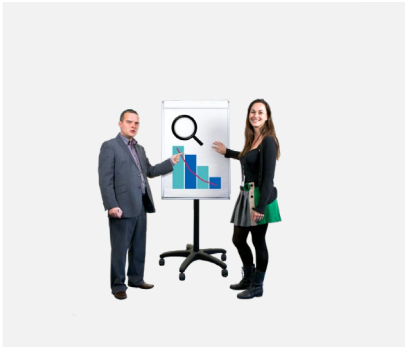


Online government services and websites must be easy to use.  
The language must be easy to understand.

# Settlement services



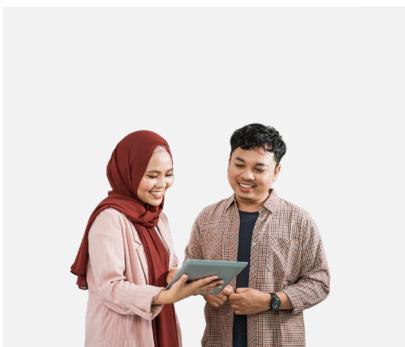
Settlement services can help refugees with disability find jobs and learn new skills.



They can help refugees get adult education and training.



They can help refugees make social connections and take part in community activities.

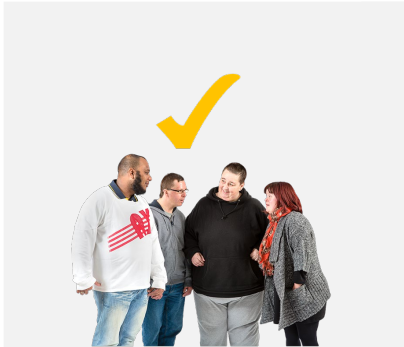


Settlement services can help refugees learn digital skills and use the internet.



Settlement services can help with understanding cultural differences.

# Research



We need more research about refugees who have disability.

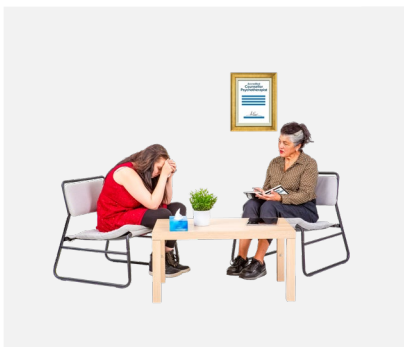


The research should look at how different parts of people's lives affect each other.

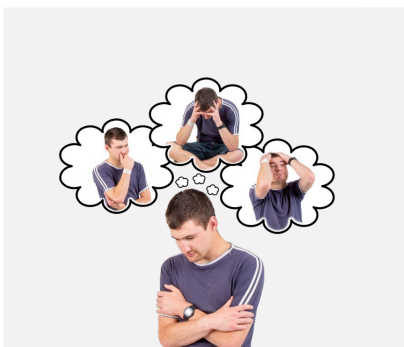
Like their disability, health, and their rights.



The research must include people with disability. It must respect their cultures and experiences.



The research must understand when refugees have experiences of **trauma**.



Trauma is when something bad has happened. It makes a person very sad, scared, or upset.

# Conclusion



This research shows that refugees with disability need the right support when they settle in Australia.



This includes support from the government, the community, and service providers.



These services and the community must all work together.

Working together can make a big difference.



The research explains how we can meet the needs of refugees with disability better.



We can make sure that they settle well and they are part of their new community.



# For more information



You can find more information on these websites:



<https://www.ndis.gov.au/languages>



<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/ndis-each-state>



<https://www.ssi.org.au/our-services/disability/>

This Easy Read report is based on the Summary Report of Tan, W., McMahon, T., Nguyen, T., Goggin, G., & Thohari, S. (2025). *Insights on Refugees with Disability in Australia: Foundations for Belonging 2025*. SSI/Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University.

You can find other versions of this research at:  
<https://www.ssi.org.au/about-us/research-and-policy>

The other versions include:

- the Full Report
- a Summary Report
  - a PDF version
  - a Word version
  - an Arabic version (PDF)

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