



# *Better Together:* Sharing our achievements and lessons

Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan 2017 - 2019  
Progress Report February 2019

Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan  
*Better Together*





“to contribute to the best possible settlement outcomes for all refugee and vulnerable migrant groups in and around Fairfield Local Government Area”

## Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan *Better Together*



*Led by CORE Community Services and Fairfield City Council*



*In collaboration with representatives from the following organisations:*



*Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Initiative Fairfield is funded by the Australian Government and facilitated by The Smith Family*



# Acknowledgements

A man with traditional Darug body paint and a feathered headband stands at a podium, playing a didgeridoo. He is barefoot and wearing a dark loincloth. The background shows a blurred audience seated at tables in a conference room.

*We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land the Cabrogal people of the Darug Nation.*

*We also pay our respects to Elders, past and present of the Darug Nation.*

The Working Group is thankful to the community – residents, religious organisations, volunteers and unfunded community organisations who continue to play an important role in supporting our newly arrived refugee and migrant communities.

# FOREWORD

## *Message from the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan Working Group*

**F**airfield is a major settlement city for migrant and refugee communities. More than 50% of its residents were born overseas and approximately 70.4% of them speak a language other than English at home (Census, 2016), making Fairfield one of the most culturally diverse cities in Australia.

The City's long and positive history with refugee and migrant communities continues today. Consistently, more people arrive to Fairfield City under Australia's Humanitarian Program than any other City in Australia. The vast majority of new arrivals have family links with the local Assyrian, Chaldean and Syrian communities.

The Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan ('the Plan') was in direct response to the large influx of people to Fairfield City under the Humanitarian Program. The Plan is a community initiative driven by local services with decades of experience in meeting the settlement needs of the newly arrived refugees and migrants.

The overarching aim of the Plan is to contribute to the best possible settlement outcomes for all refugee and vulnerable migrant groups in Fairfield City.

The Plan's Working Group came together in July 2016 to consult, share ideas and expertise, and design and deliver the Plan. The Working Group comprises over 20 government and non-government organisations with expertise in the various Action Areas in the Plan. It is convened quarterly and supported by the Plan's Coordinator and a Secretariat comprising CORE Community Services and Fairfield City Council. The Working Group constantly reflects on the implementation of the Plan and seeks ways of addressing gaps.

Since its launch in June 2017, the Plan has enabled organisations to work collaboratively and positively on initiatives in ways that have contributed to significant settlement outcomes for newly arrived refugee and migrant communities.

The Working Group remains committed to continue working with all stakeholders – community and all tiers of Government to improve settlement outcomes for refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum in Fairfield City. The recommendations put forward in this report will direct the Working Group for the remainder of the Plan, with the aim to contribute to as many listed outcomes as possible.

The Working Group is thankful to the community – residents, religious organisations, volunteers and unfunded community organisations - who continue to play an important role in supporting our newly arrived refugee and migrant communities.

We are delighted to present to the wider community this progress report, which captures achievements and challenges as well as strategies for addressing them.



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# At a glance

**Aim** to contribute to the best possible settlement outcomes for all refugee and vulnerable migrant groups in and around Fairfield Local Government Area.

**L** launched in June 2017 as a proactive response to the large number of refugees, humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants settling in the Fairfield City area, mainly due to the Australian Government's decision to allocate an additional 12,000 places in response to conflicts in Syria and Iraq.



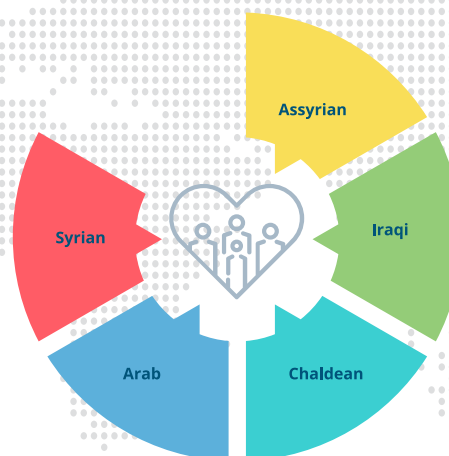
## Humanitarian Program arrivals in Fairfield City

14,536 humanitarian arrivals to Fairfield City in the last seven years

6,717 arrivals between January 2016 and June 2017

A further 2,044 arrivals between July 2017 and September 2018

## Top 5 Ethnicities arriving in Fairfield City



## Refugee Services in Fairfield City covered by the Action Plan

Settlement services  
Housing and homelessness services  
Refugee health services  
Mental health support services  
Disability services  
Policing and community safety  
Employment services  
Youth services  
Primary and secondary education  
Vocational training  
English language programs  
Volunteering programs

Business community initiatives  
Community capacity building programs  
Community legal services  
Emergency financial and food relief  
Women's services  
Domestic and family violence services  
Liaison with religious leaders  
Ethno-specific organisations  
Advocacy, policy and service innovation  
Children and Family Services



# Service facts & figures

Numbers of newly arrived accessing key services and programs in Fairfield City

## Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

- FY 2017/2018 - 4,508
- FY 2016/2017 - 4,400

## Humanitarian Support Program

Between February and October 2018, **1,320** refugees and humanitarian entrants arrived in Fairfield City.

## jobactive Services

**2,932** or **43%** of all job seekers registered across the six Commonwealth Government *jobactive* providers are *refugees*.

## Settlement Support Program

January-December 2018

Case work Session: 3,917

Attendees 3,998

Group Work Sessions: 733

Attendees 13, 809

Referrals: 3,825

RHS Activity	FYR 15 /16	FYR 16/17	FYR 17/18
RHS Initial Nurse Assessment	215	470	360
RHS Initial Nurse assessment (home visits )	349	852	610
Paediatric Clinics (SWSLHD Community Paediatric Service)	N/A	N/A	16 clinics

## Action Plan Agencies

### Coordinating agencies

CORE Community Services  
Fairfield City Council

### Working Group Members

Assyrian Resource Centre  
Department of Human Services (Centrelink)  
Housing NSW  
Lebanese Muslim Association  
Legal Aid NSW  
Multicultural NSW  
Navitas English  
NSW Department of Education (incl. Fairfield IEC)  
NSW Department of Family and Community Services  
NSW Department of Justice  
NSW Police  
NSW Health (SWS Local Health District)  
NSW Refugee Health Service  
NSW STARTTS  
Settlement Services International  
The Smith Family  
TAFE NSW  
Woodville Alliance

### Interagency Forums

Fairfield Emerging Communities Action Partnership  
Fairfield Employment & Community Services Forum  
Fairfield Multicultural Interagency  
Fairfield Housing Taskforce  
Fairfield Youth Workers Network  
Fairfield Domestic Violence Committee  
South West Sydney Domestic Violence Committee

# Timeline

## Getting started

### 2015-2016

A large number of new arrivals settle in Fairfield City as a result of increased intake under Australia's Humanitarian Program

### July 2016

The Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan (FCSAP) Working Group formed

### November 2016

FCSAP Symposium brings together the contributors to the FCSAP

## Getting things done

### 22 June, 2017

The Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan is launched during Refugee Week

### June 2017

FCSAP Secretariat and FCSAP Working Group commence quarterly meetings to monitor and facilitate the implementation of FCSAP actions

### May 2018

Twenty government and non-government organisations meet to review FCSAP's first year. Key issues and findings set out in the FCSAP 2018 Workshop Report. A dedicated FCSAP Coordinator commences work

### June 2018 to February 2019

FCSAP Coordinator works with FCSAP partners to build connections, clarify roles and collect evidence on successes and challenges. Evidence was presented to the FCSAP Working Group to clarify and share findings

## Looking into the Future

### 25 February 2019

FCSAP Progress Report *Better Together: Sharing our achievements and lessons* is launched

### February-May 2019

Continued implementation of FCSAP and collection of localised evidence of outcomes. Stakeholder decisions about extending the Plan beyond June 2019, including funding for ongoing coordination and evaluation

### June 2019

End of the current 2017-2019 Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan

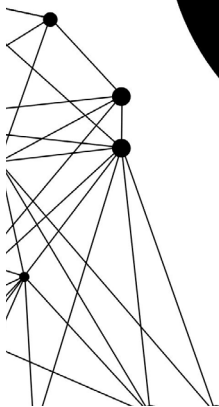
# Timeline



# Overview

## FAIRFIELD CITY SETTLEMENT ACTION PLAN

2017 - 2019



**T**he Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan ('the Plan') is a community driven initiative, which aims to contribute to the best possible settlement outcomes for all refugee and vulnerable migrant groups in and around Fairfield Local Government Area. The Plan was launched in June 2017. A copy of the Plan can be downloaded from [www.corecs.org.au/fcsap](http://www.corecs.org.au/fcsap).

The Plan is a proactive response to the large influx of vulnerable people with complex needs settling in the Fairfield City area through Australia's Humanitarian Program. Between 1 January 2016 and 1 June 2017, 6717 people came to Fairfield City under the Humanitarian Program. A further 2,044 arrived in Fairfield City under the Program from 1 July 2017 to 1 September 2018.

Through the Plan, over 20 government and non-government agencies that deliver services to refugees, vulnerable migrants and people seeking asylum pool their expertise and resources to achieve best possible outcomes through better service coordination and collaboration. The objectives of the Plan include enhancing service delivery, identifying service gaps, and establishing Fairfield as a leading Settlement City in NSW.

This report provides an update of the Plan as at September 2018. It includes a description of the progress made so far in each Action Area, achievements in cross-agency collaboration and community engagement, lessons learnt, challenges and barriers in producing desired outcomes. After the analysis of each Action Area, there are recommendations for ways in which the Plan's priority actions can be updated and improved. In addition, some general recommendations have been included which relate to the resourcing, coordination and implementation of the Plan.



# Summary of Report

# Overarching Recommendations

- Extend the Plan until June 2020 to further improve coordination of services that support refugees and migrants in Fairfield City
- Advocate to the NSW and Federal Government to resource a position that oversees the Plan's coordination, monitoring and evaluation framework and governance mechanisms until June 2020
- The Plan's 2017-2019 actions are amended to reflect completed projects, updated circumstances and the recommendations as set out below

The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:

## Action Area: People

### 1.1 Safe & Responsible Communities

- Local community organisations explore collaborative initiatives to provide practical assistance for refugees and vulnerable migrants to access legal services
- Advocate for an expansion of the Integrated Family Violence Program funded by the Department of Family and Community Services, and other opportunities for additional domestic violence services in the Fairfield LGA
- Advocate to government departments for victims of domestic and family violence to be prioritised on housing waiting lists
- Advocate to government departments to amend current policies to allow women on partner visas access to increased support when experiencing family and domestic violence

### 1.2 Physical and Mental Health and Well-being

- Explore effective and innovative ways for local migrant and refugee service providers to interact with GP's to improve access to healthcare services for newly arrived refugee and migrant communities
- Explore effective ways for local migrant and refugee service providers to engage with a wide range of mental health networks and local mental health specialist services

### 1.3 People with Disability

- Identify the barriers people from refugee and migrant communities experience when accessing the NDIS and advocate to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to address these issues
- Host information sessions to improve knowledge within local migrant and refugee service providers on NDIS processes
- Advocate to government departments for immediate on-arrival access to occupational therapy and physical aids

# Recommen



## Action Area: Opportunity

### 2.1 Meaningful Engagement, Skills Development, Education and Integration

- Advocate for Government departments to address coordination issues between *jobactive* and other specialist refugee support programs
- Improve understanding amongst local service providers of existing pathways to recognition of prior learning and overseas qualifications through RESP and TAFE NSW
- Advocate to the Department of Jobs and Small Business for volunteering to be easily approved under *jobactive* "mutual obligations"

### 2.2 Volunteerism

- Invite specialist volunteering organisations to join the FCSAP working group
- Allocate a specialist volunteering organisations to drive the Plan's volunteering actions

### 2.3 Information and Coordination

- Improve coordination between local agencies and religious leaders to improve information delivery and access to services for people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants
- Strengthen partnerships between local agencies and peak bodies supporting people seeking asylum
- Explore opportunities for local service providers to increasingly collaborate with charities providing refugees and vulnerable migrants with immediate financial and food relief

## Action Area: Place

### 3.1 Housing Accessibility

- Expand the networks and resources within Fairfield Housing Taskforce by inviting additional specialist housing agencies to join
- Advocate to Government departments for improved access to emergency accommodation for refugee and vulnerable migrants experiencing domestic and family violence

### 3.2 Evidence Based Planning and Advocacy

- Improve data collation specific to the Fairfield City region to better prioritise investments, monitor the impact of initiatives and measure outcomes of the Plan
- Ensure the current Plan considers the wellbeing of children and families, and includes specific actions to improve outcomes for children and families

# Recommendations

# Achievements

## Case Studies

“

*It's very hard in Syria  
and it's very different ... but the  
system in Australia is very good.”*

### Coffee with a Cop

Every month police in Fairfield host an open coffee day where anyone can come along, have a coffee or tea and chat with a police officer.

All are welcome and newly arrived migrants and refugees are especially enthusiastic, often showing up in the hundreds.

“It's a really easy way for the police and the public to come together and have a chat about things,” said NSW Police Fairfield City Commander Superintendent Peter Lennon

“And it's led to friendships being formed. Some of these people have actually started to work for the police as volunteers, so that's been really good.”

Adam Naddo came to Australia from Syria 18 months ago and said the meet-ups made him feel safer.

“I'm really happy I came today,” he said.

“It's very hard in Syria and it's very different ... but the system in Australia is very good.”

Image credit: Fairfield City Police Area Command



A man wearing a straw hat and a red and blue plaid shirt is herding a group of light-colored cattle in a grassy field. Another person wearing a green cap is partially visible on the right side of the frame.

## Refugee Employment Programs

Initiatives such as the Pathways to Employment Expo organised by the Fairfield Employment and Community Action Partnership (FECAP); the Refugee Employment Support Program; the Bridges to Employment project; and the Refugee Youth Peer Mentoring Program are providing pathways to meaningful employment for new arrivals to Fairfield City.

In 2015, Ivan\* arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa and settled in Fairfield. He undertook English language training through the Adult Migrant English Program at Navitas English, and SEE Program at MTC and completed a hospitality course. Three years later Ivan was still unemployed and struggling to live in Fairfield on Newstart payments.

Ivan was referred to a specialist migrant employability support workshop in Fairfield and attended the Pathways to Employment Expo 2018 - an initiative supported through the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan.

"At the Expo, I was introduced [to a] meat processing job at Wagga Wagga... advertised by the Meat Processing Group... CORE supported me to apply...and to move to Wagga...I was linked with settlement support services at Wagga. In Wagga I am stress free from the city."

Ivan is now living in affordable housing and is financially independent, having secured an additional job in hospitality. He is also studying part time for a career in community services and is calling for more refugees and jobseekers to move to Wagga.


“

*At the Expo, I was introduced [to a] meat processing job at Wagga Wagga... advertised by the Meat Processing Group... CORE supported me to apply...and to move to Wagga...I was linked with settlement support services at Wagga. In Wagga I am stress free from the city.”*

\*Name has been changed as requested and to protect the privacy of individual

© Diego Cervo / Adobe Stock



A photograph of a workshop session. A man in a striped shirt stands on the right, gesturing while speaking to a group of men seated at long wooden tables. The seated men are listening attentively. The room has a plain white wall and a grey carpet.

*“The information was very helpful for me, I then learnt about Vision Australia and have been in contact with them... I also know how to help my family and friends who need help from disability support services.”*

### **Disability Information Sessions**

Mr Hanna is originally from Iraq and arrived in Australia in 2016 as a Humanitarian Entrant and settled in Fairfield.

Mr Hanna has Permanent Vision Impairment. He has also suffered from a stroke, and has other physical health issues.

In 2017, Mr Hanna attended the disability information sessions held as part of the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan. Mr Hanna felt more confident after attending, gaining more knowledge of how disability services could help manage his situation.

“The information was very helpful for me, I then learnt about Vision Australia and have been in contact with them, I also got support to go to Housing NSW, and to fill out application forms because of my change in circumstances. I also know how to help my family and friends who need help from disability support services.”

Mr Hanna has now successfully secured an NDIS package and has received a range of support service outcomes including linkages to Public Housing.



## Youth Camp

Maryam Mansoor's family settled in Fairfield in 2017 after fleeing Iraq. Maryam is currently in Year 12. In 2018, Maryam attended a Youth Camp, one of the initiatives included in the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan.

"When I attended the youth camp I had been in Australia for about a year. It may seem like a long time to others but for me it wasn't. I had never been away from my family since I arrived in Australia and I was going to camp with other young people I did not know.

[At] the camp...I had to learn to trust and rely on other people I met for the first time. I had to learn how to socialise and create a bond with another person... In essence, what I learnt was how to adapt and adjust in new situations. It helped me break out of my shell.

Through games I learnt the importance of teamwork and communication. I also got to meet other young people from different cultures and learn more about Australian culture too. Another was about mental health and how to express and describe your emotions.

But most important, was there were other young people who I could relate to, who were going through what I was going through. This helped close the gaps of differences when meeting people I had never met before."

*"...there were other young people who I could relate to, who were going through what I was going through..."*

Pictured: Maryam

Youth Soccer Program



# Overview of current Settlement Plan

Action Section	Action Area	Priority Actions	Output Status	Summary of Next Steps
1.0 People	<b>1.1 Safe and Responsible Communities</b> Refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Australian law and know how to access the relevant community based, legal supports and relevant services when required.	Culturally competent local services	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An increase in practical 'assisted access' to services is required</li> <li>Stronger focus on supporting victims of Domestic and Family Violence</li> </ul>
		Legal system access	Meeting expectation	
		Positive Police interactions	Meeting expectation	
		Youth diversionary activities	Meeting expectation	
		Increase awareness of Domestic and Family Violence (D&FV)	Meeting expectation	
	<b>1.2: Physical and Mental Health and Well-being</b> Refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups are well informed of the physical and mental health supports available to them. Barriers to service access are minimised or eliminated where possible.	Protect refugee health	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create stronger links between GPs and community organisations</li> <li>Increase engagement with mental health specialist services</li> <li>Adjust Action Plan to recognise reduction in one-off Refugee Health Service funding for Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian entrants</li> </ul>
		Syrian Iraqi refugee access to health programs	Meeting expectation	
		Health service promotion	Meeting expectation	
		Work with GPs	Yet to meet expectation	
		Increased awareness of effects of trauma in individuals and families	Meeting expectation	
		Mental health services coordination	Yet to meet expectation	
	<b>1.3: People with Disability (PWD)</b> Expand access to physical, mental and social supports available for PWD who form refugee, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups.	Increase PWD's capacity to access services	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjust Action Plan to take into account the challenges for new arrivals in navigating and receiving appropriate support from the NDIS</li> <li>Include actions to increase access to Occupational Therapy services and aids</li> <li>Increase awareness and promotion of disability support services and NDIS processes to local agencies</li> </ul>
		Local agencies to partner for grants	Yet to meet expectation	
		Greater understanding of support options	Meeting expectation	
		Address disability stigma	Meeting expectation	
		Engage PWD families and carers	Meeting expectation	



# People

INTRODUCTION

Content Warning

PhD Candidate

Documentary Photographer

Disability Advocate

## Safe and Responsible Communities

The South West Domestic Violence Committee (SWDVC) hosts an annual conference and community event to raise awareness against gendered based violence to coincide with 16 days of Action. The committee consists of the following organisations: CORE Community Services, NSW Department of Justice, Department of Human Services, Bonnie Support Services & DAMEC.

The aim of the conference is to equip frontline service providers with the best approaches for supporting community members on issues of D&FV. In 2017, the conference attracted over 260 people and covered themes on D&FV service delivery in Fairfield LGA, best practice working with CALD community, LGBTIQ community, and elder abuse; navigating government policies, technology abuse, and engaging men in the prevention of violence. The event was sponsored by Fairfield City Council, CORE Community Services and NSW Department of Justice.

The community events delivered information on topics including healthy relationships, domestic violence, and coping strategies in dealing with stress and anxiety to community members. Interactive activities which assisted individuals in developing living skills.



Action Section	Action Area	Priority Areas	Output Status	Summary of Next Steps
2.0 Opportunity	<b>2.1: Meaningful Engagement, Skills Development, Education and Integration within Local Communities</b>	Paid employment	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus efforts on achieving recognition of prior learning (RPL) for refugees and vulnerable migrants</li> <li>Work with Department of Jobs and Small Business to address coordination and referral issues between <i>jobactive</i> and specialist refugee employment programs</li> <li>Update actions to reflect introduction of youth mentoring and work of other specialist refugee programs</li> <li>Address <i>jobactive</i> 'mutual obligation' barriers to volunteering</li> </ul>
		Youth specific programs	Exceeding expectation	
		Support for entrepreneurs	Meeting expectation	
		Access to work experience	Meeting expectation	
	Expand local volunteering, educational, transition and employment opportunities for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups increasing accessibility to paid employment opportunities.	Recognition of skills and qualifications	Yet to meet expectation	
	<b>2.2: Volunteerism Supporting newly arrived refugee, humanitarian entrant and other vulnerable migrant communities</b>	Coordinated local volunteering	Yet to meet expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage a specialist volunteering organisation to improve coordination</li> </ul>
		Assistance with health appointments	Meeting expectation	
		Recognition of local volunteers	Yet to meet expectation	
	<b>2.3: Information and Coordination</b>	Communication between services	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase efforts to improve communication between services, and religious leaders and ethno-specific communities</li> <li>Reformulate actions aimed at supporting people seeking asylum</li> <li>Provide data on refugee and vulnerable Meeting expectation migrant access to emergency financial support</li> </ul>
		Stakeholders work collaboratively to share information and achieve outcomes for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups.	Mapping financial support providers	
		Refugee women's network	Yet to meet expectation	
		Local network for people seeking asylum	Yet to meet expectation	
		English language learning	Meeting expectation	





## **Working directly with employers**

Increasing direct access to private and public sector employers is vital to increasing job outcomes for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups living in Fairfield City.

To meet this challenge, the Fairfield Emerging Communities Action Partnership (FECAP) undertook its first Business Breakfast in March 2018. The event was delivered through collaboration between CORE Community Services, STARTTS, Assyrian Resource Centre and TAFE NSW.

The event attracted more than 40 representatives of small, medium and large businesses operating in Fairfield and surrounding regions.

Businesses learned first hand from service providers, government agencies and other employers about the strengths and untapped market potential that refugee and migrant communities bring to regional businesses. A number of participating businesses have employed people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, as well as participating in other local employment initiatives, such as the annual FECAP Employment Expo.



### 3. Place

Action Section	Action Area	Priority Actions	Output Status	Summary of Next Steps
3. Place	<b>3.1: Housing Accessibility</b>	Tenancy rights and responsibilities	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fill gaps in representation on Fairfield Housing Taskforce</li> </ul>
		Fairfield Housing Taskforce	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase focus on access to accommodation for refugee and vulnerable migrants experiencing D&amp;FV</li> </ul>
		D&FV emergency accommodation	Yet to meet expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reformulate housing actions relating to PWD to incorporate NDIS programs and support options</li> </ul>
		Housing for People with Disability	Yet to meet expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reformulate actions relating to tenancy services in Fairfield, with a focus on an outreach tenancy service</li> </ul>
		Fairfield-specific tenancy service	Yet to meet expectation	
	<b>3.2: Evidence-based Planning and Advocacy</b>	Data, information and monitoring	Meeting expectation	
		Advocacy for policy changes for people seeking asylum	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure every action item in the Plan has a committed lead agency</li> </ul>
		Additional resources advocacy for PWD	Yet met expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align advocacy and policy setting efforts to new actions in the Action Plan</li> </ul>
		Advocacy for additional support	Meeting expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reformulate actions relating to production of discussion papers</li> </ul>
		Employment services advocacy	Meeting expectation	
		Domestic & Family Violence advocacy	Yet to meet expectation	





## Evidence Based Advocacy

In Fairfield City, 43% of all job seekers registered across the six Commonwealth Government *jobactive* providers are refugees. The achievement of meaningful employment is a critical settlement outcome, however, there are structural barriers to *jobactive* delivering employment outcomes for new arrivals.

To help tackle this issue, the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency (FMI) in partnership with Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) produced **“Not Working: Experiences of Refugees and Migrants with *jobactive*”**, a research paper that has gained national attention.

The paper was built on sound research, including surveys targeting refugee and migrant jobseekers in Fairfield, together with broader consultations undertaken RCOA.

In November 2017, FMI and RCOA presented the report to the Department of Jobs and Small Business and all *jobactive* providers in Fairfield. These stakeholders are now working to progress the report recommendations, resulting in improved communication and the implementation of more effective employment services for refugees and migrants. The Department has invested resources in this collaboration, with a view to replicating it in other Australian cities.

fairfield multicultural interagency  
refugee council of australia

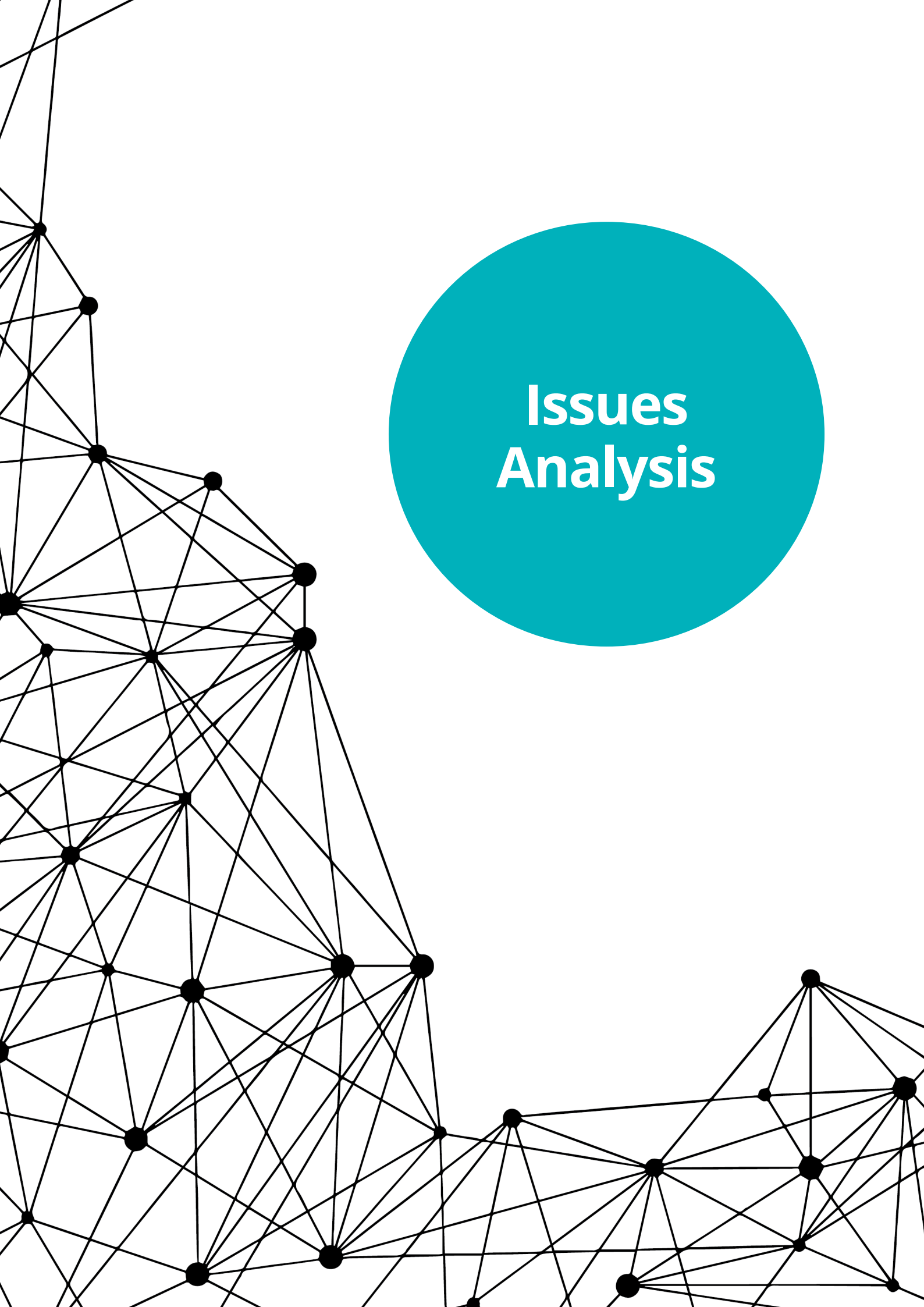
August 2017  
Report No 03/2017

## NOT WORKING:

EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS WITH *JOBACTIVE*

Shukufa Tahiri





# Issues Analysis



**T**he Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan ('the Plan') is a community driven initiative, which aims to contribute to the best possible settlement outcomes for all refugee and vulnerable migrant groups in and around Fairfield Local Government Area. The Plan was launched in June 2017. A copy of the Plan can be downloaded from [www.corecs.org.au/fcsap](http://www.corecs.org.au/fcsap). The Plan is a proactive response to the large influx of vulnerable people with complex needs settling in the Fairfield LGA through Australia's Humanitarian Program. Between 1 January 2016 and 1 June 2017, 6717 people came to Fairfield City under the humanitarian program. A further 2,044 arrived in Fairfield LGA under the Program from 1 July 2017 to 1 September 2018 <sup>1</sup>.



Through the Plan, government and non-government agencies that deliver services to refugees, vulnerable migrants and people seeking asylum pool their expertise and resources to achieve best possible outcomes through better service coordination and collaboration.

The Plan is built on a framework of five principles:

- **Place-Based:** focuses on the social and physical environment of the entire community and aims to address issues that exist at the neighbourhood level through better integrated and more accessible service systems
- **Collective Impact:** brings people together, in a structured way, with a common agenda, to achieve social change
- **Enhancing existing service provision:** achieves greater collaboration and partnership development amongst local service providers
- **Identifying service gaps:** managing risk and developing opportunities for refugee, humanitarian and migrant entrants living in and around Fairfield City to achieve settlement outcomes
- **Increasing capacity in Fairfield City:** establishing Fairfield as the leading settlement city in NSW; positively influencing government policy; and shaping initiatives that have positive impacts for refugee, humanitarian and migrant entrants.

The actions in the Plan are divided into three broad sections:

• **PEOPLE** • **OPPORTUNITY** • **PLACE** •

Within each section there are a number of **Action Areas** (eight in total). Each Action Area has specific **priority actions**, including proposed outputs, outcomes, lead agencies and time frames.

This progress report provides an update of the Plan as at September 2018. It includes a description of the progress made so far in each Action Area and achievements in cross-agency collaboration and community engagement. Examples of activities delivered and outcomes addressed to-date are listed under each Action Area. This report also provides a summary of lessons learnt, challenges and barriers in producing desired outcomes. After the analysis of each Action Area, there are recommendations for ways in which the Plan's priority actions can be updated and improved.

Evidence to produce this report has been gathered by the Plan's Coordinator through:

- Responses from lead agencies for priority actions
- One-on-one meetings with participating agencies
- Attendance at local Interagency and sub-group meetings
- Information shared at the 1 May 2018 workshop to gauge progress in the first 12 months of the Plan (attended by 40 representatives of 19 government and non-government agencies)
- Information provided at the Plan's secretariat and working group meetings
- Primary and secondary information sources, including published and unpublished data.

This report is not an exhaustive list of activities, instead providing a broad representation of what has been achieved through the Plan and the areas requiring further work. There are reporting gaps in the report as not all data could be collated due to reporting limitations within the Plans Working Group.

<sup>1</sup> Settlement data received from the Department of Social Services - 30/11/2018

# Section 1: People

## Action Area 1.1: Safe and Responsible Communities

**Expectation of actions:** Refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Australian law and know how to access the relevant community based, legal supports and relevant services when required.

### Snapshot of activities contributing to outcomes in Action Area 1.1

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
<p><b>'Coffee with a Cop'</b> reached approximately 900 people in Fairfield LGA, mostly those from refugee communities</p> <p><b>Court Open Day 2017</b> hosted more than 600 students from Navitas, MTC Australia, Fairfield Intensive English Centre (IEC) at Fairfield Local Court</p>	<p>Improved perception and trust of Police and authority figures. (Perception may be skewed upon arrival due to negative experiences overseas.)</p> <p>Lowered risk and incidence of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity</p>
<p><b>Law Expo 2018</b> at Wetherill Park TAFE targeted over 250 Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) students and community members</p>	<p>Newly arrived community members are better informed about key laws, consequences of breaking these laws and individual rights and responsibilities</p>
<p><b>YOUth Know Your Rights'</b> forums held in 2017 and 2018 for 300 Fairfield IEC students hosted in partnership with CORE Community Services, NSW Department of Justice, Legal Aid NSW and the Australian Federal Police (AFP).</p>	<p>Increased awareness of relevant legal and justice programs and initiatives</p>
<p><b>Domestic Violence Conference</b> by South West Sydney Domestic Violence Committee aimed at educating 360 frontline service workers to better support their clients with D&amp;FV issues</p>	<p>Service providers have a greater awareness of the support available for victims of D&amp;FV and can refer more efficiently</p>

### Detailed description of activities in Action Area 1.1

The Plan is facilitating sustained partnerships between law enforcement, legal services and non-government organisations.

In partnership with Legal Aid NSW and NSW Police, Settlement Services International (SSI) has delivered orientation sessions about the Australian legal system, law enforcement agencies and legal support services, to ensure newly arrived humanitarian entrants are aware of their rights and responsibilities under Australian law.



**‘Coffee with a Cop’** activities are engaging refugee communities and have improved community connection with the police, helping to offset negative experiences overseas. Fairfield City Police Area Command engages with refugee communities by working closely with services like SSI, Navitas English, CORE Community Services and MTC Australia to encourage their refugee and new arrival clients to attend. Over 900 participants from mostly refugee or migrant communities have attended these monthly events so far.

A **Law Expo** was held at Wetherill Park TAFE in 2018. Members from TAFE NSW, NSW Department of Justice, Legal Aid NSW, NSW Police and CORE Community Services organised the Expo, which attracted over 250 students enrolled in the Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP) course, and an additional 100 people from the wider community. The Law Expo focused on the Work Development Order Program, employment rights, traffic laws and reporting incidents, which were topics identified by the students prior to the event. Participants interacted with Police Officers and visited over 10 stalls related to areas of law.

Participating agencies are implementing a range of youth focused initiatives to encourage social cohesion and maintain

engagement. In addition to employment, sport and recreation programs, initiatives such as the **Youth Law Summit – ‘Youth know your rights’**, held in June 2017 and 2018, have been implemented in partnership with the NSW Department of Justice, NSW Legal Aid, NSW Police, CORE Community Services and local high schools. Over 300 students from Intensive English Classes participated in workshops on topics such as alcohol and drugs, crime and personal safety. The event aimed to empower young people to connect with local law enforcement and reach common understandings on a more personal level through exchanging of stories.

**Youth Camps** are another strategy employed by local community organisations to engage participants in a wide range of positive recreational and educational activities to help identify their strengths, enhance their confidence and leadership skills, and promote positive relationships with their peers and camp leaders. In 2018, The Lebanese Muslim Association’s Thrive Youth Transition Services partnered with Creating Chances to offer the EPIC camp to nearly 100 young people from newly arrived and/or refugee backgrounds in the April and July school holidays. A further 52 youth participated in camps organised by CORE Community Services and STARTTS.

## Domestic and Family Violence

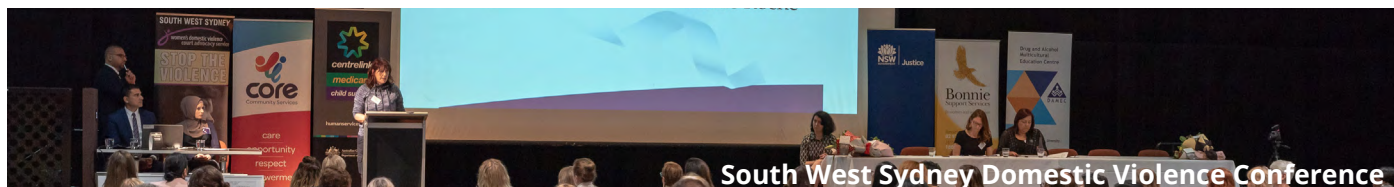
The Plan includes various actions to address domestic and family violence (D&FV) in refugee and vulnerable migrant communities, with a focus on increasing awareness through delivery of D&FV information sessions and workshops incorporated into existing group activities.

Agencies reported that over **1260** community members have participated in these sessions, which were delivered in conjunction with the following agencies:

- Navitas English
- Settlement Services International
- Assyrian Resource Centre
- CORE Community Services
- Bonnies Support Services
- Vietnamese Women’s Association
- Khmer Community NSW
- Cabramatta High School and Fairfield High School Intensive English Centres

Local services have adapted their activities to reflect the cultural context of new arrivals when delivering D&FV information. One agency representative describes meeting this challenge by:

*“re-framing information sessions on this issue as ‘healthy relationships’ and delivering it to both women’s and men’s groups ... We have also tried to deliver this session as part of a series of legal information sessions rather than as a stand-alone session to the same group to give us time to build trust and rapport with participants before discussing this topic.”*



The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) funds the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Program, which is delivered by CORE Community Services, with one Case Manager funded for the Fairfield LGA. This program has been successful in providing counselling, case management, and community engagement activities. Under this program the Case Manager has been able to provide information sessions during the reporting period to approximately 360 participants.

Frontline staff have been targeted to ensure

they are better informed of the supports available for victims of D&FV and can contribute to effective referrals. The Fairfield Domestic Violence Committee has delivered Safe Families 'train the trainer' workshops to 95 workers from community organisations working with newly arrived refugees and migrant communities. The South West Sydney Domestic Violence Committee facilitates an annual conference, which aims to equip frontline service providers with the best approaches for supporting community members on issues of D&FV. In 2017, the conference attracted over 260 people.

## Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 1.1

Agencies report an ongoing lack of legal awareness, and a continuing need for refugee and vulnerable migrant communities to be better informed on issues of immigration, fines, Centrelink compliance, complaints processes and relations with police.

New arrivals also require 'assisted access' or practical assistance when initially accessing a service, in addition to information sessions: assistance in navigating online services; and providing feedback and complaints relating to service experience.

While local agencies have successfully increased D&FV awareness, more support is needed when victims reach out for help. There are barriers that prevent victims from leaving their violent partner, resulting in women and their children at continued risk of violence. The issue of victims of D&FV staying with their violent partner due to lack

of financial and material resources has been well documented. And those from a refugee, vulnerable migrant and asylum seeking background often lack these resources, making them increasingly at risk.

Access to emergency assistance, including accommodation, material and financial assistance for victims of D&FV, is an identified gap. Agencies report that refugees are constantly at capacity, and motels are often the only option. There are also long waiting periods for financial assistance.

Women on partner visas are further disadvantaged, as they are not eligible for Centrelink benefits, social housing and child care assistance. This group of women are even more at risk as they face return to their country of origin, which could mean losing custody of their children. This may result in this group being more vulnerable to staying with a violent and abusive partner.

## Recommendations

**The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:**

**1.1.1 Local community organisations explore collaborative initiatives to provide practical assistance for refugees and vulnerable migrants to access legal services**

**1.1.2 Advocate for an expansion of the Integrated Family Violence Program funded by the Department of Family and Community Services, and other opportunities for additional domestic violence services in the Fairfield LGA**

**1.1.3 Advocate to government departments for victims of domestic and family violence to be prioritised on housing waiting lists**

**1.1.4 Advocate to government departments to amend current policies to allow women on partner visas access to increased support when experiencing family and domestic violence**

## Action Area 1.2: Physical and Mental health and Well-being

**Expectation of actions:** Refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups are well informed of the physical and mental health supports available to them. Barriers to service access are minimised or eliminated where possible.

### Snapshot of activities in Action Area 1.2

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS) provided <b>61 Orientation Sessions</b> to over 1000 participants to orientate refugees to the NSW Health System	Improved health literacy Improved health and wellbeing Community leaders are better informed, able to give correct advice to community members and make appropriate referrals to services
CORE Community Services Iraqi and Arabic Settlement Support Groups delivered over <b>40 sessions</b> on topics of health, wellness and mental health RHS delivered outreach services to a total of <b>810</b> participants in Fairfield LGA South West Sydney Health Promotion Service and local schools set up Community Gardens and ran community-based nutrition programs targeted at refugees, which attracted <b>80 students and parents</b>	Improved health literacy Improved health and wellbeing Community leaders are better informed, able to give correct advice to community members and make appropriate referrals to services

### Description of activities in Action Area 1.2

Activities to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of refugees and people seeking asylum, through additional clinical health assessments, have resulted from increased funding to the NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS). RHS interventions targeting the Fairfield LGA between June 2017-July 2018 included:

- RHS Nurse Assessment Program, which provided outreach clinics in Fairfield for 360 clients
- RHS set up additional Nurse outreach clinics in Fairfield Intensive English Centres (IEC) in local schools and held up to 3 clinics per week, and a GP clinic once a month; a total of 295 students were seen through this initiative
- Refugee Early Childhood Home Visiting Program conducted visits to 184 clients. Follow-up visits were provided to more complex cases.



RHS staff have worked with South West Sydney Primary Health Network Practice Support Officers to educate, resource and engage with GPs. RHS is also a contributor to the ongoing development and updates of the refugee health pathways in South West Sydney. In addition, RHS actively engages in research to determine best practice refugee health primary care that GPs can implement in the Fairfield LGA.

The additional funding RHS received to meet the needs of the 2015-2017 influx of humanitarian entrants from Syria and Iraq has now decreased, which means RHS needs to prioritise and consolidate programs. The Early Childhood Home Visit Program will continue, as will outreach clinics at some schools.

Actions aimed at improving health literacy and building the capacity of refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants to take charge of their own health and better navigate the health system are identified in the Plan. RHS formed partnerships with local providers who have strong links with the newly arrived communities and presented to SSI orientation sessions, Navitas English AMEP classes, and CORE Community Services community settlement support groups.

Local community organisations are proactive in responding to the demands of social/community groups and partner with government agencies, academics and NGOs to build the capacity of their group members. CORE Community Services settlement support groups delivered over 40 sessions on various topics of health wellness and mental health to an average of 70 people a

session. Group participants determined topics through a process of consultation.

One example was a partnership with the national NGO One Door. One Door is a provider of "You in Mind", a program which targets vulnerable groups, including those from a CALD background, providing psychological services for people who have a diagnosed mild to moderate mental illness. The sessions attracted 70 people from Iraqi and Syrian background, and 18 people were linked with relevant programs and continued with a psychologist. The face to face and group sessions were delivered in either the Assyrian or Arabic language.

Community-based nutrition programs have been tailored for groups from Syria and Iraq. South West Sydney Local Health District Health Promotion partnered with local high schools and the Department of Education to identify schools with a high percentage of newly arrived students to participate in the Healthy Environment Programs and Community/School Gardens. These programs aim to provide low-cost healthy breakfast to students as well as to educate parents on healthy choices. Over 80 participants from both Prairiewood High School and Fairfield West Primary School participated in these community programs. A second project built on the strengths and interests of these communities in cooking and provided pathways for participants to enter social enterprise opportunities in catering/hospitality. 18 participants completed Food Handling training, and 6 individuals are currently involved in Middle Eastern catering enterprises.

## Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 1.2

While there is good engagement within health networks with General Practitioners, there are challenges in local community organisations working with GPs. Stronger networks are required for healthcare providers to better communicate, and create better understanding of the issues faced by refugee and migrant communities from both sectors' perspectives.

More engagement is required with mental health specialist services and networks, and this is a reporting gap in the Plan. There has been insufficient documented progress against actions which aim to address issues of mental health, including improved coordination amongst services providing mental health support to families, and between mental health specific services and mainstream services. These actions aim to ensure that clients receive the most appropriate service, and there is also a greater uptake of services.

## Recommendations

**The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:**

- 1.2.1 Explore effective and innovative ways for local migrant and refugee service providers to interact with GPs to improve access to healthcare services for newly arrived refugee and migrant communities**
- 1.2.2 Explore effective ways for local migrant and refugee service providers to engage with a wide range of mental health networks and local mental health specialist services**

## Action Area 1.3: People with Disability (PWD)

**Expectation of actions:** Expand access to physical, mental and social supports available for PWD who form refugee, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups.

### Snapshot of activities in Action Area 1.3

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
SSI Ability Links delivered workshops and training sessions on disability awareness to over 360 participants	Increased access to disability services amongst individuals from a refuge and migrant background Greater acknowledgement and understanding of disability amongst community members
Fairfield City Council is currently working with Disability Employment Services to provide a <b>disability work experience</b> program	Improved employment outcomes for PWD Reduced social isolation amongst PWD, their families and carers
RHS' " <b>For a Good Life</b> " Carer Support Group conduct monthly sessions focusing on clarifying the NDIS and services available. An average of 40 residents in Fairfield attend each session SSI Ability Links Carer Support Group for Arabic speaking people reached 65 people	Improved access to information and services amongst PWD, their families and carers Improved health and wellbeing amongst carers of PWD

### Description of activities in Action Area 1.3

The Plan identifies the need to promote better understanding of disability, and to address the stigma associated with disability within some sections of refugee communities.

RHS engages three nurses and a social worker focusing on meeting the on-arrival health needs of PWD and their carers.

SSI Ability Links has engaged in a community education campaign, which has involved several activities such as workshops delivered to approximately 360 people from refugee background, and has partnered with Community Hubs to deliver workshops to 14 refugee parents who have children with

disabilities. Education and awareness sessions also targeted 50 frontline caseworkers in the Humanitarian Settlement Program.

In 2017, Ability Links and CORE conducted a community consultation for Arabic speaking Carers, leading to a targeted project. The aim of the project was to raise disability services and community inclusion awareness by inviting guest speakers from disability services. Speakers from Afford Disability Employment, NDIS and Centrelink delivered the sessions.

Disability Support Groups were formed to ensure that PWD and their carers were socially engaged, to reduce risk of isolation, to

provide social support and to educate members on available support. The RHS support group focuses on the needs of the newly arrived, and SSI Ability Links specifically targets Arabic speaking people.

Agencies report that supporting and advocating for clients applying for NDIS support is a constant requirement for newly arrived communities in the Fairfield LGA. Both the Refugee Health Service and SSI Ability Links ran sessions which assisted clients to prepare applications to the scheme, and included

obtaining medical reports. They also assist clients once NDIS supports are in place.

Fairfield City Council explored work experience opportunities to reduce isolation and increase employment opportunities for PWD. Currently Fairfield City Council is seeking a local Disability Employment Service to partner in recruiting 20 participants from Fairfield. This program does not target refugees specifically, but offers an indirect opportunity to the large refugee community in Fairfield.

### Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 1.3

The introduction of NDIS has brought challenges for newly arrived refugees with a disability. Disability services have been required to provide increased support to this community to navigate NDIS processes. Continued support is also required to ensure clients receive appropriate assistance and/or to advocate on their behalf.

**One agency explains the situation as:**

*“All agencies working with newly arrived refugees with a disability could usefully employ additional resources to enable greater follow up of clients to promote access to services, and to identify barriers to program access once NDIS plans are in place.”*

Currently, agencies that indirectly support PWD receive questions related to disability support services and NDIS, which they are often not equipped to answer. There is a need for local agencies to receive training to improve their understanding, better support their clients accessing disability support services, and improve referral pathways.

Agencies who support the newly arrived with a disability and their families identified two issues regarding gaps in disability service provision.

They have highlighted the need for on-arrival access to Occupational Therapy in order to identify appropriate aids to assist in daily living. There is substantial demand for this assistance, including financial support in purchasing and hiring equipment.

Individuals who are not eligible for NDIS, but have reduced capacity, cannot access disability support as many services will not take any referrals if the person does not have a NDIS funding package. This issue is further impacted by the NDIS criteria, which is strict, resulting in refugees and vulnerable migrants missing out on much needed services such as case management, child support, respite services, personal care services, transport, life skill support, social activities and outings. Local disability support providers aim to assist these clients by supporting them to access mainstream services, and have highlighted they require more support in providing this assistance.

### Recommendations

**The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:**

**1.3.1 Identify the barriers people from refugee and migrant communities experience when accessing the NDIS and advocate to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to address these issues**

**1.3.2 Host information sessions to improve knowledge within local migrant and refugee service providers on NDIS processes**

**1.3.3 Advocate to government departments for immediate on-arrival access to occupational therapy and physical aids**



# SECTION 2: OPPORTUNITY

## Action Area 2.1: Meaningful Engagement, Skills Development, Education and Integration within Local Communities

**Expectation of actions:** Expand local volunteering, educational, transition and employment opportunities for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups increasing accessibility to paid employment opportunities.

### Snapshot of activities in Action Area 2.1

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
<p>700 refugees and people seeking asylum accessed <b>Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP)</b> assistance in Fairfield LGA. (Jan 2017 - Aug 2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 120 placed into employment</li><li>• 107 received work experience</li><li>• 105 received mentoring</li></ul> <p>22 people reported finding employment through the <b>'Bridges to Employment'</b> pilot program</p> <p>Other <b>local Pilot Programs</b> assisted 267 individuals to reach employment goals</p>	<p>Improved paid employment outcomes for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups</p> <p>More humanitarian entrants, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups receive tailored employment support</p> <p>Increased awareness and uptake of the employment services offered</p> <p>Increased exposure to Australian workplace culture; increased local work experience and greater exposure to professional mentors for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups</p>
<p><b>Refugee Youth Peer Mentoring Program (RYPMP)</b> has matched 47 young people to a mentor</p> <p>TAFE NSW <b>'YES' Program</b> attracted 30 students who were at risk of disengaging from school</p> <p>The Lebanese Muslim Association <b>'Thrive' initiative</b> has matched 43 mentors-mentees</p>	<p>Newly arrived youth are engaged with the community and supported to begin building confidence and a sense of identity in Australia</p> <p>Improved educational outcomes and retention rates amongst high school students</p>
<p>The 2018 <b>Business Breakfast</b> brought together 40 local businesses to learn about the strength and untapped market potentials of refugee and migrant communities</p> <p>The 2018 <b>Pathways to Employment Expo</b> attracted 550 attendees and 30 stallholders and provided refugee and migrant jobseekers information on training and opportunities to inspire and encourage participation</p>	<p>Increased likelihood of business sector employing staff from a refugee background</p> <p>Increased exposure to Australian workplace culture</p>

### Description of Activities in Action Area 2.1

Creating employment and training opportunities for refugees and vulnerable migrants is a major focus of the Plan, which mirrors State and Commonwealth government priorities. It is important to note that the Plan aims to create opportunities for new arrivals to find meaningful employment, that is, employment that considers the client's talents, skills and interests.

## Targeted promotion of existing refugee specific job seeking support available

Targeted promotion and service coordination is a key priority to ensure the large number of initiatives relating to employment and skills development deliver intended results of improved referral pathways and increased client uptake. The Plan ensures local interagency groups play an integral part in linking clients to employment support programs. One local interagency is the Fairfield Employment and Community Services Forum (FECAP). The Forum has engaged the Department of Jobs and Small Business, and includes members from employment support services including *jobactive* providers and community support services.

Another active interagency group is the Fairfield Emerging Communities Action Partnership (FECAP). FECAP aims to bring members together to increase collaboration and improve access and quality of services for emerging communities. FECAP has created an employment focused working group,

which aims to engage the community to boost refugee employment in Fairfield City.

FECAP hosts the annual *Pathways to Employment Expo* and in May 2018 the expo attracted over 550 attendees and brought together over 30 stallholders including employers and local businesses, educational institutions such as TAFE NSW and Western Sydney University, government agencies and community service providers.

One FECAP member explains the aim of the expo.

*“It aimed at providing a local forum for refugee and migrant jobseekers to be inspired, encouraged and informed about employment and training opportunities available to them as well as to enable them to take the next step(s) towards achieving their employment goals.”*

## Acknowledging the skills and benefits of hiring refugees

The local business sector and wider community have been encouraged to hire people from a refugee or migrant background through promotion of the benefits, skills and qualifications that new arrivals can offer to businesses.

The FECAP employment working group hosted a **Business Breakfast** held in March 2018 and targeted local business to highlight the advantages of hiring someone from a refugee and migrant

background. 40 businesses attended this event, and 10 of these demonstrated a commitment to hiring individuals from a refugee and refugee like background by advertising their vacancies at the FECAP Pathways to Employment Expo in May 2018.

*“Prior to the business breakfast, FECAP had limited engagement and connection with local businesses. A clear articulation of the aim of the business breakfast, as well as what was in it for business, enabled the participation of local businesses.”*

FECAP member

## Work experience and mentoring opportunities

The Plan aims to increase exposure of refugee and migrant communities to Australian workplace culture through increased work experience and access to mentors.

The **Refugee Support Program (RESP)** aims to provide refugees and people seeking asylum with tailored support through access to work experience, training, mentoring, assistance with recognition of prior learning and sustained employment. The program is managed by the NSW Department of Industry and delivered by SSI in the Western Sydney and Illawarra regions. SSI reported that RESP has assisted 700 clients from the Fairfield LGA between January 2017 and August 2018. The majority of assistance was through work readiness, with 869 cases of assistance recorded, and 307 cases of business development assistance. 120 clients were placed into employment, 107 received work experience and 105 received mentoring. RESP has worked closely with 15 business partners to help reach these outcomes.

### Work Experience offered by key agencies and programs includes:

- **CORE Community Services volunteer/ work experience (52 work experience placements)**
- **Refugee Employment Support Program (Fairfield) (107 work experience placements)**
- **Fairfield City Council's Work Experience Program (9 work experience placements)**

Collaborative efforts through local pilot programs designed to create opportunities for vulnerable communities have been achieved. Fairfield City Council in partnership with Navitas English, has set up a pilot Refugee Work Experience Program for residents of Fairfield. Students are recruited by Navitas English to be part of 2 week's work experience with a manager at Fairfield City Council. 9 participants have completed so far, with the aim of 20 by end of 2019.

The **Bridges to Employment** pilot program was developed by CORE Community Services and Fairfield City Council in partnership with MTC Australia and Fairfield Open Library. The initiative aimed to respond to the high level of unemployment among people seeking asylum and partner visa holders in the Fairfield City. The target groups have work rights but are ineligible for intensive job-seeking support through *jobactive* providers. The service was offered from November 2016 to December 2017 at the Fairfield and Cabramatta libraries

and involved a job-seeking coach working with clients, two days a week. It offered one-on-one support such as preparing resumes and job search advice. During the 39 weeks of the project, there were 221 occasions of service to 73 clients. 22 of the 73 clients (30%) reported finding work during the program and not needing the service any longer. 41% of those successful job seekers were people seeking asylum.

### Mentoring Opportunities are being offered by three key programs:

- **Refugee Youth Peer Mentoring Program (47 matches)**
- **Refugee Employment Support Program (105 matches)**
- **LMA's Youth mentoring programs (43 matches)**

The **Refugee Peer Mentoring Program (RYPMP)** was established in early 2018 and is funded by the Department of Family and Community Services. It has been implemented with the assistance of youth advisory groups and key stakeholders to provide young refugees and people seeking asylum with access to mentors. The program is delivered by CORE Community Services in partnership with Western Sydney MRC for the Western Sydney area. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are paired with a peer mentor to achieve goals relating to education, employment, access to services, building connections to their community and participating in community life. 47 young people in the Fairfield area have already been successfully matched for either group or independent mentoring. The program is now in its second year of implementation and the number of participants benefiting from the program is expected to grow significantly in the next two years. Feedback from community workers indicates the program also provides many benefits to the mentor:

***“There has been overwhelming support and enthusiasm of mentors, particularly those from a refugee background. They are so passionate about giving back to their communities and to Australia, especially in terms of supporting newly arrived young people to make the most of the opportunities they have in this country.”***

**RYPMP Coordinator**



## Work experience and mentoring opportunities

The Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA) provides mentoring opportunities through the **Thrive initiative**, which is funded by Department of Social Services to support youth refugee and migrants during their settlement. The Rahnoma Mentorship program focuses on providing young people with the knowledge to pursue tertiary and vocational education through the support of a mentor. A second program is the Champion's Peer Support Program, which encourages peer support between young people in areas such as homework and training. LMA reports that 43 youth have been assisted through these two programs in the Fairfield area.

The Plan also focuses on increasing accessibility to youth specific capacity building and training opportunities. One example is TAFE NSW's **Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) program**. TAFE NSW partnered with Fairfield IEC students to deliver an 8-week program at TAFE's Wetherill Park campus. 30 students who were at risk of disengaging from school have participated in the program so far.

***“By providing educational support pathways and individual learning plans, the partnership aims to help students re-engage with formal schooling, access further education or training options, or realise successful employment pathways.”***

Navitas English Fairfield and TAFE NSW have provided youth specific programs for students in their AMEP classes, to provide youth from a refugee background with better options when learning the English language. Navitas English Fairfield have also partnered with the LMA Thrive Youth Transition Support to offer youth opportunities to participate in employment readiness and capacity building initiatives. Navitas English has facilitated a weekly on-site outreach service as part of the Thrive Project since 2017. Students from the college provide positive feedback that these training opportunities/services help them identify their goals and pathways to further study and/or employment.

## Increase accessibility to options for overseas skills and qualification recognition

Increasing access to options for overseas skills and qualification recognition is identified in the Plan as an obstacle for skilled refugees and migrants in accessing meaningful employment.

Agencies report that bi-monthly workshops on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) run by TAFE NSW in partnership with CORE Community Service and the SSI Orientation Team were effective. The sessions informed newly arrived refugees and migrants on RPL pathways, and clients were offered one on one support if

required. TAFE is also holding industry specific information sessions for non-apprentice programs, which will include information about RPL. Additionally, TAFE reports that it is developing a clear and equitable procedure for the recognition of overseas skills and qualifications for skilled migrants. Support with RPL is also provided as part of the RESP Program.

## Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 2.1

There are many initiatives and programs that support clients to find employment, start businesses, or complete training. Despite the good work in promoting and linking these initiatives in Fairfield City, it remains a challenge for local agencies to understand and utilise these opportunities.

There is still uncertainty expressed by agencies in having recognition of prior learning (RPL) achieved for refugees and vulnerable migrants, and there are financial barriers involved when individuals are required to complete exams and undergo further training. Local agencies have expressed the need for clearer pathways for RPL, as there is confusion in the community and amongst local agencies.

Proposals to establish a NSW office for overseas skill recognition have not been implemented - currently the NSW Department of Industry and Training can assess trade qualifications but not higher degrees. Currently, support provided by TAFE to secure RPL for those from refugee and migrant backgrounds is limited.

The mandatory requirements imposed by the national **jobactive** program currently limit the opportunity for clients to utilise refugee focused employment programs. The **jobactive** model is driven by outcome payments, which can result in pressure on providers to put people into any type of work, and not utilise a client-focused approach.

Clients are required to meet 'mutual obligation'

requirements that can limit the scope for people to participate in refugee focused programs or initiatives. If clients do not fulfill their mutual obligations their Centrelink benefits are at risk of suspension. One lead agency comments on the challenges in offering specialised employment support to refugees:

*“Clients might be studying English, caring for family, attending jobactive appointments, attending health appointments, and engaging with multiple other services. This means that they are not able to engage with the program to the extent that is required in order to significantly improve their employability skills and secure employment.”*

There is flexibility in relation to mutual obligation requirements if a program is an “approved activity”. Approved activities include English language courses such as AMEP; the NEIS program, which supports refugees in entrepreneurship, and the RESP Program. However referral pathways between *jobactive* providers and these programs remain a challenge. Referrals between State and Federally funded employment programs need to be streamlined. Employment service providers report that some programs, such as NEIS, attract only a partial subsidy. Other employment programs that allow the

*jobactive* provider to receive full subsidy when they make the referral, rely heavily on both agencies having open communication to record attendance and outcomes. Where there are no requirements to notify the *jobactive* provider, the current system does not provide strong incentives for effective referral pathways. One agency identified this issue and suggests:

*“Policy directions are required on how to engage refugee jobseekers on mutual obligations commitments, we still noticed competing and conflicting policies and lack of coordination on Federal and State directions to support jobseekers in general and refugee jobseekers in particular. There is a need to consider some community employment support interventions as approved activities under the social security support programs.”*

The above issues hinder collaboration between agencies and services that provide local employment support. And place hurdles for refugee and vulnerable migrants to consider volunteering, or participate in targeted training or programs that act as a pathway for long term employment.

## Recommendations

The Plan’s Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:

- 2.1.1 Advocate for Government departments to address coordination issues between *jobactive* and other specialist refugee support programs
- 2.1.2 Improve understanding amongst local service providers of existing pathways to recognition of prior learning and overseas qualifications through RESP and TAFE NSW
- 2.1.3 Advocate to the Department of Jobs and Small Business for volunteering to be easily approved under *jobactive* “mutual obligations”

Action Area 2.2: Volunteerism in relation to supporting newly arrived refugee, humanitarian entrant and other vulnerable migrant communities

Expectation of actions: Coordination and acknowledgement of local volunteers.

Snapshot of Activities in Action Area 2.2

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan’s partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
A pool of volunteers provided 113 occasions of service for the RHS <b>Health Navigation Program</b> , which assisted new arrivals through transport to medical appointments	Broader community support is available for newly arrived refugee, humanitarian entrant and other vulnerable migrant communities

Description of activities in Action Area 2.2

The NSW Refugee Health Service developed a **Health Navigation Program** which recruited a pool of volunteers to assist new arrivals through transport to medical appointments.

In the development of the program RHS liaised with several volunteer recruitment agencies, including LEEP, Go Volunteer, Seek, Liverpool Volunteer Resource Centre and University of Sydney. RHS has reported that since its commencement in January 2018 the program has provided 113 occasions of service.

RHS reports their nurses have been receiving positive feedback from clients regarding

how the program has helped them access appointments and better understand the health system through the volunteers.

One RHS employee explains additional outcomes from the program.

*“Volunteers on occasion have also acted as advocates for clients i.e. ensuring that interpreters are present, appointments are not changed without notification to the client.”*

Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 2.2

A lack of volunteering activities represents a current gap in the implementation of the Plan.

Wider participation of agencies with expertise in utilising volunteers to support refugees and other newly arrived communities would help fill this gap. This will also assist the coordination and recognition of volunteers who contribute to the settlement of the newly arrived.

Current volunteer recognition ceremonies appear to recognise volunteers as a whole group, and do not specifically target those who support newly arrived refugees and vulnerable migrants.

Recommendations

The Plan’s Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:

- 2.2.1 Invite specialist volunteering organisations to join the Plan’s working group
- 2.2.2 Allocate a specialist volunteering organisation to drive the Plan’s volunteering actions



## Action Area 2.3: Information and Coordination

Expectation of actions: Stakeholders work collaboratively to share information and achieve outcomes for refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups.

### Snapshot of Activities in Action Area 2.3

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
<p>Fairfield Police hosted an “<b>Elders Abuse Forum</b>” and targeted over 40 religious and community leaders</p> <p>Services supported and participated in the <b>Annual Walk-a-Thon</b> event with the Assyrian Church of the East's youth association</p> <p>Assyrian Resource Centre has provided ‘<b>English for Life</b>’ classes to 500 community members</p>	<p>Services are better able to communicate relevant information to communities via religious organisations</p> <p>Religious organisations and community leaders are better informed and able to provide appropriate referral to their congregation and community members</p>

### Description of activities in Action Area 2.3

A key focus of this Action Area is engaging religious leaders. CORE Community Services and the Assyrian Resource Centre (ARC) report that engagement with religious leaders is important to convey service information to migrant communities; discuss and address identified community issues; and meet needs regarding settlement issues.

CORE Community Services reports that it supports and participates in events held by ethno-specific communities such as the *annual Walk-a-Thon* event with the Assyrian Church of the East's Youth association and have supported the Annual Youth Association Conference.

Fairfield Police report that they constantly work with local ethno specific communities, including participating in cultural events. In August 2018 they hosted a forum, which targeted community and religious leaders to discuss the effects of

Elder Abuse in the community, with over 40 community leaders from a variety of cultural and religious groups attending.

Members of local refugee communities consistently request the provision of English language classes in addition to AMEP. ARC reports that it has provided English for Life classes to 500 community members. Agencies have also worked to encourage a greater uptake of AMEP entitlements, with a focus on those on a partner visa who are likely to be more vulnerable and isolated. An example is the work by Navitas English Cabramatta to engage closely with key local community organisations who are well connected with women in the area, including Asian Women at Work and Vietnamese Community in Australia. This frequent engagement has helped to promote understanding and importance of English language programs.

While a local network to support people seeking asylum has not been established, Fairfield Multicultural Interagency (FMI) was able to create a small working group to prepare a briefing on their concerns regarding the recent changes to the Status Resolution Support Service Program (SRSS) and its impact on the welfare of people seeking asylum. The paper was presented to a local Member of Parliament in July 2018. A FMI member explains the challenges in creating a local network to focus on people seeking asylum

**“Services with expertise in supporting people seeking asylum are largely overwhelmed by government policy changes in the sector and can hardly find time to invest in being part of a working group. Many would rather seek other ways to support their clients affected by the policy changes.”**

## Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 2.3

More work is required to engage with religious leaders, as they are influential in refugee communities and are especially important in delivering information to vulnerable migrants and people seeking asylum who cannot access the same support available to humanitarian entrants.

There are challenges in ensuring that people seeking asylum are targeted in initiatives to ensure the best possible outcomes for their settlement. This group experiences the same issues as humanitarian entrants, however receives less support, and is more likely to fall through gaps, especially with recent changes to the Status Resolution Support Service Program (SRSS).

## Recommendations

**The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:**

- 2.3.1 Improve coordination between local agencies and religious leaders to improve information delivery and access to services for people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants**
- 2.3.2 Strengthen partnerships between local agencies and peak bodies supporting people seeking asylum**
- 2.3.3 Explore opportunities for local service providers to increasingly collaborate with charities providing refugees and vulnerable migrants with immediate financial and food relief**

# SECTION 3: Place

## Action Area 3.1: Housing Accessibility

**Expectation of actions:** Advocate for adequate resource allocation and innovative approaches to improve accessibility to short and long term local housing options for humanitarian entrants, refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable migrant groups.

### Snapshot of Activities in Action Area 3.1

Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners	...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes
Re-establishment of the Fairfield Housing Taskforce in June 2017	
<b>Tenancy Rights and Bond Law Information</b> Session delivered to 90 students at Navitas Fairfield	Better coordination at a service level in relation to housing matters
<b>Energy Savings Forum</b> educated 34 frontline workers on ways they can support their clients to save money on electricity bills	Increased awareness of housing options available

### Description of activities in Action Area 3.1

The re-establishment of Fairfield Housing Taskforce (FHT) in June 2017 has produced better coordination in relation to housing matters at a service level. The FHT aims to increase awareness amongst new arrivals about housing services, educate them on social housing policy and update them on changes to housing products.

The improved coordination has resulted in targeted information sessions on tenancy rights and responsibilities and housing options delivered by Legal Aid and Housing NSW to students at Navitas Fairfield AMEP classes. The sessions commenced in June 2018, with 6 sessions conducted to date and over 90 participants.

The FHT also held an **Energy Savings Incentive Forum**, which educated frontline settlement workers about practical tips to save money on energy bills, for the benefit of refugee clients in the Fairfield LGA. The event attracted 34 participants. One FHT member commented on the issues in the community:

*“We see many clients who can pay up to 80% of their income on electricity bills. Therefore the FHT wanted to be able to deliver some education via frontline workers to the community.”*

### Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 3.1

The FHT requires increased engagement from some key agencies in the housing sector. A wider participation would address potential knowledge and expertise gaps within the group regarding housing issues and availability of services. It would also improve referral pathways and promote more resource sharing between agencies.

Housing NSW's Start Safely program provides support to people that do not have a safe place to live due to domestic and family violence. Agencies have reported that on occasion a referral to the program has taken 2-3 months to be approved, and does not seem meet the immediate needs of those escaping domestic violence and at risk of homelessness. As addressed in Action Area 1.1, those on a partner visa who are experiencing domestic and family violence are not eligible to access social housing.

### Recommendations

The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:

**3.1.1 Expand the networks and resources within Fairfield Housing Taskforce by inviting additional specialist housing agencies to join**

**3.1.2 Advocate to Government departments for improved access to emergency accommodation for refugee and vulnerable migrants experiencing domestic and family violence**

## Action Area 3.2: Evidence-Based Planning and Advocacy

Expectation of actions: Build platforms, provide leadership and opportunities for collaboration for local and regional leadership on issues impacting refugees, people seeking asylum and other vulnerable

### Snapshot of Activities in Action Area 3.2

#### Collaborative activities implemented by the Plan's partners

Fairfield Multicultural Interagency and Refugee Council of Australia release report **"Not Working: Experiences of Refugees and Migrants with *jobactive*"**

Training held for local stakeholders on using the Department of Social Services Settlement Reporting Facility

#### ...to contribute to the following 2017 - 2019 outcomes

Recognition by Government of the need for an ongoing [employment services] initiative to effectively service humanitarian and refugee - and to a lesser extent - migrant communities

Increased capacity amongst stakeholders to be able to access relevant statistics relating to migrant and refugee communities

### Description of activities in Action Area 3.2

The Fairfield Multicultural Interagency (FMI) identified the need for an evidence-based discussion paper highlighting the needs of refugee and migrant communities when seeking employment and concerns about delivery of the *jobactive* program. The FMI working group conducted a qualitative survey, which attracted 102 respondent jobseekers from a refugee and migrant background residing in Fairfield City. The survey gathered data relating to the issues, desires and employment barriers faced by refugee jobseekers. Additionally, FMI was able to partner with the Refugee Council of Australia, which provided access to their annual consultations in Fairfield. This collaboration enhanced the robustness of the FMI research. Findings and recommendations from the surveys were compiled into a report **'Not Working: Experiences of Refugees and Migrants with *jobactive*'** and launched in August 2017. An FMI member explains the effectiveness of the approach:

***"The positive response from both the Department of Jobs and Small Business and *jobactive* services aptly illustrates the power of evidence. Prior to the surveys, FMI members had largely shared anecdotal data about the negative experiences of their clients with *jobactive* services. Their claims had been challenged in meetings by *jobactive* services for lack of evidence."***

Positive outcomes achieved included a willingness from the Department of Jobs and Small Business and *jobactive* providers to explore ways to address recommendations raised in the report. There has also been sustained collaboration from *jobactive* providers through interagency forums such as

the FMI and Fairfield Employment and Community Services Forum (FECSF). Employment services and settlement services have been able to build a better understanding of the issues each sector experiences.

FMI held a training session to build the capacity of local stakeholders to access the Department of **Social Services Settlement Reporting Facility (SRF)**. Participants were taught to gather settlement data that can be generated by the SRF and how to best navigate that system for planning and funding purposes. Presenters from the Department of Social Services led the training and answered questions raised by FMI members. The two-hour training attracted 35 FMI members. An FMI convenor identified that maintaining a positive working relationship with government departments was an important part of this process, enabling the provision of practical support to service providers.

Changes to the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) program have raised widespread concern at the national and local level. Since the announcement, FMI has worked to educate and raise awareness of the threats to the welfare of people seeking asylum associated with this policy decision. FMI members formed a small working group and prepared a briefing paper on the direct negative impacts. FMI also invited presenters from the Refugee Advice and Casework Service and from the Department of Home Affairs to speak to FMI members. Members were able to share local experiences with the presenters. FMI members aim to effectively engage with key stakeholders and peak bodies to support them in their advocacy campaigns to improve conditions for people seeking asylum. FMI will also aim to partner with the Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Interagency



to collaborate in collecting data, and stories of lived experiences, mapping services to develop a coordinated response, and exploring practical support for people seeking asylum.

The various activities led by FMI demonstrate

the importance of local leadership proactively advocating for policy changes and raising awareness of issues affecting refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrant groups in the Fairfield area.

## Challenges, barriers and gaps in Action Area 3.2

### Inclusion of Children and Families

After the Plan was launched, local agencies with expertise in early intervention services advocated for the inclusion of family and children specific issues to be included in the Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan.

This advocacy has led to several initiatives that aim to create better interaction, understanding and connection between early intervention services and refugee and migrant settlement services operating in Fairfield City.

In the period October 2017 to September 2018 six workshops were facilitated in Fairfield to explore the strengths and gaps in cross-sector service collaboration that benefit children and families. Each workshop was developed in collaboration between CORE Community Services, Communities for Children Fairfield

(facilitated by The Smith Family) and delivered by Western Sydney Community Forum. Some lessons from the workshops included:

Both sectors developed better understanding of why effective communication is needed and agreed that current separate ways of working are not effective

Participants developed a common, plain English/non-jargon language glossary so that both sectors are better equipped to work together and with the community.

Communities for Change Fairfield, Woodville Alliance and the Child and Family Interagency are taking a leading role in developing action items to be included in an amended Plan, as set out in a 'mini' issues paper.

### Other Challenges

Some priority actions in this area have not been implemented due to lack of a lead agency. Agencies report limited capacity to commit to producing evidence based discussion papers.

## Recommendations

**The Plan's Working Group incorporate the following actions into the Plan and allocate a lead agency to pursue the implementation of each:**

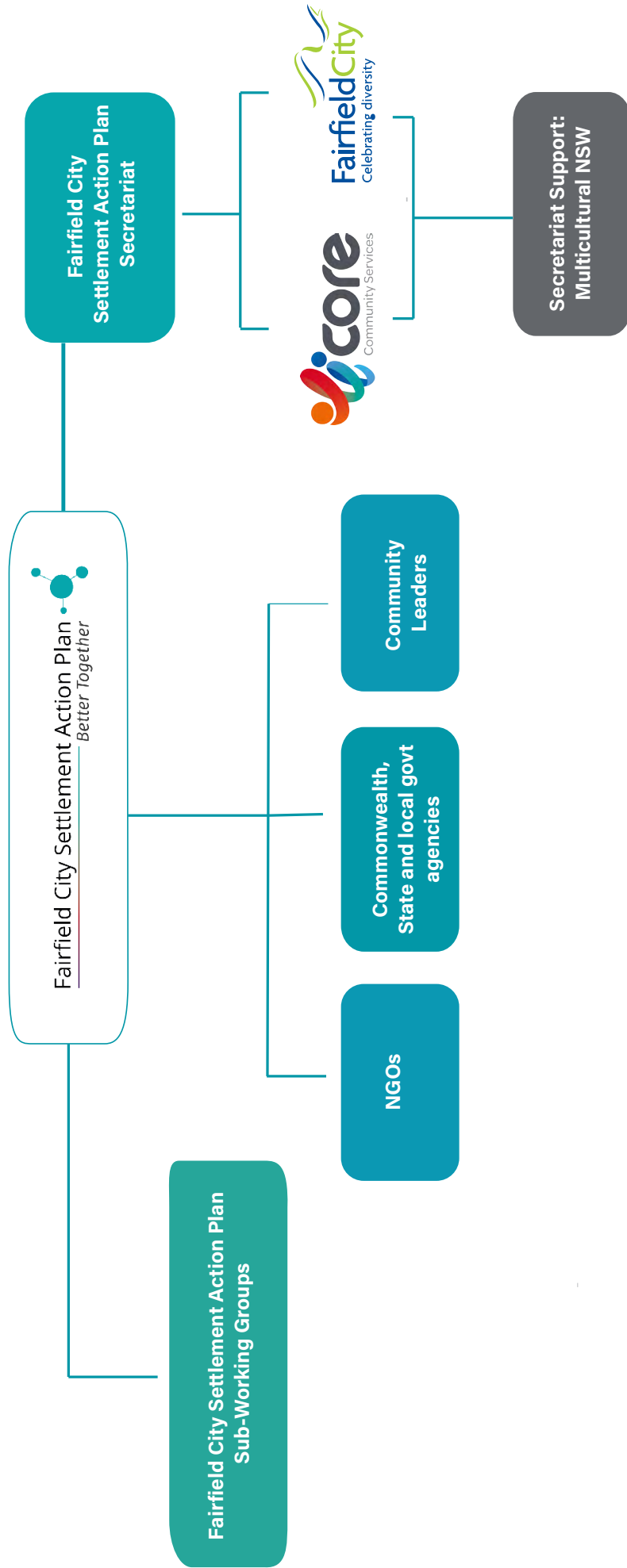
**3.2.1 Improve data collation specific to the Fairfield City region to better prioritise investments, monitor the impact of initiatives and measure outcomes of the Plan**

**3.2.2 Ensure the current Plan considers the wellbeing of children and families, and includes specific actions to improve outcomes for children and families**

## Overarching Recommendations

- **Extend the Plan until June 2020 to further improve coordination of services that support refugees and migrants in Fairfield City**
- **Advocate to the NSW and Federal Government to resource a position that oversees the Plan's coordination, monitoring and evaluation framework and governance mechanisms until June 2020**
- **The Plan's 2017-2019 actions are amended to reflect completed projects, updated circumstances and the recommendations as set out above.**

# Fairfield City Settlement Action Plan Model





This is a community based document.

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#### **Disclaimer**

**Findings and conclusions presented in this report reflect a summary of consultations in the target areas and with the Plan's partners.**

**The document must be attributed as:**

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2019 Better Together: Sharing our achievements and lessons*

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