Submission on Australia’s Humanitarian Programme 2017-18

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Jesuit Social Services: Who we are

Jesuit Social Services works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged people, families, and communities.

Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where it has the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. Jesuit Social Services values all persons and seeks to engage with them in a respectful way, that acknowledges their experiences and skills and gives them the opportunity to harness their full potential.

We do this by working directly to address disadvantage and by influencing hearts and minds for social change. We strengthen and build respectful, constructive relationships for:

- **Effective services** – by partnering with people most in need and those who support them to address disadvantage
- **Education** – by providing access to life-long learning and development
- **Capacity building** – by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact
- **Advocacy** – by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research
- **Leadership development** – by partnering across sectors to build expertise and commitment for justice.

The promotion of **education, lifelong learning and capacity building** is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by suicide, trauma and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment.

Currently our direct services and volunteer programs are located in Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory, and include:

- **Justice Services**: supporting young people and adults in the justice system, and assisting them to make a successful transition from custody back into the community. Within the suite of services are Perry House, Dillon House and Youth Justice Community Support Services.
- **Jesuit Community College**: increasing opportunities for people constrained by social and economic disadvantage to participate in education, work and community life and reach their full potential.
- **Settlement Program**: working with newly arrived migrants and refugees across metropolitan Melbourne, including the African-Australian and Vietnamese communities.
• **Connexions**: delivering intensive support and counselling for young people with co-occurring mental health, substance and alcohol misuse problems.

• **Artful Dodgers Studios**: providing pathways to education, training and employment for young people with multiple and complex needs associated with mental health, substance abuse and homelessness.

• **The Outdoor Experience**: offering an alternative treatment service through a range of outdoor intervention programs for young people aged 15 – 25 years, who have or have had issues with alcohol and/or other drugs.

• **Support After Suicide**: supporting people bereaved by suicide, including children and young people.

• **Capacity building** activities in NSW (Just Reinvest project in Bourke) and the Northern Territory with Aboriginal communities to improve their situation and to have more control over their lives.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants’ lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

Our Learning and Practice Development Unit builds the capacity of our services through staff development, training and evaluation, as well as articulating and disseminating information on best practice approaches to intervening with participants across our programs.
Our recommendations

- We recommend the Australian Government continues to expand the number of Humanitarian places in ongoing program years and, in addition, makes a further special intake of 12,000 places for people displaced by the Syrian conflict.

- We recommend that, for future program years, the Australian Government allocates places for the Community Support Programme outside the Humanitarian Programme.

- We recommend the Australian Government promotes and facilitates private and community sector collaborations that foster workplace inclusion for humanitarian entrants, including paid internship programs and intensive employment coaching.

- We recommend the Australian Government explores options to encourage the employment of refugees and humanitarian entrants through set employment quotas for publicly-funded works and by offering financial incentives to the private sector.

- We recommend the Australian Government amends the Humanitarian Settlement Services exit criteria to define long-term accommodation as securing a lease of at least 12 months in length.

- We recommend the Australian Government explores options to provide specialised assistance for humanitarian entrants in negotiating public housing and the private rental market.

- We recommend the Australian Government allocates dedicated places under the Migration Programme for family members of refugees and humanitarian entrants.

- We recommend the Australian Government adopts approaches that promote greater flexibility for migrants completing their AMEP tuition, with particular consideration given to migrants who are responsible for young children.

- We encourage more facilitated pathways between Humanitarian Settlement Services and Settlement Grants providers to ensure migrants receive adequate support to access services beyond the initial six-to-12 month post-arrival period.

- We call on the Australian Government to recognise that settlement is a lifelong endeavour and fund flexible approaches towards supporting migrants, such as extending programs funded under Settlement Grants to be able to deliver services beyond the current post-arrival five year period of eligibility.
Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to put forward our views on the composition of the 2017-18 Humanitarian Programme, as well as the support programs assisting humanitarian entrants to secure stable employment and achieve self-sufficiency.

For 40 years Jesuit Social Services has been engaging effectively with disadvantaged people, including successive waves of new migrant groups, to improve personal resilience and build a strong sense of belonging and social cohesion.

Our programs in this space have included:

- the Settlement Program and Homework Club (discussed below), which work in western Melbourne with newly arrived communities to build capacity and a sense of belonging
- leadership programs for young people from African countries
- the African Australian Inclusion Program, which supports skilled migrants to gain local work experience and a sense of belonging
- the Refugee Speakers Program
- the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum, which works to foster greater understanding and compassion towards asylum seekers and migrants within the Australian community.

In 2011, we established Jesuit Community College in order to engage more effectively with highly disadvantaged and disengaged groups within the community, including humanitarian entrants, and to support them on pathways into education, training and employment. The College provides both pre-accredited and accredited education programs for participants, based on their interests and objectives, to improve their prospects for employment. In particular, the College promotes the social inclusion of humanitarian entrants and other newly-arrived migrants through the provision of English language classes.

Members of migrant groups have reported substantial disengagement from Australian society. Several overlapping factors contribute to this sense of disengagement, including difficulties adapting to the Australian education system, an inability to find employment, a lack of supporting programs, poverty, the traumatic backgrounds of many migrants, and discrimination from the broader community. A further barrier to social integration for some recently arrived migrants is limited knowledge of the English language.

Our submission illustrates that the private and community sectors are already willing to assist disadvantaged migrants address these barriers in order to secure stable employment and achieve self-sufficiency. In fact, we demonstrate one example of how they are already working together on an innovative program to this end, through the African Australian Inclusion Program. The Australian Government has a crucial role in fostering initiatives from these sectors through promotion and appropriate funding.

While we have some views on the composition of the 2017-18 Humanitarian Programme (in response to question one of the department’s submission request), our submission focuses primarily on the support structures for empowering humanitarian entrants to participate fully in the Australian community (in response to question two).
Our Settlement Program

In the western suburbs of Melbourne, Jesuit Social Services delivers the Settlement Program (under Settlement Grants) to support newly arrived people build capacity, overcome barriers and foster a sense of belonging. Our staff work with individuals, families and groups in the areas of casework support, referrals and community development.

Through individual casework, we develop people’s ability and confidence to access support services, facilitate independence, enhance living skills and promote meaningful community engagement. We also refer people to local networks and services, such as those providing housing support and cultural linkages.

As part of the Settlement Program, our community development programs increase people’s knowledge and understanding of topics essential to settling into life in Australia. Topics we cover include health advice, parenting support, the impact of the journey to Australia, education and English language support, and advocacy. We run facilitated groups, workshops and information sessions based on participant-identified need, including specific groups for women, elderly people and youth. Our facilitated workshops have included parenting skills development and pathways to self-employment.

We also administer a regular Homework Club, where volunteers offer education support to primary and secondary school students, who are primarily from families with refugee and humanitarian entrant backgrounds. Importantly, the Homework Club engages participants who have lived in Australia for more than five years yet still require support to engage in education and overcome the diverse challenges faced throughout settlement.

Our direct experience with Settlement Program participants informs our advocacy work, in giving voice to their experiences and in seeking to influence and contribute to Government thinking, policy and legislation in settlement matters.
1. Priorities for resettlement under the 2017-18 Humanitarian Programme

Jesuit Social Services supports current arrangements which prioritise protection needs, as identified and referred by the UNHCR, without giving weight to the potential economic benefits of applicants or to culturally or religiously-based integration prospects.

We welcome the Australian Government’s staggered increase in Humanitarian places over the next two program years from 13,750 to 18,750. We also welcome the Australian Government’s commitment of increased international aid to support refugee populations displaced by the Syrian conflict.

However, we consider that the Australian community is willing to support a more generous response to the needs of displaced people and has the capacity to welcome more new-arrivals under the Humanitarian Programme.

We recommend the Australian Government continues to expand the number of Humanitarian places in ongoing program years and, in addition, makes a further special intake of 12,000 places for people displaced by the Syrian conflict.

Jesuit Social Services is disappointed with the recent Federal Budget announcement that the allocation of 1000 places for the Community Support Programme, which will allow individuals and private organisations to sponsor and fund humanitarian entrants to Australia, will be taken from the existing Humanitarian Programme quota, rather than being an additional allocation. This approach effectively subsidises government spending, and serves only to diminish community enthusiasm for offering extra places for refugee and humanitarian entrants under this scheme.

We recommend that, for future program years, the Australian Government allocates places for the Community Support Programme outside the Humanitarian Programme.
2. **Supporting humanitarian entrants to secure stable employment and achieve self-sufficiency**

Overcoming barriers through private and community sector collaboration

Engaging with newly arrived migrant groups over a period of 40 years, Jesuit Social Services recognises the importance of employment for successful settlement outcomes. Employment fosters broader participation in society, provides a sense of purpose, and creates opportunities for migrants to become contributing members of the community. Employment is understandably crucial for ensuring positive settlement outcomes, given that the financial strain on newly arrived peoples can be significant. Jesuit Social Services’ participants have indicated that financial pressure comes from multiple sources including the lack of a broader family network of financial support, the responsibility of sending financial aid back to their country of origin, and the expense of public transport, utilities, and education materials for children, exacerbated if from a large family.

Discrimination, racism and prejudice are barriers that many migrants have faced. Participants in Jesuit Social Services’ Settlement Program and African Visitation and Mentoring Program, which provides mentoring for African-Australians involved with the criminal justice system, have reported feeling discriminated against across multiple domains including engaging with police, accessing services, travelling via public transport, seeking employment and securing stable housing. The issue of racial profiling by police has been well-publicised over recent years, a pertinent example being the ‘Haile-Michael and Others v. Commissioner of Police and Others’ race discrimination case in Victoria, in February 2013. In this case, six young people of African descent claimed that Victoria Police had engaged in unlawful racial profiling practices. Analysis of police data from 2006 – 2009, released in reports following the case, identified that young African Australians living in Flemington were almost two and half times more likely to be stopped by police than people from other cultural backgrounds. Prejudice presents a significant barrier to gaining employment. A study conducted with 72 members of the South Sudanese community seeking employment in the Australian Capital Territory found that almost all (89 per cent) of the participants experienced racism in the process of looking for a job. Participants commonly confronted complaints regarding their ‘strong accents’. Many of the job seekers were university graduates, and as a result of the difficulty in gaining employment they began to question the intrinsic value of their qualification.

Based on our experiences engaging with migrant communities seeking employment, Jesuit Social Services formed a partnership with the National Australia Bank (NAB) in 2009 to establish the African Australian Inclusion Program (AAIP; see caption below).

This program fosters workplace inclusion for disadvantaged and underemployed skilled African migrants by addressing the initial barriers that prevent entry into the Australian workforce. While the AAIP produces a social good, in broadening the employment prospects of disadvantaged migrants, it also provides significant benefits to the private sector in opening up an untapped labour market of talented workers. The program has been successful because it offers the private sector partner the competitive advantage of bringing experienced, skilled, yet underemployed, job seekers to their attention. It also serves to benefit the private sector through workplace diversification, in boosting staff morale and in enhancing corporate reputation.
The success of this initiative demonstrates that the private and community sectors can collaborate creatively for the inclusion of disadvantaged migrants in the workforce, in a way that serves mutually beneficial and productive outcomes. It offers a model that could well be adapted for the workplace inclusion of humanitarian entrants. While humanitarian entrants may not necessarily enjoy the same level of skills and work experience as the cohort assisted through the AAIP, they can offer the private sector the advantage of a resourceful and flexible workforce. The AAIP demonstrates that disadvantaged migrants can achieve secure employment, once they are given the chance to overcome entry barriers.
The community sector can provide support to humanitarian entrants by developing similar dedicated internship programs, in partnership with the private sector, which can offer corporate work experience and an induction into Australian workplace culture and practice. In addition, there is scope for the community sector, with adequate government funding, to develop intensive employment coaching programs, tailored to humanitarian entrants. Such intensive employment coaching can be valuable in preparing job-seekers for entry into Australian workplace culture and in supporting new workers and their employers in the early stages of employment.

We recommend the Australian Government promotes and facilitates further private and community sector collaborations that foster workplace inclusion for humanitarian entrants, including paid internship programs and intensive employment coaching.

Jesuit Social Services welcomes recent successful state and federal government initiatives to increase indigenous public-sector employment by setting aspirational quotas, under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation. We also welcome private sector initiatives to increase workplace diversity and inclusion, encouraged by government support and financial incentives. We consider that employment outcomes for humanitarian entrants could also be encouraged through similar initiatives.

We recommend the Australian Government explores options to encourage the employment of refugees and humanitarian entrants through set employment quotas for publicly-funded works and by offering targeted financial incentives to the private sector.

Preconditions for employment and self-sufficiency

The prospects for successful settlement outcomes, such as secure employment and self-sufficiency, ultimately depend on sufficient support structures being in place for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Suitable long-term housing and adequate English language proficiency are essential building blocks for a person being able to enter the workforce. For some refugees and humanitarian entrants, having family and community support networks may be necessary to allow for participation in the workforce. Government and community sector support services aimed at successful settlement outcomes must keep in mind the unique disadvantages and vulnerabilities faced by refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Housing

Securing long-term and stable accommodation is an essential precondition for humanitarian entrants to be able to secure employment and achieve self-sufficiency. However, humanitarian entrants face unique challenges in accessing secure housing. Jesuit Social Services works with newly arrived migrants in need of support to access secure housing, including women who have experienced family violence. They report experiencing discrimination when engaging with public housing providers without the support of a caseworker and in negotiating the private rental market.

We recommend the Australian Government explores options for providing specialised assistance to humanitarian entrants in negotiating public housing and the private rental market.
Participants in our programs have also indicated that, although securing a six month rental property lease generally meets the exit criteria for the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) program, this is a relatively short period of time that does not guarantee stable housing and can leave an individual vulnerable should they fail to secure a subsequent lease.

**We recommend the Australian Government amends the Humanitarian Settlement Services exit criteria to define long-term accommodation as securing a lease of at least 12 months in length.**

**Family support networks**

Through our work with newly-arrived migrant groups, we recognise the importance of family and community links which support integration into the Australian community and foster self-sufficiency. We note that many newly-arrived members of the Australian community, including humanitarian entrants and refugees who arrived by irregular means, currently face the hardship of protracted separation from close family members.

Broadening the pathways for the family members of refugees and humanitarian entrants to enter Australia, either through the family stream of the permanent Migration Programme or by a dedicated family reunion program, could significantly increase the integration prospects for many refugees and humanitarian entrants. Reunited families can offer stable support networks for refugees and humanitarian entrants, which will ultimately reduce demand on government and community sector support. Family support can also offer the stability and caring arrangements that foster stable employment. The unique vulnerabilities of refugees and humanitarian entrants warrant a dedicated allocation of places under the Migration Programme to facilitate family reunion to support their integration.

**We recommend the Australian Government allocates dedicated places under the Migration Programme for family members of refugees and humanitarian entrants.**

**Language, education and access to services**

Language can be a significant barrier for refugees and humanitarian entrants, affecting almost all other domains of settlement. Although the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition, Jesuit Social Services’ participants have indicated this is less than adequate to obtain a level of English that allows an individual to confidently engage with employers and service providers.

For migrants who are also parents, the capacity to attend AMEP tuition and complete it within five years of commencement can be limited because of the demands of raising young children in a new country. Attending AMEP tuition thus comes with the added responsibility of organising childcare or alternative arrangements for the care of children.

**We recommend the Australian Government adopts approaches that promote greater flexibility for migrants completing their AMEP tuition, with particular consideration given to migrants that are responsible for young children**
Engaging with Australian service systems such as Centrelink and Medicare can be difficult not only because of language proficiency, but also because of the complexity of the systems. As the HSS program tends to only offer support engaging with services within the first six to 12 months of arrival, migrants can be left to engage with these services without support and without the confidence to do so. Although migrants are able to be referred to a Settlement Grants provider for support following the six to 12 month period, in our experience more facilitated referral pathways between HSS and Settlement Grants providers are required to ensure migrants receive consistent and adequate support to access services.

For newly arrived migrants, engaging with education providers can be onerous due to unfamiliarity with formal education structures as well as year level generally being determined by age rather than actual level of educational attainment.\(^5\)

We encourage more facilitated pathways between Humanitarian Settlement Services and Settlement Grants providers to ensure migrants receive adequate support to access services beyond the initial six-to-12 month post-arrival period.

Recognising the pre-arrival circumstances of humanitarian entrants

Jesuit Social Services works with participants who have experienced significant trauma as a result of civil war, intergenerational conflict, displacement and extended periods of time living in refugee camps. Our extensive experience working with newly arrived peoples - particularly the Vietnamese, Burmese, Tibetan, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Oromo, Amharic, Somali and South Sudanese communities - has revealed the significant impact that pre-arrival and migration experiences have on settlement outcomes, such as securing stable employment and achieving self-reliance.

For those forced to flee their country of origin, yearning for their culture, lives lost and family left behind can lead to the development of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Further to this, many of our participants have had limited access to education prior to their arrival in Australia and possess low levels of literacy and numeracy, adding to the stress of engaging with their new community.

Studies such as Building a New Life in Australia\(^6\) conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies demonstrate the pre-arrival experiences of newly arrived peoples. The first wave of the study was conducted with close to 2,400 respondents who had been granted a humanitarian visa to live in Australia, almost all of whom arrived in 2013. The study highlighted the disadvantage experienced by recently arrived migrants, finding that most participants reported relatively low levels of English language proficiency or education prior to arrival in Australia. Around 15 per cent of adult respondents reported having never attended school, and a further 34 per cent had fewer than 10 years of schooling.

Mental health findings in the study were also telling, with 89 per cent of participants reporting they or their family had experienced traumatic events (war, persecution, and/or extreme living conditions) prior to migrating. Thirty-five per cent of males and 45 per cent of females indicated moderate-to-high levels of psychological distress prior to conducting the survey and many participants reported they were separated from other family members wanting to come to Australia.\(^7\)
These pre-arrival experiences impact on migrants’ ability to connect with family, friends and develop a sense of belonging in their new community. Past experiences of corruption and distrust amongst authorities and organisations may make engaging with law enforcement agencies overwhelming, and low literacy levels can lead to difficulty understanding new legal, social, economic and political structures.

Pre-arrival challenges play a significant role in an individual’s experience of settlement. Understanding this is fundamental to the way we work. Jesuit Social Services consistently aims to engage participants from a person centred, trauma-informed and strengths based approach. While policy makers and service providers must necessarily look for common understandings, themes and trends when working with newly arrived people, it is crucial that we never lose sight of the person who remains at the centre of our response. Jesuit Social Services is always seeking to bring the person to the forefront of our considerations, and to influence others to take a broad, rich view of the human reality that often lies behind the statistic.

We call on the Australian Government to ensure programs and policies affecting newly arrived migrants recognise the significant impact that pre-arrival experiences have on individuals’ settlement outcomes.

Jesuit Social Services believes that settlement is an individualised, complex and lifelong endeavour. Some challenges will be overcome, while some will be overcome and then return; therefore our response must be adaptable and based on a person’s unique support needs. We believe that services funded under Settlement Grants - like the Settlement Program - should be able to respond to the settlement needs of migrants beyond the current post-arrival five year period of eligibility. Settlement services and the legislation that govern them must allow for tailored and flexible supports that mirror the non-linear journey towards successful settlement.

We call on the Australian Government to recognise that settlement is a lifelong endeavour and fund flexible approaches towards supporting migrants, such as extending programs funded under Settlement Grants to be able to deliver services beyond the current post-arrival five year period of eligibility.

7 ibid
9 Olliff, L., Mohamed, F. (2007). ‘Settling in: How do refugee young people fair within Australia’s settlement system?’, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Melbourne