



## Information Package for Group Mentorship Program (2020/21)

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## 1. What is the Group Mentorship Program (GMP)?

Our website now features a 'Group Mentorship Program' page in which all key materials relating to the Group Mentorship Program can be found – including this Information Package. Please see <http://www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au/how-you-can-help/2020-group-mentorship-program/>.

### a. Background

The Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (CRSI) has been advocating for the introduction of a community refugee sponsorship program in Australia, which would enable ordinary Australians to sponsor refugees from overseas. This vision is inspired by the successful community sponsorship program operating in Canada since the late 1970s, which has enabled more than 325,000 refugees to build a new life in Canada, in addition to those resettled under the government-funded program. Similar schemes are now being implemented in many countries around the world, including in the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand.

The community sponsorship program that we are advocating for would involve sponsor groups committing to provide 12 months of practical settlement support to a refugee individual/family as well as cover their basic financial needs during that period – with sponsored 'places' thereby being added to the visas available under Australia's long-standing government-funded resettlement program.

The federal government is currently reviewing its refugee sponsorship policies and we are hopeful that a suitable federal community refugee sponsorship program could be available next year. While COVID-19 has significantly curtailed international travel, governments and international organisations such as UNHCR and IOM are working to ensure that refugee resettlement can resume as soon as possible in a way that is safe for all.

Meanwhile, to help pave the way for this, CRSI is working with a number of partner organisations to launch a Group Mentorship Program (GMP) in 2020 and we are looking for mentor groups to join us on this journey as the trailblazers for a new era of community sponsorship in Australia.

#### **Terminology: 'Sponsorship' vs 'Mentorship'**

The GMP is envisioned as a one-off, pilot project on the road to a future large-scale community refugee sponsorship program backed by the federal government. Therefore, we use the terms 'mentor' and 'mentorship' in relation to this preliminary project (which does not require any changes to federal government policy or access to additional visas) and the terms 'sponsor' and 'sponsorship' in relation to a future government-backed program.

This Information Package primarily describes the GMP. For more information about CRSI's vision for a future community refugee sponsorship program:

- See our Community Sponsorship Explainer and 2019 CRSI Position Paper at <http://www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au/resources/>
- Tell us how you would like to help and join our newsletter mailing list at <https://www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au/how-you-can-help/>

## b. Objectives

The objective of the GMP is to further encourage and prepare for implementation of a successful future community refugee sponsored visa pathway by:

- **demonstrating the viability and benefits** of holistic community-led support for refugees to support our goal of seeing a new community refugee sponsorship program (with visa pathway) launched in Australia
- **providing additional support to a small number of refugees** who could benefit from this approach
- **preparing a number of local groups** to become sponsors under a potential new federal community refugee sponsorship program in 2021
- **testing and refining training programs** and other elements of a future community refugee sponsorship program
- **learning about successful practices** from local groups already experienced in working with refugees
- **maintaining and building community support** and **further refining the civil society vision** for such a program

The GMP does not aim to address all of the needs of all of those seeking protection in Australia – it is a very specific project for a very specific purpose of developing a new resettlement pathway.

## c. Overview

This small program will involve:

- **10-12 refugee individuals/families** in need of additional support matched with
- **10-12 mentor groups** in communities across Australia (including regional locations)
- **6 months practical support** (individualised and holistic mentoring) of refugee individuals/families by mentor groups starting October 2020
- **mentor groups raising a small amount of money** (estimate \$1,000-\$3,000) to help their mentees with specific needs
- **training and support** of mentor groups by CRSI and partner organisations (including leading settlement agencies)
- **building community capacity and know-how** to feed into a future community refugee sponsorship program for refugees currently overseas



#### d. Roles & Responsibilities

**Refugees** who are keen to participate in the GMP will identify a few settlement goals (areas in which they would like support) and enjoy the support of members of their mentor group (working collaboratively with relevant settlement agencies) as they work toward achieving their settlement goals. These goals will be documented in a ‘mentorship support plan’ written by the refugee together with the mentor group. Refugees will also participate in monitoring & evaluation activities for the purposes of program development. Please see ‘What are the eligibility criteria and referral process for a refugee?’ for further details on refugee eligibility criteria and referral processes.

**Mentor groups** will work toward the refugee’s settlement goals with the refugee and any relevant partner organisations by agreeing on a mentorship support plan, providing six months practical support and a small amount of financial support and receiving training and support from CRSI and partner organisations and participate in information-sharing and monitoring & evaluation activities for the purposes of peer-to-peer learning and program development. Please see ‘What are the eligibility criteria and expectations for a Mentor Group?’ for further details.

**CRSI** will coordinate the GMP; identify mentor groups; work with a range of front-line organisations to match refugees with mentor groups; help to train mentor groups; facilitate information-sharing and monitoring & evaluation activities; document learnings; and continue to develop and advocate for a future community refugee sponsorship program.

**Partner organisations** (including leading settlement agencies) will identify and refer refugees; assist in matching refugees with mentor groups and help in training and supporting mentor groups; and participate in monitoring & evaluation activities for the purposes of program development. They may also play additional roles, depending on the specific profile of an individual refugee, mentor group or partner organisation.

**All participants (monitoring & evaluation):** Refugees, mentor groups and others involved in the GMP will document and share their experiences for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation and refinement of the program.

## e. Timeline

6 August 2020	Public information session for mentor groups
August 2020	Referral of refugees; applications by mentor groups
4 September 2020	Application deadline for mentor groups
September 2020	Vetting & general training for mentor groups; matching of refugees with mentor groups; finalisation of mentorship support plans; specific training for mentor groups
October 2020 – March 2021	Mentor groups provide mentorship support to refugee individuals/families

## 2. What are the eligibility criteria and referral process for a refugee?

### a. Refugee Eligibility Criteria

Refugees must be:

- Living in the Australian community (not overseas or in detention)
- Holding a valid refugee-type visa (see the FAQ for details)
- Single adult (age 18 or over) or family unit
- Early in a process of settlement or re-settlement in a new community:
  - recently arrived in Australia (after 1 April 2019 but the more recently the better) OR
  - in process of relocating to a new Australian community (eg moving from Sydney to a regional location)
- Living in or moving to a location near an identified mentor group (suggest within a 20-minute drive but the mentor group can decide how far they are willing to travel)
- Not already well-known to the mentor group
- In need of additional support of a nature that could be provided by a local mentor group (see the FAQ for details)

We will be seeking to involve a diverse group of refugees taking into account differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, family composition, country of origin and other personal characteristics, with current personal needs/goals that could really be supported by practical help from a mentor group.

### b. Referral Process

We expect most refugees will be referred into the GMP by settlement agencies or other front-line agencies working with refugees. However, if you or someone you know would like to refer a refugee who meets the eligibility criteria into the GMP directly, please email details to Stephanie Jones at [stephanie.jones@crsi.org.au](mailto:stephanie.jones@crsi.org.au). Please note, however, that part of the eligibility criteria is that the refugee is **not** well-known to the mentor group.



### 3. What are the eligibility criteria and expectations for a mentor group?

Mentors must:

- Form a local group of at least five people (if you are an individual looking for a group, see the FAQ). We recommend that group members be living near each other (suggest 20-minute drive) and from at least three different households in order to maximise the diversity of support for the refugee and minimise the risk that the mentor group will be unable to continue if a family/household is affected by an unforeseen event.
- Be Australian citizens/permanent residents
- Have no criminal record or active adverse immigration proceedings (eg, visa cancellation, citizenship revocation)
- Be willing to apply for and able to pass background checks (National Criminal History Check (AFP Check) and Working With Children Check or equivalent (WWCC))
- Be willing to **raise a small amount of funds** to help your mentee(s) with particular needs (variable, suggest \$1,000 - \$3,000 per group depending on the refugee(s)'s needs and family size; see the FAQ for details)
- Be able to commit the necessary time for:
  - undertaking training (approximately 8 hours in late August/early September)
  - developing a mentor support plan with your mentee(s) (in consultation with any settlement case managers that they are already working with)
  - peer-to-peer learning with other mentor groups
  - providing mentorship support (variable depending on the needs of the refugee(s) but we estimate a commitment of around 4-8 hours per week per group)
  - providing feedback to CRSI and its evaluation partner on your experience of the program at various intervals throughout the six month experience (including keeping track of time you spend undertaking mentoring activities and the sorts of support that you are providing)
- Be living near a suitable refugee who is a candidate for this program (suggest no more than 20-minute drive away)
- Submit an application, including referees and background checks, by 4 September 2020 (see 'How do I apply to the GMP?')

Relevant professional skills, volunteer experience, local networks and/or languages will be a great asset to your group but don't worry too much if you can't think of a lot – there is scope for you to be resourceful and innovative and you will no doubt find what you need along the way. A foundational concept of the GMP and a future community refugee sponsorship program is that ordinary Australians can meaningfully support refugees in their community (see the FAQ for more details).

We are looking for mentor groups based in geographically diverse locations (at least 50% living outside Brisbane, Melbourne or Sydney), with a positive 'can-do' attitude and a well thought-out application detailing your group and community resources and the refugee profile(s) your group could support. We will do our very best to involve all groups who meet the criteria in the program but we cannot promise that there will be an immediate opportunity for every single group. For instance, we may receive more applications than the scale of the program can accommodate and we may find situations in which we are unable to find a good match between an interested group and an eligible refugee. But don't let that deter you – any hard work you do now will ultimately be of value in a future community refugee sponsorship program.

#### What is the role of mentor groups in a future program sponsoring refugees from overseas?

We hope that mentor groups who participate in the GMP will also be keen to take the next step and apply to sponsor a refugee individual/family from overseas in 2021 or beyond, subject to the federal government putting in place a suitable federal community refugee sponsorship program. The government is reviewing this policy area in late 2020 and we are hopeful that new federal policy settings could be in place in mid-2021

Mentor groups who have participated in the GMP (maximum 12 groups) will be first in line to receive \$5,000 in 'seed funding' from the Sidney Myer Fund (via CRSI) towards the funds that your group would need to raise to sponsor refugee(s) from overseas once a suitable federal program is in place. This will be subject to your group meeting the government's criteria for sponsorship under a future program and raising the full amount of funds required for the sponsorship. The cost of sponsorship is estimated at \$25,000 for a single person or \$46,000 for a family of five for 12 months under the model proposed by CRSI, but this will depend upon the details of a future government program.

## 4. How do I apply to the GMP?

The GMP application process consists of three steps:

- Form a local group of at least five people
- Have each member of your group apply for background checks (National Criminal History Check (AFP Check) and Working with Children Check or equivalent (WWCC))
- Complete and submit the Mentor Group Application Form ideally by **28 August 2020**, or 4 September 2020 at the latest (attach background checks that you have received, and submit any remaining background checks after you submit the application form)

## a. Form a local group of at least five people

For information about mentor group eligibility criteria and expectations, see 'What are the eligibility criteria and expectations for a mentor group?' If you are an individual looking for a group, see the FAQ.

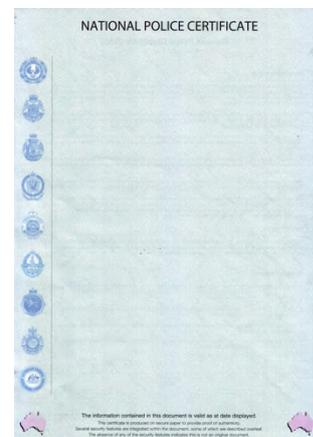


Once you have formed a local group of at least five people:

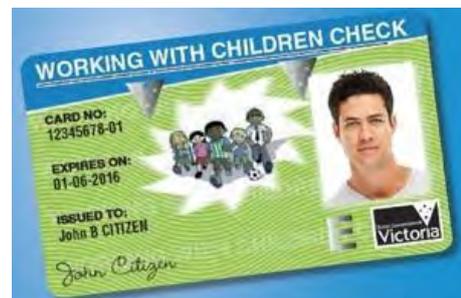
- Meet and discuss your group's expectations and ways of working, your group and community's resources and your interest in the GMP, including the refugee profile(s) your group could support. This will help you arrive at a common understanding as a group, as well as complete the Mentor Group Application Form.
- Appoint one member of your group as the Group Coordinator who will be responsible for submitting the Mentor Group Application Form, as well as being the focal point for communication with CRSI

## b. Apply for background checks

Apply for **background checks (National Criminal History Check (AFP Check) and Working with Children Check or equivalent (WWCC)) for each of your group members by 4 September 2020** and send them to us as soon as available. See below for application details. Again, **please apply for background checks as soon as possible to leave sufficient time for processing.** Please have the background checks sent to you and save each background check for each group member as a single, clearly labelled .pdf file (eg AFP Check for [Group Member 1], WWCC for [Group Member 1]).



If the background checks are complete by 4 September 2020, please upload them together with the Mentor Group Application Form. If some background checks are still outstanding, please provide a status report as part of the Mentor Group Application Form and send the outstanding background checks as soon as available in one email referencing your group name and attaching all of the outstanding background checks to Stephanie Jones at [stephanie.jones@crsi.org.au](mailto:stephanie.jones@crsi.org.au).



### i. How to apply for a National Criminal History Check (AFP Check)

You can apply for an AFP Check at <https://policecheckexpress.com> (this is cheaper and faster than applying directly to AFP). You should apply for an individual police check (Volunteer Check), which costs \$29.00. You can list the reason as 'Volunteering with refugees in a community volunteer program' and the level of contact as 'Unsupervised contact'.

Processing times are 1-2 days for 70% of applications, and 3-12+ days for 30% of applications.

If you already have an AFP Check dated 1 September 2019 or later and you do not have any subsequent criminal history, you may use that AFP Check by sending us a scanned copy.

### ii. How to apply for a Working with Children Check or equivalent (WWCC)

The process for applying for a WWCC varies by state/territory. You should apply for a volunteer check.

If you are in NT, QLD, or WA, you will need a non-profit organisation to sponsor your WWCC. If your group is not part of, or associated with, a non-profit organisation, please email Stephanie Jones at [stephanie.jones@crsi.org.au](mailto:stephanie.jones@crsi.org.au) with the names of each of your group members, and we will arrange for CRSI's host organisation, Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), to sponsor your WWCC.

If you already have a valid WWCC for the state/territory from which you will be participating in the GMP and you are not aware of any subsequent adverse information against you, you may use that WWCC by sending us a scanned copy or a photo of your WWCC card (front and back) (depending on how your state/territory issues it).

For application details by state/territory, see below:

- ACT - [https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-\(wwvp\)-registration#!tabs-1](https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-(wwvp)-registration#!tabs-1) (if you have a WWCC expiring on or after 16 March 2020, its validity has been extended due to COVID-19)
- NSW - <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check>
- NT - <https://nt.gov.au/emergency/community-safety/apply-for-a-working-with-children-clearance>
- SA - <https://screening.sa.gov.au/applications/application-information-for-individuals>
- QLD - <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/applications/apply>
- TAS - <https://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/licensing-and-registration/registrations/work-with-vulnerable-people/applications/apply>
- VIC - <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>
- WA - <https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/applicants-card-holders/applying-for-a-wwc-check/how-to-apply>

## c. Complete and submit the Mentor Group Application Form

Complete and submit the **Mentor Group Application Form** (one form per group) ideally by 28 August 2020 (and **by 4 September 2020 at the latest**). The Mentor Group Application Form includes detailed questions about each of your group members, your group and community's resources and your interest in the GMP, including the refugee profile(s) your group could support. **Please leave sufficient time for you as a group to discuss and complete it.** The Mentor Group Application form is attached as a separate document in MS Word for ease of use. It can also be found on the GMP page of our website. Once you have completed it in MS Word, please upload it together with available background checks for each of your group members at <https://airtable.com/shr5xjmhs9LMLYK16>.

The purpose of this form is to help CRSI and its partners understand the nature of your group as much as possible, so that we can endeavour to facilitate a successful match and positive experience for both your group and your refugee mentee(s). It is not intended to be a 'pass/fail' process. Once we receive your completed applications we will work with you to address any concerns or gaps. So please do your best to complete the form as accurately as possible but don't worry about being excluded from the program by answering a question in a particular way.

## 5. What happens next?

Once we receive your completed Mentor Group Application Form we will review the application and let you know if any additional information or clarification is required and you will have an opportunity to clarify any remaining questions that you might have.

Once your mentor group application is complete and we have identified a group of refugees who are candidates for participating in this program, we will begin matching mentor groups with refugees and training mentor groups in cooperation with those organisations who have referred the refugees to this program. We cannot guarantee that every group will be matched with a refugee as some groups may be located in areas where we are unable to find a suitable refugee mentee, but we will do our very best to match as many groups as possible.

Matched mentor groups and refugees will each be asked to sign a short agreement with CRSI outlining and confirming their participation in the GMP. They will also be asked to work together (in consultation with any existing settlement case managers) to develop a mentorship support plan which will be your 'roadmap' for the next six months.

We will provide more information about training, the mentorship support plan, and mentorship details once we have received mentor group applications and refugee referrals.



Thank you for your interest in the GMP, and we look forward to receiving your mentor group application. If you still have questions about the GMP, see the FAQ.