
Proposal for Refugee Specialised Settlement Programs



Delivering a nationally integrated and cost effective system for refugee education, job-training and social integration programs in Australia.

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Outline

Background

Refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia are consistently over represented on the lists of unemployed, underemployed, lowly paid and low-skilled members of Australia's labour force (Department of Immigration and Border Protection- 2012/13)¹. As the best strategy for addressing this problem, research has repeatedly advocated for refugee specialised employment and integration programs that actively connect refugees with private enterprise's and local communities (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2013)² (Refugee Council of Australia, 2010)³ (Brotherhood of St Lawrence, 2008)⁴. Despite the key recommendations outlined in research reports, an integrated system delivering specialised refugee employment and settlement programs in Australia continues to be limited.

Proposal

The following proposes Australia introduce new specialised refugee settlement programs that are specifically developed for, and administered to, newly accepted refugees who are unable to establish employment and support themselves financially with their settlement in Australia.

The 2-year programs, called Introduction Programs, will provide this group of refugees with an education, job training, integration assistance and financial support that will encourage their participation in, and contribution towards, Australian society.

Enrolment and participation in the Introduction Programs will be obligatory for all newly accepted refugees seeking Government unemployment assistance within the first 5 years of their settlement in Australia. The financial support awarded will be in place of Newstart payments currently available to unemployed newly settled refugees.

The Introduction Programs will comprise of 2 key syllabuses:

- Education and Job-Training Programs- An Australian accredited job-training program that targets the unique and numerous employment challenges facing newly settled refugees. These specialised programs will combine existing Australian Vocational Education Training programs with programs focused on familiarising refugees with the Australian employment environment and improving their English literacy skills.
- Integration Programs- Social programs designed to support refugee integration and contribution to their local communities. These programs will combine social activities with informative classes educating refugees about their rights and responsibilities as Australian residents.

¹ Department of Immigration and Border Protection: Australia's Migration Trends 2012–13

² United Nations High Commission for Refugees: Policy Development and Evaluations Service- The Labour Market Integration of Resettled Refugees (2013)

³ Refugee Council of Australia: What Works- Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants (2010)

⁴ Brotherhood of St Lawrence: Given the Chance (2008)

The Introduction Programs will be taught and administered through newly established educational facilities, called Introduction Centres. The Introduction Centres will be refugee-specialised facilities that will be responsible for

- Administering the 2-year Introduction Programs to refugees
- Connecting refugees to communities via employment and social activities, and involve the wider community in their Introduction Programs
- Offering accommodation to program participants and their accompanying family members.

Each Introduction Centre will accommodate approximately 250 residents and be located in regional areas seeking population and employment growth. Refugees will live voluntarily at the centres and will live as normal members of their communities. During the 2-year programs, the centres will focus on helping their residents establish good work and social connections to local communities, with the aim of increasing the probability that their residents will find employment and settle permanently in these areas upon completion of the programs.

The benefits of the Introduction Centres and Programs

Australia will receive enormous benefits from the Introduction Centres and Programs, which include

- Increasing the educational and skill levels of newly settled refugees
- Low-cost housing solutions for refugees whilst they undertake education and training
- Specialised employment services connecting refugees with employment providers
- Increased refugee employment participation rates
- Increased productivity in selected industries
- Reduced refugee dependence on other social welfare programs
- Specialised programs and facilities providing targeted integration assistance to refugees, including counselling and settlement support
- A more integrated and cohesive population

The Introduction Centres and Programs will also provide a valuable tool for local, state and federal governments to locate unemployed refugees away from overpopulated suburban areas with very limited employment opportunities, and into regional areas desiring population and employment growth.

Required Funding for the Introduction Centres and Programs

The total estimated funding for the Introduction Centres and Programs is \$ 333.7 million per year- of which 78% (\$261.2 million) would come directly from funding that is currently allocated to Newstart payments for the same unemployed refugees.

The additional \$72.5 million per year in required funding should come from one of the following alternatives:

Option a) Additional funding will come from funding currently allocated to the

Federal Departments for:

- Human Services
- Education
- Immigration and Border Protection

State Departments (or equivalent) for:

- Employment and Training
- Housing
- Regional Development

With Introduction Programs managing all of the major refugee employment and settlement tasks, the above state and federal departments can re-distribute a large portion of their existing budgets for managing refugee settlement tasks toward funding the Introduction Centres and Programs.

Option b) Participation in the Introduction Programs and housing at the Introduction Centres will be set up as a loan and repayment system, similar to the current Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP) available to university students. Participants will incur a debt to cover the increase in funding required for their education and housing (approx. \$10340 per participant) and will repay their debt back through the tax system as they undertake employment.

Option c) Additional funding will come from a combination of the above 2 alternatives.

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Details of the Introduction Programs



Overview

As outlined above, the following proposes Australia introduce a new 2-year Introduction Program that all newly accepted refugees who seek unemployment benefits within the first 5 years of their settlement will be required to participate in. The programs will be administered via newly established educational facilities, called Introduction Centres.

The Introduction Programs will comprise of 2 key syllabuses administered concurrently over a 2-year period.

Part A: Education and Job Training Programs

Part B: Integration Programs

The central goal of the Introduction Programs will be '*to ensure all newly settled refugees receive the appropriate educational and social tools to be able to successfully participate, contribute and integrate into Australian society*'.

The programs will specifically address the issues of unemployment and segregation that are commonly experienced among newly settled refugees to Australia, by providing them with an Australian accredited education, relevant and recognised work experience, and targeted integration and settlement support.

All refugees in the Introduction Programs (and their accompanying children) will be provided with accommodation at the Introduction Centres and will receive financial assistance to cover their expected costs of food, clothing, medical and other essential needs. All adult residents will have an obligation to attend the programs (with deductions being made to their financial support for non-attendance) and all accompanying children will attend local government schooling and kindergartens.

Refugees will have the right to decline participation in the programs if they choose to self-fund their settlement in Australia through employment or other means.

Part A: Education and Job Training Programs



Overview

Part A of the Introduction Program will comprise of an Education and Job Training Program (EJTP) that will aim to significantly progress the educational levels and employability of all newly accepted unemployed refugees.

The objective of the EJTP will be to provide job transitional support to refugees who do not have the required skills, experience or job-network connections to be able to successfully commence employment with their settlement in Australia. The EJTP will specifically target the areas that commonly prevent refugees from establishing work in Australia, and provide them with a certified qualification that will encourage them onto meaningful and sustained employment.

How it works

Program Development

EJTP curriculums will be developed by integrating programs from existing Australian VET programs (ie Australian Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program and Australian Apprenticeships Access Program), with specialised programs addressing the unique employment challenges facing newly accepted refugees, such as

- English literacy skills
- Australian workplace experience
- Australian job network connections
- Familiarisation with common Australian workplace systems and cultures
- The efficient conversion of foreign education and training into Australian accredited qualifications.

Development of the EJTP's will focus on industries represented on the Australian National Skills Needs List. Numerous EJTP's covering a variety of industries and education levels will be established in order to accommodate for the varying educational levels participants bring with themselves to the programs, as well as the diverse range of skills sort after by industries. All EJTP's will be of 2-years duration. At the completion of the programs, refugees will receive a formal qualification certificate within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

Program Educational Levels

EJTP's will belong to 1 of 3 educational levels:

Level I	<u>Pre-Employment Programs</u>
Level II	<u>Specified Skills Development Programs</u>
Level III	<u>Skills Recognition Programs</u>

Level I Pre- Employment Programs

Pre-Employment EJTP's will be developed for, and administered to, refugees with minimal or non-existent education and/or employment experience. These programs will address the deficiencies in their basic education and employment training, and focus on building the skills sets needed for acceptance into basic Australian employment. The objective of these programs will be to both

- Act as a vocational pathway in its own right by leading onto employment as a basic skilled worker (eg assistant to a qualified labourer), and/or
- Encourage participants along the pathway to higher-level VET programs

Upon completion of the Pre-Employment Programs participants will achieve a Certificate Level I qualification within the AQF.

Level II Specified Skills Development Programs

Specified Skills Development EJTP will be developed for, and administered to, refugees that exhibit some prior education and/or employment experience, but who have not previously undertaken job-specific skills training. The objective of these programs will be to progress the training and education level of this group of refugees to a point that they can both

- Commence partly skilled employment (eg cook, kindergarten assistant), and/or
- Commence higher education and training (eg begin a 3rd/4th year traineeship or apprenticeship program).

Upon completion of the Specified Skills Development Programs participants will achieve a Certificate Level II / III qualification within the AQF.

Level III Skills Recognition Programs

Skills Recognition EJTP will be developed for, and administered to, refugees that have already completed foreign education certificates and/or employment training to a high or advanced level. The objective of these programs will be to fast-track prior skills and training into Australian accredited qualifications using competency-based testing. The Skills Recognition Programs will aim to reduce the time of a standard Australian Apprenticeship or Traineeship Program so that participants can complete a Certificate Level IV qualification (ie full apprenticeship or traineeship) within the 2-year program.

*** Additional Common Programs**

All programs in all three educational levels will include a common program that familiarises refugees with the Australian employment environment. The program, called 'An

Introduction to the Australian Workplace, will focus on improving English literacy skills and include curriculums covering topics such as

- Job Applications: Job Searching, Resume Writing and Interview Skills
- Worker Rights and Responsibilities
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Common Systems, Structures and Cultures Found in Australian Workplaces
- How to Progress Your Career

Administration

All Educational and Job Training Programs will comprise of theoretical and practical curriculums administered concurrently over 2-years.

Theoretical components

The theoretical components will be taught by teachers and instructors in classes inside the Introduction Centres. These will include classes related to

- English literacy
- The theoretical components of the VET programs, and
- 'An Introduction to the Australian Workplace' program.

The purpose of this will be to combine English literacy classes with employment-focused programs, which is considered to be most effective system for improving refugee's language proficiency(RCOA, 2010)⁵. This will also avoid the inherent difficulties of merging such programs with current TAFE programs undertaken by Australian/English literate students.

Note: Program participants will have the opportunity of joining TAFE administered programs in circumstance where they exhibit a suitable standard of learning capability and English literacy skills.

Practical and on-the-job training components

Practical and on-the-job training components will be taught via a combination of

- Teachers and instructors in simulated work environments in the Introduction Centres, and
- With Registered Training Organisations (RTO's), Apprenticeship Centres and local businesses out in the community.

This system will provide the best employment-transition possibilities for participants by continuing to provide them with the mentoring and support from the Introduction Centres teachers, whilst also introducing participants to Australian workplace systems and culture, and delivering them the essential Australian work place experience.

Staff

Each Introduction Centre will have 7 staff members responsible for the teaching and administration of their EJTP. It will be their responsibility to screen new participants, instruct

⁵ Refugee Council of Australia- What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants, 2010

classes and coordinate with local RTO's, Apprenticeship Centres and businesses to arrange job training and work experience for their program participants. EJTP staff will actively connect industry representatives and employers with program participants in order to effectively place participants in work experience and/or employment positions. The key objective for staff will be to ensure all participants develop the required educational and work contextual skills that will qualify them for employment and/or higher-level qualifications.

In addition to the 7 permanent staff members administering the EJTP, each Introduction Centre will have an annual budget of \$150 000 to be used towards the hiring/contracting of local tradespersons and professionals to come in to the Introduction Centres and instruct elements of their EJTP. This will help facilitate the involvement of local business and industries in the training and skills development of program participants and help promote job networking between businesses and program participants.

Local Governments, Apprenticeship Centres and industry representatives will collaborate together to decide on which particular industries each of the Introduction Centres will focus their EJTP on in order to best achieve all of their local, state and federal requirements.

The expenditure

The expenditure relating to the Educational and Job Training Programs is detailed in the section:

Expenditure

-> Budget Estimate

-> Administration Expenses

The budget estimate covers staff wages, materials and equipment needed to administer the EJTP inside the centres, as well as external practical training costs.

Expenditure for the programs will be minimised through the use of

- VET curriculums taken from pre-existing apprenticeship and traineeship programs,
- Collaboration between the Introduction Centres and local Apprenticeship Centres and RTO's, and
- Work experience and on-the-job training for participants with local businesses.

Specialised curriculums addressing the unique education and employment challenges of refugees (eg English literacy skills, familiarisation with Australian workplaces) will be developed so they can be commonly administered across all centres, helping minimise costs.

Additional investment and support should come from local governments, businesses and industry bodies, as these will all greatly benefit from the programs delivering increased skilled workers into their respective areas.

The benefits

The Education and Job Training Programs will deliver huge benefits to a range of entities.

For Governments

It will provide local, state and federal governments with a job-certified program that specifically targets unemployed, newly settled refugees. With the EJTP combining pre-existing VET programs and platforms with specialised programs addressing the unique learning and employment difficulties of refugees, it will deliver tailored refugee educational programs that integrate with the current Australian employment-training environment.

Along with this, program staff will establish and use their connections with industries and employers to actively seek work placement and employment for their program participants. With a lack of job network connections being a major obstacle for refugees establishing meaningful employment, this will create the most effective environment for placing refugees into suitable training and employment positions with employment providers.

Also, with governments selecting both the locations of the Introduction Centres and the industries that the individual centre's will focus their EJTP on, governments will be able to influence and benefit from the migration of skilled workers into regions and industry sectors that will achieve the greatest employment outcomes. This will provide a valuable tool to stimulate chosen areas of the economy and ultimately increase government revenues via increased business and personal taxes.

The EJTP will also provide governments with specialised and nationally consistent employment settlement programs for refugees. The consistency of the EJTP will allow Introduction Centres to collaborate and share information that will promote a process for establishing best practices. And with research showing refugee tailored employment training as offering a highly successful process for placing refugees in sustainable work⁶, the EJTP will provide governments with an nationally consistent program specialising in helping refugee's overcome their unique barriers to employment.

For refugees

It will provide newly settled unemployed refugees with an education and job training during a period with which they would otherwise be idle and unproductive. Through the Introduction Centres refugees will receive dedicated and ongoing support towards their education and receive the necessary encouragement and motivation to overcome their educational and employment challenges. They will receive the relevant Australian training and work experience required by Australian employers, develop a range of new skills, improve their English proficiency and gain the confidence of completing an accredited education.

Upon completion of the EJTP, each refugee will have significantly increased their chances of finding meaningful employment, helping them achieve the obvious financial benefits, as well as providing them with a the best platform to support their integration and participation in Australian society.

⁶ United Nations High Commission for Refugees: Policy Development and Evaluations Service- The Labour Market Integration of Resettled Refugees, 2013

For industries

It will provide industries with the opportunity to directly contribute towards meeting their demands for skilled workers. With large components of the skills training undertaken through businesses and training centres, industries will have a direct input into developing the particular skill sets they desire.

Also, with Introduction Centres acting as an intermediary between employers and refugees, it will alleviate many of the concerns raised by businesses and industry groups regarding the training and employment of refugees. The programs will allow industry representatives and employers to consult and coordinate with program staff that will reduce their perceived risk in employing refugees. Employers will have the opportunity to liaise with program staff and come to rely on them for recommendations about individual applicants that will efficiently and effectively connect them with suitable employees.

For local communities

It will provide local communities the economic benefits that come from having increased skilled workers flow into their local industries and businesses. With local governments and businesses contributing to the decisions regarding the industries the Introduction Centres in their communities will focus on, they will be able to target those industries that will achieve the best employment outcomes. This will help stimulate productivity and have ongoing economic and social benefits that will be felt throughout the entire community.

Also, with Introduction Centres being located in regional areas desiring population and employment growth, it will take away the burden on these communities to attract new workers to stimulate their economies.

Part B: Integration Program



Overview

Part B of the Introduction Program will comprise of an Integration Program that will educate newly accepted refugees about the Australian social system. It will combine an informative program outlining the basic laws that govern Australia with a social and cultural program that will introduce refugees to key elements of Australian society.

The objective of the Integration Program will be to provide refugees with the knowledge and understanding about Australian society that will encourage their involvement in, and contribution towards, their communities.

How it works

The Integration Programs will contain 2 key syllabus's that will be administered concurrently over 2-years.

- I. Information Program (Theoretical syllabus)
- II. Activities Program (Practical Syllabus)

Program Development

Theoretical Syllabus

The theoretical syllabus (Information Program) will be developed by the Department of Human Services and will address the common social and cultural challenges refugees face when settling in Australia, such as

- Australian laws and customs
- The Australian social system
- Family and Religious freedoms
- Personal rights
- Women's and children's rights
- Parental responsibilities
- The Australian healthcare system
- Suitable conflict resolutions

The Information Program will also provide refugees with assistance towards the essential settlement tasks, such as

- Registration for tax file numbers, bank accounts and Medicare
- Applications for Special Humanitarian Program visas with immediate family members

The Information Program will be a standard syllabus taught commonly across all Introduction Centres. The objective of this program will be to introduce refugees to the systems and core values of Australian society and inform them about their rights and responsibilities as Australian residents. With refugees frequently experiencing difficulties in navigating their way through the unfamiliar and often complex systems associated with their settlement process, the Information Program will provide structured guidance that will help refugees efficiently complete all of the essential settlement tasks, leaving them to concentrate on their education and integration.

Practical Syllabus

The practical syllabus (Activities Program) will be developed by the individual Introduction Centres and be subject to the resources each Introduction Centre has available to it within their local community, such as

- Community events
- Voluntary organisations
- Cultural clubs
- Music groups
- Training facilities
- Sporting teams

Each centre will be responsible for developing their own Activities Program syllabus. All Activity Programs will adhere to a common set of guidelines that will ensure equal levels of integration are achieved across all centres. The objective of the Activities Program will be to encourage refugees to become involved in local activities, events and organisations that will help them build strong social networks that will lay the foundation for their successful involvement in their communities.

Administration

Each Introduction Centre will typically have 3 staff members allocated to the administration of their centres Integration Program. It will be their responsibility to instruct the '*Information Program*' and arrange social and physical activities for their '*Activities Program*'. Their job will be to introduce participants to key elements of the Australian social system and help facilitate the interaction between their program participants and their local communities.

The staff members will also have a duty to collaborate with local organisations such as event organisers, sporting teams and volunteer groups in order to encourage the involvement of their local communities in their centres Integration Program.

The expenditure

The expenditure relating to the Integration Programs is detailed below in the section:

Expenditure

-> Budget Estimate

-> Administration Expenses

The majority of the expenditure used towards the Integration Programs will come from the instruction and administration of classes and activities. Expenditure for the Integration Programs will be minimised through the use of:

- Standardised curriculums for the 'Information Program', and
- Free or inexpensive happenings out in the community for their 'Activities Program'- such as community clubs, volunteer work, sporting teams and field trips to local areas.

The benefits

The Integration Programs will deliver huge benefits to a range of entities.

For Governments

It will provide local, state and federal governments with a tool to educate refugees about the Australian social system, including the rights and responsibilities afforded to its residents. With the Integration Program focused on informing refugees about the basic laws and systems that govern Australia and helping familiarise them with common Australian values, activities and traditions, refugees will receive a greater understanding of Australian society that will increase their integration and contribution to the wider community.

The Integration Programs will reduce the requirement of more generic service providers dedicating their resources towards the unique challenges of refugee integration. They will provide specialised support to refugees with the issues of employment, education, training, housing, health care, Australian law, domestic conflicts, family migration, taxation, Medicare, participation in sport/local activities, and create a more effective and efficient system for delivering settlement assistance to refugees.

The Integration Program will also be in the best position to manage the disjuncture that often occurs between refugee expectations of Australia before their arrival and their actual settlement experience re: money, housing, employment, integration and language barriers. The Integration Programs will be in the best position to develop tangible employment and settlement pathways for refugees and provide them with the motivation and guidance for their successful participation in Australian society.

For refugees

Refugees will gain the understanding needed of Australian society that will help them to become active participants in their communities. They will receive an education about their rights, responsibilities and freedoms as Australian residents, as well as be introduced to local

events, activities and community groups where they can establish strong social networks and build up their social capital.

The programs will also provide refugees with the necessary assistance towards all the essential settlement tasks, leaving them to focus on their education, employment and integration.

For local communities

Communities will greatly benefit from the Integration Program's via increased participation in their local events, sporting teams, and volunteer organisations, as well as the benefits that come from a more strengthened, integrated and cohesive population. With Introduction Centres including the wider community in their Integration Programs, communities will be introduced to new cultures that will increase the cultural tolerance, understanding and diversity of regional communities.

Details of the Introduction Centres



Overview

The Introduction Programs will be administered via newly established educational facilities, called Introduction Centres.

The Introduction Centres will have 3 primary duties:

- To administer the Introduction Programs to newly settled refugees,
- Connect refugees to communities via employment and social activities, and involve the wider community in their Introduction Programs
- To provide accommodation facilities to program participants and their accompanying family members.

Introduction Centres will typically be located throughout regional Australia in areas of desired population growth. Accommodation at the Introduction Centres will be made available for all program participants and their accompanying family members.

All centres will have communal facilities, such as kitchens, activity areas and cultural rooms where residents are able to prepare and eat meals, study, socialise and exercise.

Residents will receive a fortnightly allowance that will be in place of the Newstart payments currently received by newly accepted unemployed refugees. The allowance will cover their expected expenses relating to food, clothing, medical, hygiene, transport and other essential needs and be directly connected to participation in the programs.

Introduction Centres will operate as refugee-specialised facilities providing refugees with information, key services and guidance needed for their successful settlement in Australia.

Each centre will be employed to administer the duties outlined below. Strict regulations and guidelines will provide oversight for all operations of the centres to ensure each centres adherence to their duties.

Duties

The Introduction Centres will be responsible for performing the following duties:

- Teaching and administering the 2-year Introduction Programs

Education and Job Training Programs

- Screening, selecting and counselling new program participants about the programs they will be suitable for
- Providing suitable education facilities, such as classrooms, books and computers
- Instructing classes and coordinating with outside organisations for work experience and on the job training for their participants
- Monitoring participants progress through routine evaluations
- Providing ongoing learning support

Integration Programs

- Administering the Information Program to participants
 - Developing and administering the Activities Program
 - Monitoring participants progress through routine evaluations
 - Providing ongoing integration support
- Providing safe and clean accommodation for participants and their accompanying family members
 - Facilitating communication between residents and healthcare services
 - Offering a variety of social, physical and health related activities suitable to all men, women and children
 - Offering childcare assistance for parents whilst they participate in the Introduction Programs
 - Administering the monetary allowance to residents (*this is discussed in greater detail below, under the section -> Allowance System*)
 - Providing assistance to residents with the essential settlement tasks, including applications for
 - Tax file numbers
 - Bank accounts
 - Registration with Medicare
 - Special Humanitarian Visa's for resident family members
 - Be wholly accountable for the on-goings of the centre in accordance with the regulations governing the above responsibilities

Required personnel

Each Introduction Centre will typically have 15 employees.

Centre Manager

Responsible for all operations of the centre. This includes

- Answering directly to the Department of Human Services for all on-goings of the centre; including the centres adherence to regulations governing the Introduction Programs and accommodation facilities
- Ensuring the centre's collaboration with respective community organisations, such as schools, training centres and local businesses

Education and Job Training Program Coordinator

Responsible for overall administration of the 'EJTP' to participants. This includes

- Supervision over program curriculums
- Ensuring the centre provides the appropriate learning facilities and equipment for resident participation in the EJTP such as classrooms, books, computers and practical equipment
- Ensuring the courses are properly administered; including the teaching of classes and facilitating work-experience and on the job training for participants with local RTO's and Apprenticeship Centres

EJTP Teachers and Instructors (x 6)

Responsible for teaching the EJTP. This includes

- Teaching the theoretical and practical components of the EJTP
- Providing assistance to the EJTP Coordinator in connection with their duties

Integration Program Coordinator

Responsible for administering the Integration Program to residents. This includes

- Administering the 'Information Program' syllabus
- Developing and administering the 'Activities Program' syllabus
- Working in cooperation with the EJTP Coordinator to combine the Integration Program with educational tasks and work experience

Integration Assistant and Physical Activities Instructor

Responsible for both

- Providing assistance to the Integration Coordinator in connection with their duties, and
- Offering physical activities that are suitable to all residents such as sports teams, training groups, fitness classes

Economy and Healthcare Coordinator

Responsible for both

- Administering the fortnightly allowances to residents in accordance with given regulations, and

- Managing the health related issues of residents by facilitating communication between residents and healthcare centres eg arranging doctor's appointments, nurse's visits and vaccinations.

Resident Counsellor and Integration Assistant

Responsible for

- Providing counselling support to residents, covering issues such as trauma, conflict and family relationships, and
- Incorporating counselling support with the Integration Program

Childcare Teacher

Responsible for

- Providing childcare assistance to program for residents
- Delivering parental guidance courses to all residents

Receptionist

Responsible for the centres general administration tasks. This includes

- Centre reception duties
- Assistant to the Centre Manager

Janitor/Security

Responsible for the upkeep and security of the centre. This includes

- Centre maintenance
- Fire safety and security for residents and staff

Along with the 15 permanent employees, each Introduction Centre will have a yearly budget of \$150 000 for external education and training costs. This budget will be used towards employing local tradespeople and professionals to come into the Introduction Centres and instruct elements of their Education and Job Training Programs in order to help facilitate the training and job networking between local industries and program participants.

Note: All adult residents living at the centres will be obligated to partake in weekly common cleaning and upkeep duties associated with the maintenance of the centres. The individual centres will manage specifics of these duties depending on their individual requirements, but it will comprise approximately 4-5 hours a week of contribution per resident. This will create a 'rights and responsibility' based environment for residents and help reduce the overall expenditure of each centre.

The expenditure

The expenditure related to the Introduction Centres is detailed below in the section:

Expenditure

-> Budget Estimate

-> Administration Expenses

Expenditure will be minimised through the use of resident participation in the daily operations of the centres, such as cleaning, maintenance, providing assistance to staff as translators, and assisting staff with their general responsibilities and duties.

Introduction Centres will also (where possible) make use of renting or purchasing existing hotels/accommodation facilities and convert them into suitable facilities for their residents in order to help minimise expenditure and provide direct financial benefits to local communities.

The benefits

The Introduction Centres will deliver enormous benefits to Australia.

- It will provide Australia with refugee-specialised facilities that manage all of the necessary refugee settlement tasks.
- It will allow for the centralised administration of all refugee matters and help free up the resources of other government and non-government institutions that currently dedicate resources towards refugee settlement tasks.
- The centres will provide a facility where governments, refugees, businesses, industry bodies and refugee advocacy groups can all come together in one place and work together towards increasing the employment and support services provided to refugees. The centres will dramatically reduce the need for current job-service providers to refer refugees to ancillary service providers in order to deal with the issues of counselling, integration support, housing, job-training and work experience, healthcare, child care, family/domestic conflicts; which will help promote more effective employment and settlement outcomes for refugees.
- The centres will be able to integrate English language courses with employment-based programs; something advocated for in research findings (RCOA, 2010)⁷. This will also eliminate the problems developed from refugees often having to choose between one or the other in the currently separated systems.
- Centres and programs will be able to play a vital role in introducing refugees to Australian society and emphasising the importance that attaining sustained and meaningful employment will have on the success of their settlement. The centres will have trained staff providing encouragement and tailored assistance to each program participant throughout the settlement process.
- The centres will be in the best position to manage the disjuncture that commonly occurs between refugee's expectations and their actual settlement experience (re: income, housing, ease of finding meaningful employment, integration and social assistance). The centres will be trained and experienced in advising and motivating refugees to find and develop the career pathways in order for them to meet their expectations.

In relation to the specific concerns/issues of:

Refugees lacking the required education to begin employment

It will provide a facility that caters specifically to the educational requirements of refugees. Refugees will receive the greatest possible assistance with their educational

⁷ Refugee Council of Australia- What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants, 2010

needs (such as, English literacy and numeracy, absence of previous education), and it will help avoid the inherent difficulties of placing adult refugees in classes with teenage/young adolescent Australians.

Refugees settling in overpopulated suburban areas with minimal employment opportunities

By providing local, state and federal governments with a tool to locate unemployed refugees away from overpopulated suburban areas with high unemployment, and into regional areas desiring population and employment growth.

Refugees lacking previous Australian work experience

By having the Introduction Centres facilitate job training and work experience for refugees with local organisations and businesses.

Refugees having previous qualifications not recognised by the Australian accreditation system

By having specialised programs designed to efficiently recognise prior training and education in order to fast track their conversion into Australian accredited qualifications.

Refugees being unfamiliar with Australian workplace systems and cultures

By having the Introduction Centres focus on familiarising refugees with the Australian employment environment and improving their understanding of common Australian workplace systems and practices.

Employment discrimination of refugees

By having the Introduction Centres act as an intermediary between employers and refugees throughout the training, pre-employment and post-employment process.

Lack of available affordable housing and transport for refugees in areas where they undertake education and employment

By providing refugees with accommodation at the Introduction Centres, as well as facilitating their transport to and from external training centres.

Refugee segregation resulting from their inability to interact and contribute to their communities

By having facilities and programs that encourage refugee involvement in their local communities, within a structured and supportive setting.

Lack of targeted support services for refugee settlement and employment transition

By providing a centre designed specifically for this purpose.

The Allowance System



Overview

Participants in the Introduction Programs and their accompanying family members will receive an allowance to cover their expected expenses related to food, medical, clothing and other essential needs. This allowance will replace Newstart payments currently available to newly settled refugees seeking unemployment support.

How it works

The Introduction Centres will distribute a fortnightly allowance to their residents that will be directly paid for and regulated by the Department of Human Services.

The amount that individuals/families receive will be dependent upon certain criterion that applies to them. These categories will be similar to those used in the Newstart payments system and include, for example

- Is the person single or are they co-habitant/married?
- Do they have dependent children? If so, what age are they?
- Do they own/posses any assets over a certain value?

Both the Introduction Centre and the Department of Human Services will be permitted to make deductions to individual allowances under certain, pre-established conditions. These conditions include for example

- Non-explained absence from compulsory classes/training/work experience
- Breaking of the Introduction Centre's rules
- Non-participation in obligatory cleaning and maintenance tasks of the centres
- Receiving income from other sources- eg employment

The expenditure

Costing's for the Allowance System is detailed below in the section:

Expenditure

-> Budget Estimate

-> Resident Allowance Expense

The benefits

The allowance system offers huge benefits to a range of entities.

For the Department of Human Services

The allowance provides the DHS with a system to adequately provide financial support to unemployed refugees whilst they undertake their education. With the allowances covering the expected food, clothing, hygiene and healthcare requirements of program participants (and their family members), it will ensure that all of their essential living needs are provided for.

For refugees

The allowances will offer unemployed refugees and their families' financial security whilst they participate in the programs. This will allow them to focus on their education and integration without the burden of financial issues distracting them from successfully completing their Introduction Programs.

Each participant/family will have different requirements and the allowance system permits the individual/family to appropriate the money to their own specific needs. The responsibility of attending compulsory classes, as well as the planning and decision-making regarding how best to allocate their allowance, will help prepare them for their future financial independence from government.

For local communities

The allowances will provide an ongoing economic stimulus to local communities. With Introduction Centres typically located in areas desiring employment and economic growth, the allowance will be a means to increase the money supply throughout the entire community.

For the centres

It will allow the centres to distribute many of the everyday tasks to their residents, such as cooking and cleaning. This will help minimise staff numbers and reduce the overall operational costs of each centre.

The allowances will also help the centres establish a culture of responsibility and accountability among their program participants. With deductions to the allowances permitted if the programs or centre's rules are broken, it will help the centres establish a positive and responsibility-minded environment inside the centres.

Management and Governance of the Introduction Centres

Overview

The Introduction Centres will be owned and managed by Non-Governmental Organisations for the purpose of operating for profit.

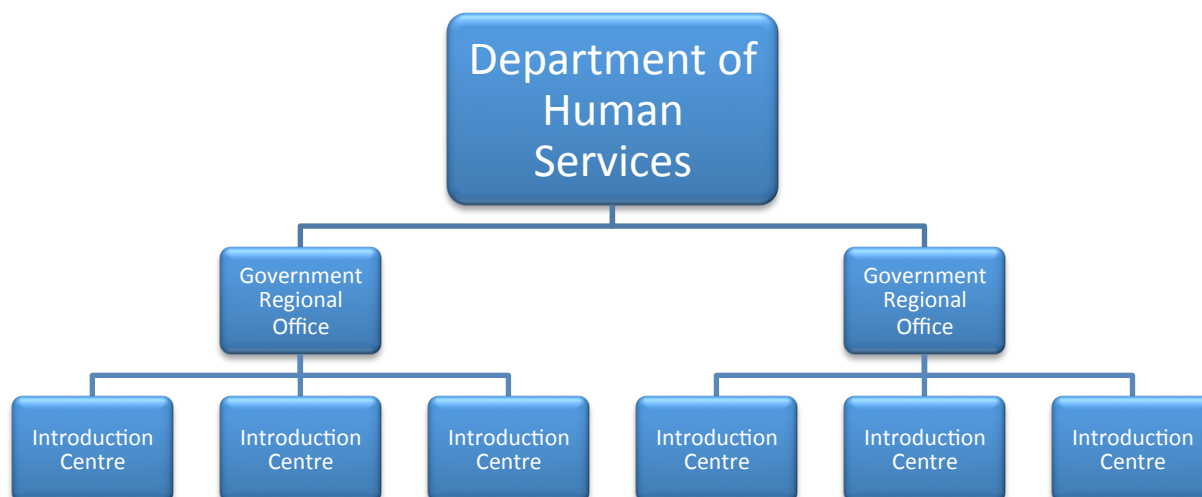
The centres will be responsible for carrying out the tasks outlined in the section above:

Details of the Introduction Centre

-> Duties

The Department of Human Services will provide the regulations for operations of the centres. Each Introduction Centre will report directly to a regional Government office. The regional Government office will manage the Federal Government's contact and collaboration with the individual Introduction Centres and will be responsible for carrying out the inspections and performance evaluations of the centres within their region.

Structure



Introduction Centres

Introduction Centres will operate independently and will manage the specifics of their own operations. They will be responsible for deciding how best to allocate their budgets and resources in connection with their local communities so that they can achieve the best employment and integration results for their residents.

Regional Government Offices

The Regional Government Offices will be the point of contact between the Department of Human Services and the Introduction Centres. They will act in an advisory/supervisory role for the Introduction Centres. They will perform annual inspections, financial audits and evaluations on each of the centres in their region to ensure the centres are held accountable for their operations and performance.

The Regional Government Offices will have ultimate responsibility on the industries that the centres in their areas will focus their EJTP on. This will help best manage the supply and demand of workers into local industries.

The Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services will be responsible for providing the operational framework for the Introduction Centres. The department will have final say on all matters concerning the functions and operations of all centres.

The Department of Human Services will also be responsible for the administration and logistics of transferring program participants and their family members to each of the Introduction Centres.

Business aspect of the Introduction Centres

Each centre will be operated as an ongoing concern and be paid an administration fee to carry out their responsibilities outlined in the section above:

Details of the Introduction Centre

-> Duties.

Each centre will have a set capacity, and the total of their administration fee will be directly related to this.

Included in the administration fee is a Participant Fee. This is a fee paid to the centres for each participant they have in the Introduction Programs, and is where the centres are able to derive a profit.

The benefits

This system of non-governmental organisations operating the Introduction Centres under the close directive of government will offer the Federal Government with enormous benefits, including

- The Federal Government retaining control over the levels of education, integration and living standards of newly accepted refugees through strict regulations and oversight.
- Giving control to the Introduction Centres with how best to allocate their resources and budgets in relation to the varying resources each centre has available to it within their different communities.

- The Federal Government retaining the ability to open and close Introduction Centres quickly, without the inherent difficulties in doing so with equivalent government centres. This will help support
 - The natural fluctuations in total numbers of refugees arriving in Australia and participating in the Introduction Programs, and
 - The closure of centres due to poor performance.

This system is based on the Norwegian asylum centre system. It delivers the benefits of separating the objectivity of Governmental decision and policy making with the subjectivity and logistics of managing individual centres in connection with their differing local communities. Also, with individual centres operating for the purpose of profit, it ensures that the centres are run efficiently and held accountable for their performance objectives.

Expenditure



Overview

There are 2 key elements attributable to the cost of running each centre:

- Administration Expense
- Resident Allowance Expense

1 Administration Expense

The Administration Expense is a fee paid to each centre for administering their duties outlined in the above section:

Details of the Introduction Centre

-> Duties

This amount will cover the intended expenditures of each centre in relation to

- Staff wages
- Rent and maintenance
- Electricity and water
- Office and program instruction equipment
- Transport costs
- General business expenses.

The total of this is a fixed, yearly amount related to the capacity of the centre – *see the section:*

Budget Estimates

-> Administration Expense

Individual centres will control the specifics of how this money is allocated. However, routine inspections, financial audits and performance evaluations of each centre by their local Government Regional Office will ensure that each centre is adequately adhering to their required duties and responsibilities.

2 Resident Allowance Expense

All Introduction Program participants (and their accompanying family members) will receive a fortnightly allowance that will cover their expenses related to:

- Food
- Clothing
- Medical
- Sanitation
- Other essential needs

The total of this for each centre is not fixed but dependent upon the number of residents at the centre in each of the different allowance classifications- *see the section:*

Budget Estimate

-> Resident Allowances

The allowances will be directly paid for by the Department of Human Services and be in substitution of Newstart payments currently received by newly settled unemployed refugees.

Budget Estimate

See attachment.

Required Funding for the Introduction Centres and Programs

The total estimated funding for the Introduction Centres and Programs is \$ 333.7 million per year- of which 78% (\$261.2 million) would come directly from funding that is currently allocated to Newstart payments for the same unemployed refugees.

Alternatives for additional funding requirements

The additional \$72.5 million per year of required funding should come from one of the following alternatives:

Option a)

Extra funding should be redirected from already existing funding allocated to the:

Federal Departments for:

- Human Services
- Employment
- Immigration and Border Protection

State Departments (or equivalent) for:

- Education and Training
- Housing
- Regional Development

Equal financial contributions between the state (and territory's) and federal governments (\$36.25 million each) will help drive efficiency, cooperation and performance outcomes of the centres and programs.

States and territories will divide up the 'State Department (or equivalent)' share of funding as a percentage of the number of Introduction Centres operating in each state and territory.

With Introduction Centres and Programs managing all of the major refugee employment and settlement tasks, these state/territory and federal departments can redistribute large portions of their existing budgets for managing refugee settlement tasks, towards funding the Introduction Centres and Programs.

Option b)

Participation in the Introduction Programs and housing at the Introduction Centres will be set up as a loan/repayment scheme, similar to the current Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP) available to university students.

Participants will incur a debt of \$10 340 as a result of their 2-year education and housing and will repay their debt through the tax system as they undertake employment.

Option c)

Additional funding will come from a combination of the above options- ie the extra funding needed for the Introduction Centre and Program will be partially subsidised through state and federal contributions, with program participants incurring a 'discounted' debt that will be paid back through the tax system.

Note – The above estimate does not take into account the expected economic and social benefits achieved through the programs, such as increased personal and business tax revenues, increases in productivity in desired industries and increased social cohesion between refugees and their communities.

Refugee Welfare Under the Proposal

Overview

Living at the Introduction Centres and participating in the Introduction Programs will be voluntary.

All newly accepted refugees can decline the offer to live at the Introduction Centres and participate in the Introduction Programs if they decide to support themselves financially with their settlement in Australia and do not seek government unemployment assistance within the first 5 years of their arrival to Australia.

The Introduction Centre's will follow strict operational regulations that will guarantee the welfare of all residents. The centres will be bound by these regulations, with it forming an essential part of their contract/license to operate the centre. Regular government inspections, audits and evaluations of each centre will ensure these regulations are being adhered to.

Specific Concerns

With specific concerns related to:

Health

Each centre will have staff members responsible for the health related issues of their residents. They will have a duty to facilitate with local health authorities to ensure all of their residents have access to available healthcare.

Each centre will also employ a trained counsellor to offer trauma and family counselling for their residents.

Living conditions

Each centre will be responsible for providing the appropriate living facilities for their residents, such as

- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Toilets
- Laundry rooms
- Activity areas
- Children play areas
- Study rooms
- Exercise rooms, and
- Religious rooms

Regular inspections and evaluations of the centres will ensure each centre is adequately providing for these.

Food and basic essentials

All residents of the centres will receive an allowance intended to cover their expenses related to food, clothing, medical, sanitary and other essential needs. The allowance will be set and regulated by the Department of Human Services in relation to standard living expenses.

Activities

Each camp will have multiple staff members responsible for arranging enjoyable and physical activities for all of their residents. Their job will be to motivate their residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles. The activities offered will have a cultural and physical diversity so as to be suitable to all men, women and children.

Profits v's Refugee Welfare

Profits for the companies managing the Introduction Centres will be derived separately from the money allocated to the essential needs of program participants. The separation of these two will remove any conflict of interest concerning the derivation of profits and the distribution of resources contributing to the health and welfare of their residents.

Along with this, the Department of Human Services will perform routine inspections and evaluations on each centre that will ensure all centres are held accountable for providing the appropriate living conditions for participants. The evaluations will include financial audits on the centres expenditure towards the living conditions and general welfare of its residents.

Conclusion

The above proposal outlines the enormous benefits available to Australia if the current focus and funding of refugee settlement tasks is redirected towards establishing refugee specialised education, job training and integration programs.

The Introduction Centres and Programs offer a comprehensive and integrated approach that will deliver extensive financial and sociological benefits to Australia that will be sustained and self-perpetuating into the future. The proposal reflects the 'rights and responsibilities' ideals of Australia's social framework by providing refugees with education, integration and financial support, whilst attaching responsibilities and obligations to the support provided. This will deliver a sustainable refugee settlement system for Australia that simultaneously provides refugees with improved settlement support.

Specifically, the above proposal addresses the key recommendations that Australian and global research has consistently advocated for as providing the best means for refugee's achieving self-sufficiency in their new countries, such as:

- Making education, job-training and integration programs for refugees compulsory
- Combining existing job-training programs with refugee tailored employment programs
- Providing tailored services actively seeking suitable work experience/unpaid work placement for refugees
- Trained workers who understand refugee's unique barriers to employment, such as cultural differences, counselling and the need for on-going motivational support
- Combining vocationally-focused language programs together with work experience
- Individualised employment action plans with continuous mentoring and follow-up
- Specialised services actively linking refugees with potential employers
- Receiving communities ability to provide employment
- Specialised services dealing with employment recertification
- Low-cost housing solutions for refugees whilst they undertake education and training
- Specialised support services dealing with refugee integration and settlement challenges
- Specialised services actively building partnerships between refugees and local communities
- Specialised services dealing with the refugee settlement expectation-and-actuality disjuncture
- Mechanisms for sharing good practices via consistency of programs and centres across a nationally integrated system.

With the proposal offering cost neutrality via the diversion of already existing funding and/or loan financing, it will deliver a cost effective plan for Australia that will deliver enormous financial and socioeconomic benefits through

- Increased numbers of skilled workers
- Increased productivity in desired industries
- Increased business and government revenues, and
- A more integrated and cohesive population.

This can all be achieved whilst simultaneously increasing the support services provided to refugees and greatly contributing towards their furthered education and improved welfare.

The proposal also considers the needs of refugees alongside the needs of governments. It specifically addresses the issues raised by refugee advocate groups whilst simultaneously providing the government with a tool to improve the work participation levels of newly accepted refugees. The proposal offers the best means for connecting newly accepted unemployed refugees with those communities and employers that are able to provide the greatest employment opportunities. With Australia locked in a debate concerning the appropriate integration assistance that should be bestowed upon refugees, the above outlines a comprehensive approach that delivers practical solutions to the issues raised on all sides of the political debate.

With many of the ideas outlined in the above proposal currently in the make up of the Norwegian asylum system the proposal builds on an established and successful framework. Norway has greatly benefited from their inclusion of refugees in their country's axiom of equal investment and opportunity for all their residents, by helping contribute towards their extremely high rate of GDP per person (1st- IMF, United Nations- 2013) and very low rates of unemployment (3.44% avg.- years 1997-2014). This must be taken in consideration with the fact that Norway has settled 8.2 times as many refugees per head of population as Australia currently has.

All the benefits outlined in the proposal are achievable if the current focus and funding of newly settled refugees in Australia is re-directed to providing them with specialised education, job training and integration programs.

Kind Regards,

Mark Howie