# Fact Sheet 1: Introduction to New and Emerging Communities

*Better Beginnings. Better Futures* is a series of factsheets that aims to provide a community perspective on some of the most pressing issues affecting new and emerging communities in Australia.

## Aim and purpose of the factsheets

Developed on the basis of community feedback and perspectives, the factsheets identify key issues and present strategies for the improvement of service and program delivery for new and emerging communities in Australia. They aim to highlights that new and emerging communities, and their associated needs, are not always included, nor adequately considered in the planning, funding and development of programs and policies at local, state and federal levels.

By their very nature, 'new' and 'emerging' communities often have limited ability to self-advocate as a result of limited systems knowledge or understanding of the existing platforms and mechanisms available to assist with the settlement process. This means that their needs often remain overlooked and go unaddressed.

**As such, the core objective of this series of factsheets is to assist the development of effective strategies to improve the social, economic and political prospects of new and emerging communities in Australia.**

In so doing, the factsheets propose a working description of 'new and emerging communities' to provide greater clarity on the issues that they face and opportunities that exist to improve the design and delivery of policies, programs and services to meet their needs.

The intended target audience of the factsheets is deliberately broad in order to facilitate greater awareness and responsiveness to issues discussed.

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The anticipated readership encompasses policy and decision makers from local, state and federal levels of government, as well as funding bodies, service providers and community groups that work with people from new and emerging communities and play a significant role in their settlement journey.

## The factsheets - an overview

Factsheet 1 – *Introduction to New and Emerging Communities*

An introduction to new and emerging communities, including a working description, and specific characteristics of such communities.

Factsheet 2 – *Support for Post-Compulsory School Education for Students from New and Emerging Communities*

A discussion of the main barriers to achieving positive educational outcomes, including the educational needs of people from new and emerging communities, support available to them, gaps in service delivery and availability, as well as tips on how to address them.

Factsheet 3 – *Youth Employment in New and Emerging Communities*

An overview of key barriers to gaining and retaining meaningful employment for youth from new and emerging communities, including support programs available, gaps in services and programs and tips on how to address them.

Factsheet 4 – *Access to Funding for New and Emerging Community Organisations*

An analysis of the funding programs accessible to new and emerging community organisations and how to access them, challenges to effective management of funds, as well as gaps in services and programs and tips on how to address them.

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The information provided in these factsheets is based on reports developed by relevant community, academic and government organisations, in addition to the perspectives of community members, obtained through consultations. The factsheets also draw on the advice and expertise of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) and its New and Emerging Communities Advisory Committee. In addition, they draw on insights from FECCA's membership and extended networks across Australia, incorporating service providers, case workers, healthcare professionals and volunteers.

## New and emerging communities - a working description

In its 1999 *New Country, New Stories* report, the then Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission described new and emerging communities as:

> *Communities with less than 20,000 people in Australia, most of whom had been in Australia for less than ten years[1].*

In terms of provision of settlement support, the Australian Government considers an initial period of up to five years for the provision of services for new arrivals to facilitate their successful settlement in Australia. Despite this initial support period, it is important to acknowledge that this does not render such communities as being 'established', given that they continue to face specific challenges associated with the short duration of their settlement journey in Australia and their pre-migration experiences.

> **For the purpose of these factsheets, new and emerging communities refer to those people of shared background who have arrived in Australia within the last five to ten years.**

Significantly, new and emerging communities largely consist, albeit not exclusively, of recent refugees and other humanitarian entrants. This is predominately the case as Australia is one of the top three countries to resettle refugees from around the world.
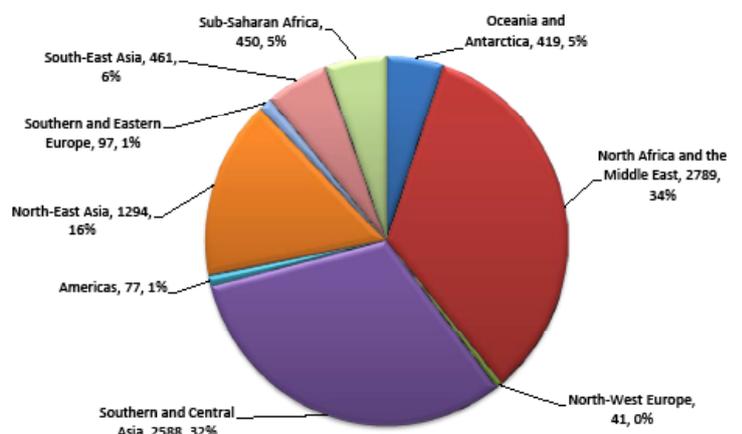
In the period 2012-13 alone, the Australian immigration authorities granted a total of 20,019 Humanitarian Program visas, mainly to people from the Middle East,

Southwest Asia, Central Asia and Africa[2]. In addition to stateless persons, some of the most common countries of orgin include Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, and many other African nations[3].

### Top Countries of Origin for Offshore and Onshore Humanitarian Visas (2007-13)[4]

| Visa Program | Countries of Origin (2007-13) |
|---|---|
| Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (offshore) | Burma<br>Iraq<br>Afghanistan<br>Sudan<br>Liberia<br>Bhutan<br>DR Congo<br>Ethiopia |
| Onshore Protection | Sri Lanka<br>China<br>Iraq<br>Pakistan<br>Iran<br>Afghanistan<br>Zimbabwe<br>Stateless |

### Protection Visa Applications Lodged by Region (2012-13)[5]



Whilst new and emerging community members come from a wide range of backgrounds, many share

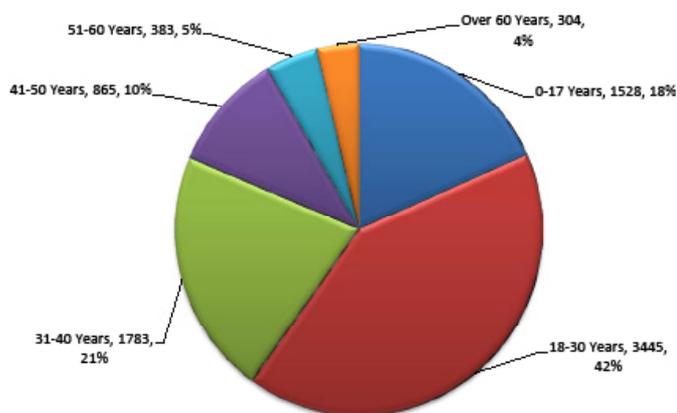# Better beginnings.
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similar experiences, often having fled conflicts in their countries of origin or having experienced other difficult circumstances resulting in their displacement outside of their homeland. Many people from new and emerging communities now settled in Australia have spent time in situations of protracted displacement, in which they have endured limited access to health, education or other services and support mechanisms, as well as limited employment opportunities.

The demographic characteristics of people requesting humanitarian entrance have changed over recent years, and applicants will have different needs to those from previous times. People from these groups are very likely to have experienced high degrees of trauma, and possibly even torture, and instances of rape, murder and disappearance, as well as abritrary detention.

The majority of the members in new and emerging communities fall into the age group of 18-30 years, as outlined in the graphic below.

**Protection Visa Applications
Lodged by Age Group 2012-13[6]**



51-60 Years, 383, 5%
Over 60 Years, 304, 4%
41-50 Years, 865, 10%
0-17 Years, 1528, 18%
31-40 Years, 1783, 21%
18-30 Years, 3445, 42%

## Key features of new and emerging communities - an overview

The following characteristics have been identified as broadly applying to new and emerging communities in Australia:

- They are typically small in number and most of their members are new arrivals to Australia. There has

been a significant increase in the number of people arriving from countries of origin designated as 'new and emerging communities' in Australia over the past ten years.

- New and emerging communities often lack established family networks in Australia, support systems, community structures and the necessary social and economic resources to facilitate effective settlement.[7]

- Individuals from new and emerging community backgrounds can be more vulnerable than immigrants from established communities, to the extent that they often come from refugee backgrounds and have experienced such challenges as displacement, trauma and torture.

- New and emerging communities often comprise individuals with low levels of education and formal training. This is often the result of having spent significant periods of time in situations of protracted displacement with limited access to education and training opportunities.

- New and emerging community members often posess limited or no English language skills.

- New and emerging communities often comprise individuals who are unfamiliar with Western systems of government and services available to assist them as they have no prior lack of experience with such structures in their countries of origin.

- New and emerging community members may be dislocated from family members as a result of their displacement. They may subsequently lack the ability to draw on collective resources for support, and may not know of existing services, programs and other mechanisms at their disposal.

- Despite their members often having common needs, new and emerging communities are diverse in terms of their culture, religion, languages spoken, levels of education, skills, social and political backgrounds.

- Individuals from new and emerging communities are more prone to becoming victims of discrimination and racism due to their apparent differences, as well as their cultural and religious backgrounds, and lack of familiarity with systems and processes in their new settlement location.

## Specific issues concerning new and emerging communities

Although the needs of new and emerging communities vary, they are generally related to:

- accommodation/housing;
- education and training;
- employment;
- English language skills;
- health;
- youth;
- family and relationships;
- the legal system and justice;
- social participation; and
- community development.

## A roadmap for success

Successful settlement of new and emerging communities is dependent on the quality and level of support that such communities receive during and beyond the primary stages of their settlement in Australia. Appropriate, informed and adequately resourced, early intervention measures in the areas of health, education, employment and capacity building are all vital to ensure that members of new and emerging communities can become independent participants of, and contributors to, the overall wellbeing and cohesiveness of their broader community.

To be successful, settlement support services need to be coordinated, comprehensive and tailored to meet the specific needs of people from new and emerging communities. With regard to their planning, development and implementation, programs and policies servicing new and emerging communities must recognise their diversity and cater to this accordingly. Successful settlement of new and emerging community groups in Australia requires an effective whole-of-

government approach, and a clear focus in all relevant government agencies on effective service provision that addresses the diverse needs of new and emerging communities.

In addition, the availability and provision of settlement support programs must also be supplemented to match the changing demographis of Australia and the increasing proportion of new and emerging communities alongside Australia's other culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In this context, and as discussed further in these factsheets, it is imperative to encourage new and emerging community groups to self-advocate and be supported to develop their own mechanisms and strategies to facilitate effective settlement in Australia. In this regard, capacity building is key to empowering new and emerging communities to develop and prosper.

### References

[1]Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. 1999. 'New Country, New Stories'. Available at: https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/.../newcountry_newstories.doc

[2]Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship. 2013. '2012-13 Annual Report'. Available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2012-13/pdf/2012-13-diac-annual-report.pdf

[3] Queensland Government Department of Premier and Cabinet. 'New and Emerging Communities in Queensland'. Available at: http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/new_emerg_cmmties.pdf

[4] Refugee Council of Australia. 2014. 'Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2014-15, National and Global Statistics.'Available at: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub/2014-15_Stats.pdf

[5]Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection. 2013. 'Asylum Trends - Australia 2012-13'. Available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/immigrationupdate/asylum-trends-aus-2012-13.pdf

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Queensland Government Department of Premier and Cabinet. 'New and Emerging Communities in Queensland'. Available at: http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/new_emerg_cmmties.pdf