



30 August 2021

Re: Collaboration to connect Defence and veteran families to support for Afghan refugees

To the Defence community:

We have received feedback that many families would like to support the wave of refugees from Afghanistan that are soon to settle in Australia. As a result, we have facilitated a group of stakeholders in the Defence support sector, to identify opportunities for our community to support these refugees where they wish to.

To ensure families can have immediate connection and impact, we have consolidated information on existing resettlement programs, and have been approached by several ex-service organisations interested in offering their programs to this refugee group.

Upon arrival in Australia the immediate areas of need for refugees are: housing, health, and home related appliances and wares. Once these are established, refugee needs also cover: employment, legal issues, education and long-term housing. Underpinning all of this, is the need for families to be welcomed and supported in assimilating into a new home, which may be quite foreign to them. There are a significant number of established programs which offer this support, both from the government and from community organisations.

Government Resettlement Services:

The [Refugee Servicing Network](#) can assist families to access these services. [Multicultural Service Officers](#) can support these discussions for those requiring translation services¹. Those with complex resettlement needs are eligible for the [Humanitarian Settlement Program's Specialised and Intensive Services \(HSP's SIS\)](#) for up to five years from the time of their arrival. People can apply for this program via the above link or direct questions during business hours to the Department of Home Affairs on 1300 855 669. A list of the SIS service providers in each region can be found [here](#).

Under most humanitarian visas, the new arrival can work, study and access government services such as [Centrelink](#), [Medicare](#)² and [JobActive](#). They can also access short-term counselling for trauma, and [English language classes](#) (up to 510 hours), if required. In cases of financial crisis, new arrivals may be able to access once-off [crisis payments](#) or [special benefit payments](#), with regular waiting periods for newly arrived migrants waived under humanitarian circumstances³. For more information on what payments and services a new arrival may be able to access, visit the [Centrelink Payment and Service Finder Tool](#).

Once established, there is also support for education through the [Skills for Education and Employment Program](#), and for [finding childcare services](#). The [JobActive](#) website features a range of resources for securing employment.

¹ Services Australia, 2021, [Help for refugees, humanitarian entrants and new arrivals](#). Updated 17 June 2021.

² Call 131 450 for assistance with Medicare in a [language other than English](#).

³ Buckmaster & Guppy, 2014, [Australian Government Assistance to refugees: fact versus fiction](#). Research Paper Series 2014-2015.



Community Organisations:

A number of national organisations offer comprehensive support for migrants and refugees. These include:

- [The Australian Red Cross](#) – providing emergency relief and support services, and advocacy.
- [Relationships Australia](#) – for counselling and support programs for families in a range of languages.
- [Soldier On](#) – expanding eligibility for their programs to all Locally Engaged Employees (LEEs) who supported Allied operations in Afghanistan.
- [The Refugee Council of Australia](#) – providing resettlement support, advocacy and community connection, including community sponsorship and mentoring programs.

How can you help?

- Volunteer or donate to the above community organisations.
- Register to be a mentor for a refugee family, through [the Refugee Council](#), the [Red Cross](#), or the [Humanitarian Settlement Program's service providers](#).
- Write to your local member to request they engage in [community sponsorship](#) of refugee families settling in the local area.
- Consider whether your business or employer can sponsor an individual under an [Assurance of Support](#) arrangement. By employing a refugee you support their resettlement and help them to achieve independence and financial stability.
- If you identify a gap in services, speak to your local ex-service organisations to develop a solution. Then spread the word!

As further information or opportunities becomes available, these will be shared on the DFA social media channels.

On behalf of the team at Defence Families of Australia, thank you to all ADF members and veterans who were involved in the Afghanistan War. Your service and sacrifice made a difference. Furthermore, thank you to the families of these service members who also sacrificed so that their loved one could help support the people of Afghanistan.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandi Laaksonen-Sherrin', written over a white background.

Sandi Laaksonen-Sherrin
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