

The time is right for Australia to introduce a community refugee sponsorship program

Community sponsorship of refugees is a growing global phenomenon which expands resettlement capacity through harnessing the resources and networks of local volunteer groups, who are trained and supported to provide holistic settlement support to refugee newcomers

- ❖ Tried and tested in Canada for over 40 years and now spreading around the world
- ❖ Proven benefits for refugee economic and social integration, English language acquisition and successful settlement in regional locations
- ❖ Community-led and volunteer-driven

2020 Pilot - Group Mentorship Program

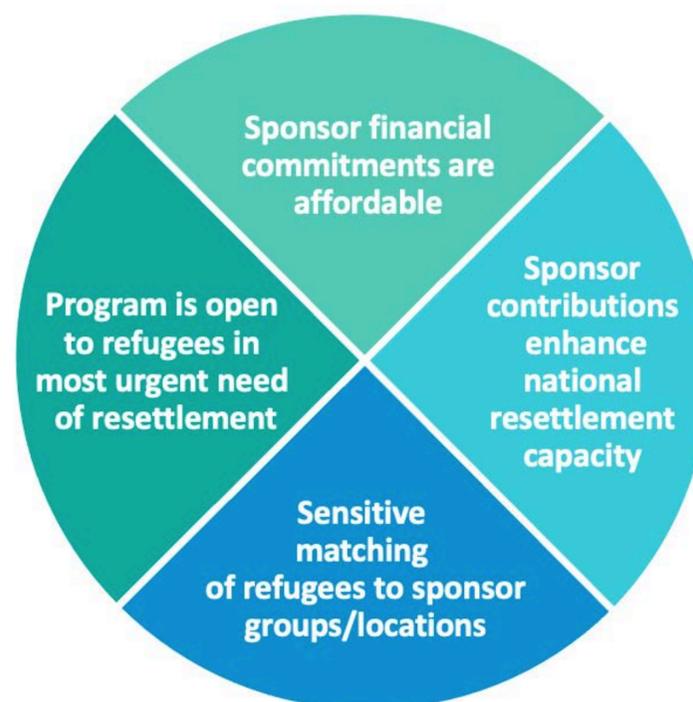
The Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is currently running a pilot program to demonstrate the viability of this approach in Australia. 21 volunteer groups across five states, from regional and metropolitan areas, have been screened and trained to provide practical settlement support to refugees who arrived in Australia before the pandemic.

12 of those groups are now actively supporting refugee households in their local area. The program will be formally evaluated in mid 2021 but to date, mentor groups have shown themselves capable of helping refugee newcomers to:

- ✓ Find suitable employment / self-employment
- ✓ Enrol and better participate in education
- ✓ Practice English
- ✓ Learn to drive
- ✓ Understand how to have overseas qualifications recognised
- ✓ Access previously unknown local services
- ✓ Make new friends
- ✓ Secure housing in a regional area lacking local migrant services

Guiding principles for program design

The program should aim to **engage a broad cross section of the Australian community**, not just those with personal connections to refugees wishing to resettle here



21 mentor groups (172 individuals) across 5 states (62% regional) recruited, screened and trained

6 months free support provided by groups to refugee newcomers

15 refugee households receiving free mentor support (26 adults plus 11 children)

12 groups now actively supporting one or more refugee households (30% regional)

\$1,000 to \$3000 small fundraising component to provide mentor group budget

What is needed from the federal government?

- A positive pro-refugee narrative and clear incentive for community members to invest valuable time and resources
- An allocation of humanitarian visas: additional visas which add to the existing quota of 13,750 will provide a very clear incentive for sponsor groups to engage
- Funding for civil society partner to recruit, train & support sponsor groups
- Investment in leading program co-design and oversight

What role do sponsor groups play?

Under this approach self-directed sponsor groups provide **holistic** and **'whole of family'** settlement support to refugee households. Sponsor groups provide equivalent support to that provided by government-funded 'Humanitarian Settlement Program' services but with the **added elements of the extra time, social capital & networks, deep local knowledge and friendship that can be offered by a group of local volunteers.**



View video of pilot program in action.

Watch 5 minute video: youtube.com/watch?v=nvpAHpAczdAp

Watch 2 minute video: youtube.com/watch?v=KydcUcVnUA