



VFST STATEMENT

The settlement of refugees in Australia

The following observations reflect our work over more than 25 years with many thousands of refugees from numerous and diverse countries, and examination of the body of evidence from research and other sources.

People of refugee backgrounds are profoundly resilient – they have been forced to leave their countries of origin because of persecution and violence and have often experienced considerable hardship for prolonged periods prior to arrival in Australia. Since inception, Foundation House has witnessed the courage that our clients and their communities have shown in successfully dealing with the trauma, loss and grief that is tragically common in the plight of refugees.

People of refugee origins are determined to successfully settle in Australia, to find work to support themselves and their families, to ensure their children get the education they will need to do well and to fully participate in our society.

The great majority of people of refugee backgrounds settle quickly with relatively little assistance from government and community. They find jobs and homes; they set up businesses; they become familiar with how Australia works. Through offering them resettlement in Australia we are inviting them to become part of our nation – to be Australians.

Some take longer and need greater assistance to overcome the impacts of pre-arrival experiences, to learn English and understand how things are done in a society greatly different from their countries of origin and places of temporary shelter.

Australia has a world-class array of settlement programs for refugees involving appropriate expenditure for programs with a humanitarian foundation. Importantly, the resettlement program has enjoyed bipartisan support for many years.

The evidence of the benefits to Australia is indisputable. In both the short and long-term, studies show that people of refugee backgrounds have made, and continue to make, substantial economic and social contributions to Australia.

We believe Australia can and should significantly strengthen its response to the plight of a growing number of refugees around the world by resettling more people and increasing our support for the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other agencies abroad.

Paris Aristotle AM

CEO, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture