

# Regional Humanitarian Settlement Pilot

## Ballarat

Report of an evaluation undertaken by  
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for the

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Overall Outcomes

The majority of people granted visas to come to Australia under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program have firm ideas about where they would like to be settled. This is largely determined by the residential location of their relatives or friends who can provide valuable social support in the early settlement period. This has resulted in humanitarian entrants tending to cluster in certain areas, mainly the major capital cities. There are some benefits in this kind of settlement pattern, such as enabling services to be clustered in areas of most need. However, it can also place some strains on infrastructure and resources, in particular housing. It can also have an impact on the demographics in these areas and, if not carefully managed, undermine public support for the resettlement program.

In recent years, the federal government and many state governments have been keen to explore the potential of new settlement destinations, in particular those away from the major capital cities. There are many regional centres that are keen to boost their populations and have core infrastructure from which specialist settlement services can be built.

Most past regional humanitarian settlement has been “organic” or unplanned, with entrants being drawn to regional areas because of the presence of a community sponsor or because they themselves have identified particular advantages there. However, governments are now keen to ensure that wherever possible, new regional settlement locations are selected for sound planning reasons. In this context, a series of projects has been undertaken to establish settlement in new regional areas. The first took place in Shepparton in central Victoria in 2005-06. The success of this prompted two further settlement projects: one in Mount Gambier, in southeastern South Australia, and the other in the regional Victorian city of Ballarat, both commencing in mid 2007.

Each of these projects has been evaluated after approximately one year of settlement, to examine the effectiveness of the process and identify any areas for improvement. The evaluations also aim to identify elements required for successful regional settlement. The nature of each project has been quite distinct and has led to the identification of very different issues. Rather than any one report being seen as a blueprint for regional humanitarian settlement, the three reports should be considered as a whole, each adding to our understanding of this issue and identifying important lessons and guiding principles.

The Ballarat regional humanitarian settlement project involved 12 families from the small West African nation of Togo. The planning and implementation of the project was undertaken by the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee comprising representatives from federal, state and local government agencies and relevant community agencies.

While there have been some positive outcomes, the Ballarat project was affected by a range of external and internal factors, causing some complications for the planning committee and the settlement of the Togolese. As a result, it is arguably too premature to make a definitive assessment of the overall success of the project.

There have been a number of positive outcomes including:

- *a strong commitment from a range of key local stakeholders to Ballarat hosting future humanitarian entrants;*
- *the formation of strong collaborative cross-sectoral arrangements;*

- *demonstrated capacity from a range of service providers, particularly in the health and education sectors, to respond to the complex needs of refugees;*
- *ease of obtaining affordable accommodation; and*
- *confirmation that Ballarat can offer a welcoming and safe environment for refugees.*

At the same time, a number of issues have meant that the project has not unfolded smoothly. These include *inter alia*:

- *the challenge for everyone of learning about a group of refugees with whom no one (locally or nationally) had previous experience and interpreters were in very short supply;*
- *significant turnover in the management and staff of the agency responsible for the delivery of settlement services;*
- *the complexity of the family structures, with many not being the usual “parents and young children” combination associated with the first arrivals in a new regional settlement location;*
- *the high levels of torture and trauma in the entrants’ backgrounds;*
- *the entrants’ overwhelming impatience to reclaim their lives and their frustration that this was not happening as quickly as they had hoped;*
- *the entrants’ difficulty in adapting to the winter climate in Ballarat;*
- *a range of incidents and events that have had an impact on the entrants’ willingness to trust others; and*
- *divisions occurring within the Togolese community of sufficient consequence for it to have lost the capacity to function as a cohesive, mutually supporting unit.*

This report provides an evaluation of the Ballarat project, including the range of complexities that have affected the smooth progression of direct settlement in the area. In so doing, it draws lessons from the experiences of those involved that can inform the planning and implementation of other regional settlement initiatives and presents a set of recommendations to assist in building Ballarat’s capacity as a regional settlement site.

In summary, the findings of the evaluation are that Ballarat has potential as a site for further regional humanitarian settlement but that a period of consolidation will be required prior to making a final decision to continue the program.

## **1.2. Key Lessons**

Section 4 of this report looks in detail at the implementation of the regional settlement project in Ballarat. The lessons drawn from this analysis are listed below.

### Lesson #1:

*When selecting a site for regional settlement, it is important to allow time to make a thorough assessment of the capacity of stakeholders and the availability of key services.*

### Lesson #2:

*It is important to involve the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS) provider in discussion about the selection of a regional resettlement site at an early stage as they have relevant perspectives to add to deliberations and need to be confident that they can deliver quality services.*

Lesson #3:

*It is important that the Settlement Planning Committee is sufficiently resourced to enable it to function efficiently and that its roles and responsibilities be agreed to from the outset.*

Lesson #4:

*It is important that the IHSS provider be part of the local planning process from the outset.*

Lesson #5:

*The need for the Chair of the Planning Committee to be impartial and, if required, to take on a mediating role, makes it undesirable that the role be filled by a representative of the IHSS provider or any other direct service provider.*

Lesson #6:

*Clarity concerning the roles and responsibilities of subcommittees and their relationship with the committee and other structures is imperative for their efficient functioning. In this regard, committees responsible for the planning of a new regional settlement initiative should give careful consideration to the recommendations from the Report of the Evaluation of the Shepparton Regional Settlement Pilot that related to the formation and functioning of the project steering committee and its subcommittees (Appendix 3).*

Lesson #7:

*Regular and open communication between the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the settlement planning committee is vital during the planning process.*

Lesson #8:

*It is essential that those involved in planning a regional settlement project have as much information as possible about the background and experiences of the entrants. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has an important role to play in supporting this process and, wherever possible, enabling the planning committee to engage with people who have had first hand experience with refugees from the target region, including those who have provided cultural orientation training (AUSCO) to the entrants offshore.*

Lesson #9:

*The importance of ensuring that those responsible for planning a regional settlement project have a detailed understanding of Australia's resettlement program and their role within it cannot be overemphasised.*

Lesson #10:

*Those involved in the planning and implementation of a regional settlement project must also receive comprehensive training about the overall settlement service delivery framework and DIAC's Service Principles.*

Lesson #11:

*Initial over-servicing of entrants may lead to certain expectations of ongoing service levels. It is imperative that the level of service throughout the process is consistent for all entrants.*

Lesson #12:

*When establishing a new regional settlement location, careful consideration must be given to the service delivery model to ensure that it is appropriately resourced, supported and sustainable, noting that having a worker who is solely funded under an IHSS contract in an emerging settlement location may be undesirable.*

Lesson #13:

*Failure to ensure that the model chosen for the delivery of IHSS services is robust and sustainable and that the agency responsible for its delivery has the capacity to implement a program based on established casework standards and DIAC Service Principles can have a serious and deleterious impact on the entrants and on the whole settlement service delivery framework.*

Lesson #14:

*Clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the front line workers delivering services to newly arrived refugees is critical, as is agreement about referral pathways.*

Lesson #15:

*As settlement services are predicated on a smooth transition from the high support IHSS program to the more generalised assistance provided under the SGP, it is essential that there be a viable service to whom entrants can be referred when exited from IHSS.*

Lesson #16:

*The recruitment of people from within an entrant community has many advantages but is also inherently problematic. Those recruiting and supervising must be aware of the complexities involved and ensure that any staff working within their own community are appropriately trained and supervised.*

Lesson #17:

*Climate should be taken into account when considering the suitability of a settlement destination for entrants. If the climate of a designated area is very different to that with which entrants are familiar, additional steps need to be taken to ensure they have the necessary clothing, equipment and training to help them make the necessary adjustments.*

Lesson #18:

*Careful consideration should be given to selecting people for subcommittees. Ideally there should be a good mix of people with relevant expertise and those with sufficient seniority to approve implementation strategies. Committee members should also be prepared to put in the necessary time, be able to work collaboratively and flexibly, and be totally committed to the shared goal.*

Lesson #19:

*There are many simple strategies that can make things run more smoothly. It is thus important for workers to think laterally and creatively about issues as they present and focus on finding solutions that can accommodate their needs, those of the entrants and those of the others working with the entrants.*

Lesson #20:

*Those working with refugees should be aware of cultural differences in health care practices, including the use of traditional medicines, and ensure they specifically ask their patients/clients about this.*



Lesson #21:

*One of the challenges of working with refugees is managing their expectations about the extent to which Australian health providers will be able to solve chronic health problems.*

Lesson #22:

*One of the challenges confronting those providing torture and trauma counselling is to help their clients understand the nature of their work. It is therefore important that counsellors draw on the experience of those who have been working in the sector for some time in order to develop a repertoire of strategies that will assist them in this matter.*

Lesson #23:

*In a region unfamiliar with humanitarian settlement, it is probable that other service providers will not be familiar with the rationale behind torture and trauma counselling and the strategies that counsellors use. Briefing sessions for other workers about torture and trauma counselling should, therefore, be seen as an integral part of the planning for any new regional settlement initiative.*

Lesson #24:

*AMEP performs a critical function in the lives of new entrants, not just teaching them English but also enabling them to understand their new environment and plan for their future.*

Lesson #25:

*Given that many humanitarian entrants seek to enter the workplace as soon as possible after arrival, it is important to have flexible delivery models for AMEP so that those who enter the workforce will not be denied the possibility of learning English.*

Lesson #26:

*Specialised employment support for humanitarian entrants is required to prepare them for the Australian workplace, assist them to find employment and educate employers about their needs.*

Lesson #27:

*Having a dedicated and experienced Transition and Community Liaison Officer within the school system significantly contributes to the entrants' ease of transition into the system and the schools' capacity to respond to their needs.*

Lesson #28:

*The personal connections and sense of community one finds in regional centres can sometimes result in extraordinary acts of generosity towards the humanitarian entrants.*

Lesson #29:

*Driving is both an important part of regaining independence and an area accompanied by considerable risk. It is therefore important that entrants can access driver education that both assists them to prepare for their driving test and alerts them to all the things they need to know about owning and running a car (registration, insurance etc).*

Lesson #30:

*Leaders of the various faith communities in a new settlement location should be advised that refugees will be coming into the community and given information about the project. Further, these leaders should be encouraged to educate their congregations about the entrants and steer those who want to become involved towards established volunteer structures.*

Lesson #31:

*Entrants must be allowed to either practise the religion of their choice or decide not to worship, and be supported to make links to an appropriate faith community. Entrants who choose not to join a faith community should not be disadvantaged in terms of their access to support.*

Lesson #32:

*It is important to help entrants identify activities of interest to them and facilitate their participation in these so that they can engage in productive recreational pursuits and mix with members of the local community.*

Lesson #33:

*Successful management of volunteers is dependent on ensuring that there is a well- designed and well-managed volunteer support program in place before entrants arrive and also securing the cooperation of key people/agencies to ensure that anyone wanting to help links to this program.*

### **1.3. Recommendations**

The evaluation of the project also pointed to a number of areas that could possibly be improved. As with the lessons outlined above, the context of each of the following recommendations can be found in the report (in Sections 4-6).

Recommendation #1:

*That DIAC prepare a resource kit for new settlement service providers and regional planning committees that contains, inter alia:*

- *an overview of settlement services;*
- *key audiovisual resources such as those used by AUSCO and given to new arrivals;*
- *the DIAC publication “Empowering Refugees”;*
- *a list of specialist refugee providers in that state and their contact details; and*
- *a bibliography of resources about working with refugee clients.*

Recommendation #2:

*That, in recognition of the impact that the pacing and selection of arrivals can have in an emerging regional settlement location, DIAC ensure that, as much as is possible, the caseload selected contains sufficient numbers to enable:*

- *arrivals to occur at regular intervals (preferably two to three months);*
- *adherence to the criteria seen as best suited to an emerging settlement location, namely:*
  - *intact families with preschool and primary age children;*
  - *lower levels of torture and trauma;*
  - *some English capacity;*
  - *including people with leadership potential; and*
- *follow on migration to build a viable community.*

Recommendation #3:

*Given the importance of the role of Refugee Health Nurse, the Department of Human Services should ensure that those appointed to this role receive specialised training.*

Recommendation #4:

*That a standing committee of health providers, health educators, counsellors and other relevant parties be established to ensure that the health needs of refugees in Ballarat are addressed.*

Recommendation #5:

*That if direct humanitarian settlement is to continue in Ballarat, DIAC enter into discussions with Centrelink about ensuring there is sufficient local capacity to accommodate the needs of the entrants.*

Recommendation #6:

*That DIAC provide information to the planning committee and relevant agencies about programs addressing cultural transition and interpersonal relations within families<sup>1</sup> with a view to using these as models for support programs in Ballarat.*

Recommendation #7:

*That relevant areas within DIAC, in particular the offshore program management staff, if possible together with a representative from UNHCR, consider options for meeting with the Togolese entrants to listen to their concerns about the safety of refugees in the camps in Ghana and Benin and provide them with authoritative information about prospects for resettlement of Togolese refugees.*

Recommendation #8:

*That in the spirit of the Prime Minister's apology to indigenous Australians, those responsible for the planning of any new regional settlement initiative ensure local indigenous elders are informed about the project and that their endorsement is sought. It is also important that indigenous elders be encouraged to help disseminate information about the settlement initiative to the members of their community. This could help to minimise the potential for misunderstandings and resentments, especially around the eligibility of benefits.*

Recommendation #9:

*That DIAC, together with AMES, meet with the entrants to talk about their particular situation and try to identify strategies to ameliorate some of the problems that have developed.*

Recommendation #10:

*That DIAC closely examine the delivery of IHSS and SGP services in Ballarat with a view to determining the sustainability of the model and the extent to which DIAC Service Principles have been implemented.*

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<sup>1</sup> Including the STARTTS Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1. Background to the Evaluation:**

In summary, the background to the evaluation is as follows:

- In June 2004, the Commonwealth-Victoria Working Party on Migration released a report proposing new regional locations for the settlement of refugees. The aim of the report was to promote regional settlement in order to achieve a more balanced geographic distribution of migrants throughout the country.
- Since then, considerable attention has been devoted to identifying the factors most likely to make regional settlement a viable option for humanitarian entrants. This has focused on both the entrants (which entrants are most likely to benefit from regional settlement) and the receiving town (what must be done in advance to prepare the locals and the service providers for the refugees' arrival).
- Shepparton was the first regional location in Victoria selected for direct settlement of unlinked refugees, with 10 families from the Democratic Republic of Congo progressively settled under a pilot project from late October 2005.
- In 2006-07 Ballarat was identified as a potential area for further regional migration and an agreement was reached between the then Minister for Immigration and the Victorian Government for the establishment of a humanitarian settlement project.
- The regional settlement initiative in Ballarat was informed by the two parallel evaluations of the Shepparton pilot conducted in late 2006.
- The Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee, based in Ballarat, worked with the Department of Immigration's Victorian Office to prepare for the arrival of refugee families.
- The project began in May 2007 and to date 12 Togolese families have been settled in Ballarat. Another family is due to arrive in the coming months.
- When the project commenced, it was agreed that it would be evaluated after the first 12 months and this report constitutes the report of that evaluation.

Further details of the evolution of the settlement project are provided in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

### **2.2. Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the evaluation was to identify the key procedural lessons learnt by stakeholders during the Ballarat Regional Settlement Project. In seeking to achieve this aim, the consultant responsible for the evaluation was asked to:

- identify what processes have worked well and the challenges that have been experienced;
- identify what factors may have had a positive or negative impact (including governance arrangements, interagency relationships and involvement, community involvement/support);
- examine the respective roles of and relationships between stakeholders;
- identify how well the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) arrangements have worked under the project;
- acknowledge the particular features of the Ballarat settlement project, identifying what could be done differently to improve future regional humanitarian settlement initiatives;
- determine the capacity of Ballarat for further humanitarian settlement and the number of entrants that could be sustainably settled; and
- ascertain the degree of success, or otherwise, of the project process.

### **2.3. Overall Research Framework**

In summary, and as agreed with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), the research consisted of:

- reaching agreement on key stakeholder groups;
- developing research instruments (that were approved by DIAC prior to use);
- consulting agreed stakeholders;
- preparing a draft report that documented and analysed the information collected during the consultation process and identified key lessons and recommendations;
- sharing the draft report with DIAC and key stakeholders to allow their input; and
- incorporating feedback into the draft report and submitting a final report to DIAC.

### **2.4. Stakeholders**

The key stakeholder groups identified for the purpose of the evaluation were:

- DIAC staff in the National Office
- DIAC staff in its Melbourne office
- IHSS service providers
- members of the project settlement committee
- state and local government representatives
- humanitarian entrants
- other key stakeholders
- members of the local community

### **2.5. Research Instruments**

A set of questionnaires specifically targeted to each of the stakeholder groups was developed with the objective of capturing information relevant to achieving the evaluation's aim and objectives. The rationale for seeking input from each of these stakeholder groups and the areas explored with them is outlined below.

#### *i. DIAC National Office Staff:*

Staff members within DIAC's National Office have an important overview perspective on regional settlement and they played an important role in initiating new regional settlement initiatives. They were asked to reflect upon, *inter alia*:

- the background to the establishment of project;
- their specific role in the project;
- the extent to which other regional settlement initiatives informed their guidance of the project;
- the negotiation process with state and local government;
- communication since the commencement of the project;
- their perspectives on how the project has unfolded;
- what they see as the particular features of the Ballarat project;
- the lessons they have learnt along the way; and
- the lessons they consider should be drawn from the Ballarat experience for use elsewhere.

*ii. DIAC Staff in Melbourne:*

Two members of DIAC's Victorian State Office staff had played an active role in the development and implementation of the project and had been in close contact with the members of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee. These staff members were asked to reflect upon a number of key issues including:

- the objectives of the project and the extent to which they were realistic;
- the implementation strategies;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation model, including the role of the settlement committee and any subcommittees formed;
- whether contingency planning exercises were undertaken and the value of these;
- the extent to which documented experiences in other settlement locations informed their decision making;
- the major challenges confronted;
- the nature and impact of unforeseen circumstances;
- the effectiveness of their communication with key stakeholders;
- the successes of the project;
- key lessons learnt from the project; and
- future settlement prospects in Ballarat and the Central Highlands region.

*iii. Members of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee:*

The members of the Settlement Planning Committee were central to the evaluation process as they had the closest working knowledge of how the project unfolded on the ground. The opinions of targeted Settlement Planning Committee members were sought about, *inter alia*:

- the development phase of the project;
- the process of refocusing the Settlement Planning Committee on the project;
- the use of subcommittees and the relationship between these and the main committee;
- the respective roles of and relationship between the Committee and the IHSS provider;
- communication channels between the committee, any of its subcommittees and the IHSS provider;
- the successes and challenges of the last 12 months;
- the factors that contributed to any of the successes of the last 12 months;
- the factors that might have impeded settlement outcomes;
- the level of engagement of members of the interagency;
- whether contingency planning exercises were undertaken and the value of these;
- community involvement and support;
- the capacity of the IHSS provider to meet entrants' needs in the regional setting;
- lessons they have learnt that they believe should inform other regional settlement initiatives;
- future settlement prospects in the region, including the number and type of entrants they believe the region could successfully settle and the supports required for them to be able to do this; and
- other key stakeholders who should be consulted.

*iv. State and Local Government Representatives:*

Cognisant of the fact that successful regional settlement requires a commitment from all three levels of government, not just the federal government, the views of state and local government representatives were sought. Areas explored with state and local government representatives included:

- their policy with respect to regional settlement of humanitarian entrants;
- the extent to which the project is consistent with this policy;
- what they were hoping to achieve with the project;
- the extent to which they consider they have achieved, or are on the way to achieving, these objectives;
- the successes and challenges of the last 12 months;
- the factors that contributed to any of the successes of the last 12 months;
- the factors that might have impeded settlement outcomes;
- whether anything could have been done to mitigate the impact of these impediments;
- the communication channels between the various parties involved in the project;
- the level of clarity around the roles of the various parties involved in the project;
- the extent to which they consider the entrants have benefited from being settled in a regional area;
- the response of the local community;
- the key lessons about regional settlement that can be drawn from the project; and
- future settlement prospects in the region, including the number and type of entrants they believe the region could successfully settle and the support required for them to be able to do this.

*v. The IHSS Provider:*

The IHSS provider is a critical stakeholder by virtue of its involvement with the entrants and the vital settlement functions it performs. The project in Ballarat was delivered under a subcontractual arrangement between the agency responsible for the delivery of IHSS services throughout Victoria and a local provider. Opinions of both the contracting and subcontracting agencies were sought about, *inter alia*:

- their involvement in the planning process of the project;
- the challenges they confront in terms of service delivery in a regional setting;
- the steps they have taken to overcome these challenges;
- the nature and quality of their relationship with the Settlement Planning Committee;
- the nature and quality of their relationship with other key stakeholders in Ballarat;
- the factors that have influenced these relationships;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the project;
- the most important lessons they have learnt; and
- their views about future humanitarian settlement in Ballarat and the surrounding region.

*vi. Humanitarian Entrants:*

As important as other stakeholder groups might be, it is really the Togolese refugees who are the most important people in the whole project. A project can be well organised and run efficiently but if it does not meet the needs of the entrants, it is of little value. In respect of this, the experiences and opinions of the Togolese entrants were sought about:

- the location, including:
  - their settlement in a regional centre (including gains and losses)
  - the accommodation provided
  - its proximity to services and other things of importance
  - its proximity to Melbourne (e.g. for day/weekend visits);
- support structures, including:
  - initial support
  - orientation and information
  - English

- translating
- health
- income support
- volunteers
- emergency support
- police
- youth, etc;
- economic participation, including:
  - availability of suitable employment
  - ability to obtain employment
  - level of support from Job Network providers
  - impediments to employment, including transport;
- social participation, including:
  - community awareness of who they are and why they have come
  - community acceptance of their presence
  - level of contact with local community members
  - participation in recreational pursuits
  - participation in a faith community;
- family well being, including:
  - impact of the settlement experience on the family as a whole and individual members
  - their sense of safety in the new environment
  - the extent to which they feel in control of their lives
  - their ability to make choices, including about their interaction with volunteers and members of the local community
  - the impact, if any, being part of a new settlement project (and hence being the “first” entrants and highly visible) has had on them;
- future plans:
  - whether they plan to remain in the regional centre
  - what factors might result in a decision to leave;
- lessons learnt:
  - what advice they would give to service providers about regional settlement
  - what advice they would give to other entrants who were being offered the chance to settle in a regional area
  - if given the choice now, whether they would go to a regional area or to a capital city.

*vii. Other Service Providers in Ballarat:*

While it was recognised that the members of the Settlement Planning Committee included a broad cross section of service providers in Ballarat, it was considered important not to overlook the people who might not have been “part of the loop” but who were called upon to provide services in one capacity or another to the refugees. In addition to exploring their opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the project and the lessons they consider can be learnt from it, it is seen as important to canvass the views of these people about:

- the advice they received in advance of the refugees coming to Ballarat; and
- the nature and effectiveness of the communication they have had with the Settlement Planning Committee, the IHSS provider, DIAC and any other relevant parties.

*viii. Community Representatives:*

As one of the stated objectives is to examine the level of community involvement and support, it was also important to try to speak to some local people, unconnected in any way with the project. Their opinions were sought about a number of issues including:



- community support for the project;
- the level of community involvement in the project;
- the lessons that they feel should be learnt from the project; and
- their views about future humanitarian settlement in the region.

## **2.6. Consultation Process**

Consultations took place in Canberra, Melbourne and Ballarat during July and August 2008. Where it was not possible to arrange a face-to-face meeting, phone conversations were held. In all, 55 people were interviewed in the context of this evaluation, 31 of whom were or had been previously associated with the following agencies:

- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (National and Victorian Offices)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- (Victorian) Department of Planning and Community Development
- (Victorian) Department of Human Services
- (Victorian) Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development
- (Victorian) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- City of Ballarat
- AMES
- Foundation House
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
- Ballarat Health Services
- Maternal and Child Health Services
- Ballarat Community Health Centre
- Centrelink
- University of Ballarat/TAFE
- Victoria Police
- Direct Recruitment
- Macarthur Street Primary School

A significant number of these people were also members of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee.

In all, 21 Togolese entrants were interviewed in two group sessions held at the local library, a venue in the centre of town familiar to the entrants. The first involved 12 women, one of whom was an unmarried dependent under 25 years of age. An Ewe interpreter was used. Seven men, all heads of household, attended the second meeting. Despite the presence of an interpreter, the men preferred to speak in English. One-on-one sessions were held with two individuals.

In addition, two conversations about the project were held with people unconnected to the project. One member was a long-term resident, the other a Nigerian student studying at the university. A full list of people consulted is included in Appendix 1.

### 3. Preliminary Observations

Whereas both the Shepparton and Mount Gambier regional settlement projects were relatively trouble free, the project in Ballarat was characterised by significant change at a range of levels throughout the process. The project was influenced by events at:

- the federal government level where, in the lead up to the November 2007 election campaign, the ongoing commitment to resettlement from Africa was put into question;
- the state government level, with two things being of particular relevance to the project:
- Negotiations with potential new settlement sites were conducted in the lead up to the 2006 Victorian state elections. As will be discussed in Section 4.3, logistical problems with the first site identified meant that negotiations had to begin again about the viability of another centre hosting the project. A desire to conclude these negotiations before a pre-election caretaker period may have resulted in decisions being made too hastily;
- After the November 2006 state election, the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs (VOMA) was incorporated into the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC). VMC now has a broader focus and takes the lead in advising its Minister and the Premier in relation to multicultural affairs. Whereas with the Shepparton pilot, VOMA had been an active member of the planning process, VMC (and by extension, the state government) was not as closely involved in the Ballarat project;
- the local government level: since the commencement of the project, new people have assumed the roles of Mayor and Chief Executive Officer of the City of Ballarat. While the previous members in these positions had been very enthusiastic about the project and had driven the decision to bring humanitarian entrants to Ballarat, the change in roles may have contributed to a lesser focus on the project;
- the service provider level: half way through the project, there were changes to the board of the agency responsible for delivering the key settlement services. As will be discussed in Section 4.7.1 and elsewhere, these changes influenced the way the agency delivered its services and its relationship with clients and other service providers; and
- the staff level: significant staff turnover within this agency also affected service delivery. During the course of the project there were three different people performing the central support role for the entrants and the person supervising these staff members also changed. This has made it difficult for the entrants to build a stable and trusting relationship with their caseworker.

With this level of change and uncertainty both in the broader environment and the service delivery framework, the Ballarat project has not progressed as smoothly as similar initiatives in Shepparton and Mount Gambier. However, it should also be noted that there has been substantial work undertaken in the town by a group of very dedicated people and that success has been achieved in a range of areas. This evaluation identifies lessons learned from the project and makes a number of recommendations to improve its future sustainability.

## 4. Analysis of the Project

### 4.1. Overview of Ballarat and the Central Highlands Region

Ballarat is one of the largest inland cities in Australia and is the third largest city in Victoria. It has a population of approximately 88,000 and is situated 110 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, to which it has excellent road and rail links. On an express train from Ballarat you can be in the centre of Melbourne in one hour<sup>2</sup> and if road conditions are favourable, it can take a similar time by car.

Ballarat is a city steeped in history. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the rich gold deposits in the nearby hills lured people from all over the world to Ballarat in search of instant wealth. The wealth flowed, but so did anger over unjust mining license fees and the brutal administration that collected them. The situation came to a head in late 1854 at a place just east of the city now known as the Eureka Stockade. A group of 120 miners engaged in a standoff with heavily armed troops. They were quickly overwhelmed but this short-lived revolution became a lasting symbol of the struggle against injustice and oppression and a defining moment in the creation of the Australian spirit. Like the storming of the Bastille and the Boston Tea Party before it, the Eureka Rebellion demonstrated the refusal of citizens to be dominated by unfair government and laws.

The events at the Eureka Stockade are thus seen as an important step in the establishment of democratic principles including 'taxation with representation' and the right of each person to have a say in how they are governed, along with the Australian notion of 'a fair go for all'.

The buildings in central Ballarat reflect the wealth that poured into the city during the gold rush and its current economy is bolstered by tourists visiting the Eureka Stockade and other historical monuments. Local government estimates place the annual number of day-trippers visiting the region at 4.8 million, with a further 2.2 million people staying overnight.

Contemporary Ballarat is a major service centre for the Central Highlands Region. Manufacturing, health, community services, education and retailing are now the key industries in the city. Many government agencies also have a presence. In addition, Ballarat is linked into the growth in information and communication technology that has been occurring throughout Victoria and the information technology sector is emerging as a significant industry in the region. The City Council has designated Ballarat as a "Learning City" and strategic partnerships have been developed between the University of Ballarat and industry groups.

Gold is still mined near Ballarat and the local region supports a diverse agricultural economy based primarily on pigs, potatoes and wool. Ballarat is also the base city for the Grampians, Wimmera and Mallee which support tourism and broad acre farming. In addition, Ballarat is home to almost 200 manufacturing businesses producing a wide range of products for local and international markets.

Despite its multicultural origins, Ballarat has long been a city with little cultural diversity. Until recently, over 90% of its population was Australian born and British migrants were the largest of the predominantly European born groups. Like the rest of Victoria, Ballarat's population is also ageing with the number of people over the age of 65 projected to grow by 60% over the next 20 years.

The combination of low diversity and an ageing population, together with an exodus of young people, is not good for the future prospects of any region. This has been recognised by local

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<sup>2</sup> The train that stops at intermediate stations takes about one hour and a half.

planners and, as will be explored in Section 4.2, Ballarat is looking to inward migration to ensure its long-term economic and social viability.

## **4.2. Policies Underpinning Inward Migration to Ballarat**

Regional settlement of humanitarian entrants has to be viewed in the context of the policies of the three levels of government: federal, state and local.

At the federal level, a renewed focus on exploring the potential of regional settlement for humanitarian entrants came as a result of recommendations contained within the 2003 *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees* (the Review).<sup>3</sup> This report identified many sound reasons why some humanitarian entrants would be better suited to regional settlement, especially those from rural backgrounds and/or those whose skills were suited to skills shortages in regional areas. At the same time as benefiting these entrants, it was argued that regional settlement would take some pressure off services in larger centres.

Recommendation 29 of the Review proposed that the Department seek further opportunities to settle humanitarian entrants in regional areas and liaise closely with relevant stakeholders regarding regional locations where employment opportunities existed and appropriate services and community support were present or could be developed. Further, the report stressed the value of a cross-portfolio, whole of government approach to regional settlement and careful planning when establishing new settlement locations.

The Department of Immigration<sup>4</sup> responded to the Review's recommendations by investigating the potential of a number of regional centres to host humanitarian settlement. The Department looked for:

- a commitment from three levels of government to work together to ensure necessary services are in place;
- availability of major services, including Centrelink, Job Network agencies, health, welfare and housing, and the sensitivity of these services to the needs of humanitarian entrants;
- a commitment from local employers who have appropriate employment opportunities to offer to humanitarian entrants;
- support from the local community to facilitate a welcoming environment; and
- access to or easy provision of specialist services, including settlement, English language and specialist torture and trauma services.<sup>5</sup>

In July 2004, the former Minister for Immigration, Senator Vanstone, wrote to state and territory governments seeking their views of suitable locations for regional humanitarian settlement. The Victorian Government had already recognised the significance of regional development. In 2002 it passed the *Regional Development Victoria Act* which, amongst other things, outlined the framework for the establishment of a statutory body, Regional Development Victoria,<sup>6</sup> that would facilitate economic, infrastructure and community development in regional Victoria.

The Victorian State Government was thus very receptive to the Immigration Minister's offer and worked with the federal government, identifying Shepparton as the location for the first regional

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. May 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Since the 2003 Review, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has undergone a number of name changes. It will thus be referred to generically as "the Department of Immigration". Other descriptors, such as the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (or its acronym, DIAC), will only be used when applicable to the context.

<sup>5</sup> From an undated Department of Immigration briefing paper on the Shepparton Regional Settlement Pilot.

<sup>6</sup> RDV's Chief Executive is also the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD) and chair of the Regional Development Advisory Committee (RDAC).

settlement pilot. As previously mentioned, 10 families from the Democratic Republic of Congo were settled in Shepparton in 2005 and 2006.

Since the Shepparton pilot, the Victorian Government's migration policy has continued to evolve, maintaining its strong focus on skilled migration,<sup>7</sup> especially in the context of regional migration.<sup>8</sup> As part of the targeted program of support for regional migration, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria was funded to support migrants and communities engaged in regional migration initiatives, primarily through facilitation of linkages and communication exchange between key stakeholders, service and program providers within and across regional communities. It was also funded to provide practical assistance in the development of regional migration strategies, particularly in relation to:

- preparing employers, industries, local government, service providers, and the community to receive and settle new migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds;
- providing advice on how regional community services can be responsive to the needs of recently arrived migrants, including the preparation of resources and information;
- assisting migrants to understand local culture and practices; and
- supporting and resourcing regional Ethnic Communities Councils to participate as regional and local partners in the project.

While the policy focus has been on skilled migration, there has also been recognition of the significance of supporting humanitarian settlement. To complement federal government initiatives, a specific funding program (the *Refugee Support Package*) was set up by the Department for Victorian Communities, through the Victorian Multicultural Commission partnership with the Department of Human Services. Its purpose was to:

- provide support to Victoria's recently arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants by removing barriers to opportunities and providing assistance so they can better access existing services;
- empower refugees to increase their participation in the community; and
- provide better coordination of service delivery to refugee and humanitarian entrants.<sup>9</sup>

This program includes earmarked funding for early intervention programs and refugee health nurses in regional areas.

In light of these policy developments, and recognising the success of the Shepparton pilot, both the federal and state governments were keen to explore the potential of other regional locations in Victoria for humanitarian settlement.

As previously mentioned, Ballarat (like many other regional cities) recognises that its future prosperity is dependent on inward migration. A population forum was conducted in September 2004 and this identified the desire to see Ballarat "develop into a more diverse and multicultural community, receptive to change and new ideas".<sup>10</sup> This led to the development of Ballarat City Council's *Migrant Attraction and Retention Population Strategy*<sup>11</sup> that was released in late 2004.<sup>12</sup> This strategy articulated a recognition that if Ballarat was to be able to attract and retain migrants, it would need to adopt a coordinated and properly resourced approach to providing economic

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<sup>7</sup> The *Global Skills for Victoria: Skilled Migration Strategy* was launched by the Premier and the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation in October 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Global Skills for Provincial Victoria* is a key component of Victoria's Skilled Migration Strategy.

<sup>9</sup> From VMC website.

<sup>10</sup> From Ballarat's *Strategic Directions Framework*. 2004.

<sup>11</sup> This built upon and replaced a previous development plan, the *Ballarat Economic Development Strategy* and complements *Blueprint Ballarat*.

<sup>12</sup> The word "Population" is now rarely used when referring to strategy and most people simply use the acronym "MARS".

opportunities, bolstering infrastructure and ensuring the existence of a welcoming community. Further, it outlined a strategic action plan that would:

- support a welcoming culture by educating citizens of Ballarat about the contributions that migrants can make to the future social, cultural, and economic prosperity;
- attract migrants by actively marketing and promoting Ballarat as a migration destination;
- integrate migrants into daily life by providing the settlement services necessary to help them live, work, and learn in Ballarat; and
- retain migrants by ultimately encouraging them to make Ballarat their permanent home.<sup>13</sup>

The Strategy became operational in 2005 under the title “Skilled Migration Project” and since then, a range of structures, committees and programs have been set up to implement the action plan. As will be discussed in Section 4.3, some of these have been subsequently linked into the humanitarian settlement project.

One program implemented as part of the Skilled Migration Project and that has attracted considerable attention is the Multicultural Ambassador Program launched in 2006. Under this, 10 local residents from diverse backgrounds are appointed for terms of two years during which they work with the Council to represent the “multicultural face” of Ballarat and provide leadership and support to new migrants. One of the Multicultural Ambassadors, a man from the Democratic Republic of Congo, self-identifies as a former refugee and another Ambassador is from Zimbabwe.

Until Ballarat was approached about the regional resettlement project, attracting humanitarian entrants to the region was not part of the city’s agenda. Despite this, small numbers of refugees had begun to move into the city. Early arrivals were from Iran, India and various African states. Then former refugees from Sudan began to move into the region. Predominantly of Nuer and Bari ethnicity, the Sudanese were relocating from Melbourne and elsewhere in Victoria, in part because of the cheaper rental accommodation in Ballarat, to take advantage of the educational opportunities in the city, and to avoid community tensions. It is estimated that approximately 150-200 Sudanese now live in Ballarat.

### ***4.3. Selection of Ballarat as a New Regional Settlement Site***

Ballarat was not the first site considered for the second Victorian regional settlement project. For quite some time, Mildura in the north west of the state was the focus of attention. While distant from Melbourne, Mildura has good infrastructure and plentiful employment, especially for unskilled workers. The state government, however, had some reservations about the capacity of the health services in Mildura to cope with complex needs of humanitarian entrants and alternative sites were sought.

Some stakeholders reflected that the decision to discount Mildura was precipitous. Since it was made, a number of refugees have moved of their own accord into the area and those involved in the delivery of services to these refugees believe that the health services have not been stretched. It has also been argued that the advantages of the region would be far outweighed by the costs of sending the occasional entrant who arrived with a health undertaking to Melbourne for follow-up tests and treatment.

Nonetheless, Ballarat was seen as a suitable alternative. It was close to Melbourne, had well-developed infrastructure, wanted migrants and significantly, could offer affordable accommodation.

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<sup>13</sup> From Ballarat’s Migration Attraction and Population Retention Strategy. 2004.

In August 2006, the State Director of the Department of Immigration, supported by the local Member of Parliament, met with key government organisations, VOMA, VMC and community stakeholders in Ballarat. At this meeting, he explained the rationale behind regional resettlement of unlinked refugees and the settlement service delivery framework and outlined the benefits to the host community. He also provided advice to members planning for regional settlement on matters they would need to consider and encouraged them to commit their involvement.

Stakeholders involved at the time have reflected that the identification and selection of Ballarat might have benefited from longer consideration. Some felt that a number of external factors, including the impending state election and the shift in focus from Mildura, had driven the decision making process and that a longer consideration time might have provided opportunities for local capacity issues and service delivery mechanisms to be worked through prior to the entrants' arrivals.

#### Lesson #1:

*When selecting a site for regional settlement, it is important to allow time to make a thorough assessment of the capacity of stakeholders and the availability of key services.*

Also significant in the decision-making process was the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) provider's perception that they had not been involved in the preliminary discussions about the suitability of Ballarat as a regional settlement location, despite the fact that they would ultimately be responsible for delivering core settlement services for any new settlement site. The provider's first substantive involvement was at the time of the aforementioned meeting with stakeholders in Ballarat. During this consultation process, the provider raised concerns about the suitability of Ballarat, particularly due to its high rate of unemployment (see Section 4.7.8) and its climate (see Section 4.7.3). However, the decision-making process was already well advanced.

The IHSS provider responsible for delivering initial settlement services in Victoria is AMES. Their preferred way of working in regional areas is to identify a local agency they can subcontract to deliver services. They see this as the best way to marry their experience with local knowledge. The delays in bringing AMES into the discussions about Ballarat as a project site also had an impact on this process. As AMES had not previously worked with agencies in Ballarat, it was required to undertake a hasty identification and selection process.

#### Lesson #2:

*It is important to involve the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS) provider in discussion about the selection of a regional resettlement site at an early stage as they have relevant perspectives to add to deliberations and need to be confident that they can deliver quality services.*

Nevertheless, many local stakeholders were very supportive and enthusiastic about being involved in refugee settlement, not least the members of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee.

### **4.4. The Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee**

The Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee (CH-RSPC) was set up in the context of the Migration Attraction and Population Retention Strategy. Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC) had applied for and received seed funding from the Department of Immigration to establish a cross-sectoral planning committee that would focus on service delivery for migrants coming into the area. The Committee included participants from *inter alia*:

- the Department of Immigration;
- the City of Ballarat;
- the (Victorian) Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development;
- the (Victorian) Department of Human Services;
- the (Victorian) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development;
- the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations;
- Centrelink; and
- Ballarat Community Health Centre.

The existence of the CH-RSPC was one of the key determinants in the decision to locate the second regional settlement project in Ballarat, as it was seen that the Committee could take on the vital planning function required.

When the selection of Ballarat was announced, the role and function of the Committee took on far greater clarity than it hitherto had. It was also felt necessary to reassess the composition of the Committee. Additional people were identified and/or self-identified and the CH-RSPC was expanded to include representation from a number of other agencies including:

- AMES (the lead IHSS provider in Victoria);
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (the local IHSS provider);
- The Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (part of the IHSS consortium);
- The University of Ballarat/TAFE (the AMEP provider); and
- Ballarat Health Services.

In addition, other agencies, such as Victoria Police, were invited on an *ad hoc* basis to attend planning meetings.

When it was first set up, the CH-RSPC was chaired by the then Chairman of the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC). Many reflect on this period as vibrant and exciting, with Committee members enthusiastically focused upon the task at hand. In late 2007, the Chair of BRMC changed following the organisation's Annual General Meeting. A flow-on effect for the Committee was the requirement of a new Chair. Despite the best efforts of the replacement (and only ever temporary) Chair,<sup>14</sup> it was felt that momentum was lost at this stage as well as the collaborative focus of the group. While this did not affect initial planning for the project, the changes within BRMC had a significant impact on the CH-RSPC's capacity to steer the project throughout the pilot period and on the way in which the project was implemented. This will be discussed in later sections.

When there are changes to a committee's leadership, the role of secretary takes on an extra dimension. When the CH-RSPC was first established, Ballarat City Council offered to take on responsibility for the secretariat functions as part of its Migration Attraction and Population Retention Strategy. Some people reflected that the scope and demands of this role were not fully appreciated when the offer was made and that the resources assigned were not adequate to ensure that the role was performed as efficiently as it might have been. This had an impact on the follow-up from meetings and dissemination of information.

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<sup>14</sup> During the course of this evaluation, an election was held for the Chair of the CH-RSPC. The new Chair is conscious of the need to re-focus the Committee on ensuring the delivery of quality services to Togolese and other refugee entrants in Ballarat and rebuild cooperative working relationships and collegiality.



### Lesson #3:

*It is important that the Settlement Planning Committee is sufficiently resourced to enable it to function efficiently and that its roles and responsibilities be agreed to from the outset.*

Another complicating factor was that AMES joined the CH-RSPC only after the project was confirmed. At this stage, the Committee had been operating for some time under the leadership of the subcontracting agency and without any input from AMES. From AMES' perspective, this created challenges from the outset as they were "outsiders" who were not part of the close-knit group. There was also some confusion about their relationship with BRMC. On the one hand, BRMC chaired the Committee, yet on the other it was required to defer to AMES as the contract holder. Consequently Committee members found it hard to identify who had ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the IHSS services. The changes in both BRMC's management committee and the role of the CH-RSPC Chair did not resolve this confusion.

### Lesson #4:

*It is important that the IHSS provider be part of the local planning process from the outset.*

### Lesson #5:

*The need for the Chair of the Planning Committee to be impartial and, if required,, to take on a mediating role, makes it undesirable that the role be filled by a representative of the IHSS provider or any other direct service provider.*

## **4.5. Planning**

Mindful that Ballarat had minimal experience in refugee settlement, members of the CH-RSPC began to gather information and look closely at what was being done elsewhere. A number of members of the Committee visited Shepparton where they met with many of the people who had been involved in the Shepparton pilot. Soon after, they were also given the report of the evaluation that set out the procedural lessons learnt by their counterparts in Shepparton. The visit, the report and subsequent conversations with their counterparts in Shepparton, Warrnambool and Colac formed the basis for much of the Committee's planning.

Some of the key lessons from Shepparton that CH-RSPC members identified were:

- the need to temper community expectations;
- the need to manage the press;
- the importance of having structures to manage volunteers and donations;
- the need to promote independence; and
- the importance of establishing subcommittees.

Subcommittees were set up in the following areas:

- personal support: this was taken on by the Refugee Settlement Support Network (RSSN), a group run by BRMC (see Section 4.7.1);
- housing: to a large extent this subcommittee became redundant because direct links between BRMC and real estate agents were taken advantage of (see Section 4.7.2);
- health: this was possibly the most successful of the subcommittees and its operation will be discussed in Section 4.7.4.

In addition, the mandate of a number of existing Ballarat City Council planning committees (linked to the Migration Attraction and Population Retention Strategy) was extended to include planning for the project. These committees focused on:

- education and training;
- employment;
- community awareness; and
- attraction and retention.

The structure and mandates of these subcommittees can be found in Appendix 2. Each of the tasks was then assigned to a member of the subcommittee who was required to report back on progress.

Despite this, many felt that the subcommittees (with the exception of that focusing on health) did not function as efficiently as they should. The key reason given for this was lack of clarity about:

- the subcommittees' roles and responsibilities;
- the relationship between the Council's planning structures and those of the settlement project;<sup>15</sup> and
- how long they would be required to function.<sup>16</sup>

Lesson #6:

*Clarity concerning the roles and responsibilities of subcommittees and their relationship with the committee and other structures is imperative for their efficient functioning. In this regard, committees responsible for the planning of a new regional settlement initiative should give careful consideration to the recommendations from the Report of the Evaluation of the Shepparton Regional Settlement Pilot that related to the formation and functioning of the project steering committee and its subcommittees (Appendix 3).*

A considerable amount of planning was done before the Committee knew the origin of the entrants. The members were frustrated that it took so long to be told. "It was as if it was a state secret and they didn't trust us enough to tell us," reflected one member of the Committee.<sup>17</sup>

Lesson #7:

*Regular and open communication between the Department of Immigration and the settlement planning committee is vital during the planning process.*

Once it was announced that the entrants would be from Togo, new dimensions were added to the planning. Few countries would be less familiar to the average Australian than Togo. Everyone involved, even the staff at AMES who had been working in the sector for many years, had to begin from scratch to build up a knowledge of the country, its people and the experiences that the refugees would have had.

The Department of Immigration provided considerable assistance to those involved in planning the settlement project. This consisted of advice in the form of written information, including the Togolese Community Profile booklet, the "Welcome to Ballarat" kit and website references. In addition, a senior official from Canberra with first-hand experience of the caseload visited Ballarat and provided a briefing about the refugees. The latter was highly valued.

<sup>15</sup> Having planning for the project as a subset of a separate and largely unrelated agenda limited the amount of attention given to the pilot and left many confused about its objectives.

<sup>16</sup> Some subcommittees, in particular housing, continued to meet long after they no longer performed any meaningful role.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that due to the fact that most humanitarian entrants already have social 'links' (family or close friends) in Australia and are settled near these links, identifying a suitable unlinked humanitarian caseload for settlement in a regional location can take significant time. As soon as Togo was selected as the suitable caseload, the Department of Immigration advised the planning committee

### Lesson #8:

*It is essential that those involved in planning a regional settlement project have as much information as possible about the background and experiences of the entrants. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has an important role to play in supporting this process and, wherever possible, enabling the planning committee to engage with people who have had first hand experience with refugees from the target region, including those who have provided cultural orientation training (AUSCO) to the entrants offshore.*

The internet was an additional resource used by most of the service providers to gather more information about Togo and the situation of the Togolese refugees.

Information on what language(s) the entrants would speak was not obtained until quite late. When it was established that most spoke Ewe, the search then began for interpreters. It was fortuitous that two Ewe speakers (both of Ghanaian background) lived in Ballarat; they were encouraged to train and register with language service provider(s). The fact that a number of the entrants could also speak French was also of great assistance in the early stages.<sup>18</sup> Some in the Committee felt, however, that with a longer lead time they could have done more to identify other Ewe speakers and encourage them also to train and link up with interpreting services.

Another “information gap” also had an impact on the settlement project. A number of key stakeholders got the impression that the purpose of the project was to make Ballarat into a national hub for all Togolese settlement and that many more Togolese would follow the arrival of the initial 10 families. During the course of the project, CH-RSPC members were perturbed when they discovered that Togolese entrants were being settled in other Australian cities.<sup>19</sup> They then discovered that the numbers of Togolese refugees targeted for resettlement in Australia were actually quite small and there was no guarantee that many, if any, more unlinked cases would be sent to Ballarat. This misunderstanding led to some tense exchanges between members of the CH-RSPC and the Department of Immigration. The matter was ultimately resolved but it does highlight an important lesson.

### Lesson #9:

*The importance of ensuring that those responsible for planning a regional settlement project have a detailed understanding of Australia’s resettlement program and their role within it cannot be overemphasised.*

In a corollary to the above, reference was made to the frustration felt when it was realised that Togolese had been settled elsewhere in Australia and that those engaged in planning did not have the benefit of making contact with their counterparts in these places so that they could learn from them.

Finally, mindful of the need to build the capacity of local providers to work with the new Togolese clients and to support the Sudanese who were beginning to move to Ballarat, a number of larger agencies, including AMES, Foundation House and Centrelink, organised training and information sessions. These sessions were well received, in large part because local providers had begun to realise, from their contact with the Sudanese, that working with refugees was very different to working with their normal client base and that refugees have needs distinct from and additional to those of migrants.

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<sup>18</sup> The Department of Immigration indicated that, because of concerns about the lack of Ewe interpreters, a key criterion employed in the selection of the initial caseload for Ballarat was knowledge of French. As it was often only the head of household who spoke French, however, this led to problems communicating with other family members, in particular the women.

<sup>19</sup> It is significant to note that only those refugees identified as being suitable for regional settlement were sent to Ballarat. Meanwhile, the other Togolese identified for resettlement in Australia were directed to established settlement destinations, in this case Perth. Perth was selected because a number of the entrants had links to people who had previously been settled there.

### Lesson #10:

*Those involved in the planning and implementation of a regional settlement project must also receive comprehensive training about the overall settlement service delivery framework and DIAC's Service Principles.*

As valuable as training is, it does not meet all information needs. It is important to note that most interlocutors spoke about the need to supplement the information they received from the Department of Immigration, not only in relation to the background and needs of the entrants, but also about working with refugees. It was suggested that they would have been most appreciative of some specific guidance in relation to this.

### Recommendation #1:

*That DIAC prepare a resource kit for new settlement service providers and regional planning committees that contains, inter alia:*

- an overview of settlement services;
- key audiovisual resources such as those used by AUSCO and given to new arrivals;
- the DIAC publication "Empowering Refugees";<sup>20</sup>
- a list of specialist refugee providers in that state and their contact details; and
- a bibliography of resources about working with refugee clients.

## **4.6. The Arrival of the Entrants**

The first Togolese entrants, two families comprising 12 people, arrived in May 2007. Two more families (seven people) arrived about six weeks later (in late June). A five-month gap ensued before the arrival of the next entrants (in late November) – two families (eight people). One week later, a further two families (seven people) arrived. The remaining four families arrived separately at one-month intervals between February and May 2008. As will be discussed later, the pace of arrivals and the five-month gap with no arrivals caused significant challenges for service providers, in particular the IHSS provider.

In all, 12 families arrived under the project, totalling 57 people. Three families had seven members but most families had between three and five members. It was apparent that there are some complex family relationships within the entrant community. By no means are all of the families those typically expected in a new settlement project (two parents and young children).<sup>21</sup> Five of the entrants are classified as unaccompanied minors,<sup>22</sup> although four are linked into close family groups; one is a ward of the Commonwealth.<sup>23</sup> Two are older women with adult children.

The entrants present as a very diverse group, with differences largely due to class and educational levels, rather than ethnicity or religion. Some of the men are highly educated and had been senior professionals in their home country. Others are tradesmen with many years of experience. A smaller group of men have much lower education levels and worked in unskilled or semi-skilled roles. A much smaller percentage of the women had received a good education. Many of the other women had minimal education and low levels of literacy in their own language. The differences within the group have contributed to some of the tensions that have occurred within the Togolese community and which will be discussed in Section 5.

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<sup>20</sup> This reference was not available until the project had finished, therefore making it unreasonable to suggest earlier inclusion.

<sup>21</sup> While the Department of Immigration attempts wherever possible to select two-parent families with young children for new regional settlement locations, the small size of the target caseload meant that compromises had to be made in this case.

<sup>22</sup> As such, they come under the purview of the Department of Human Services.

<sup>23</sup> The ward is linked to one of the families.

Recommendation #2:

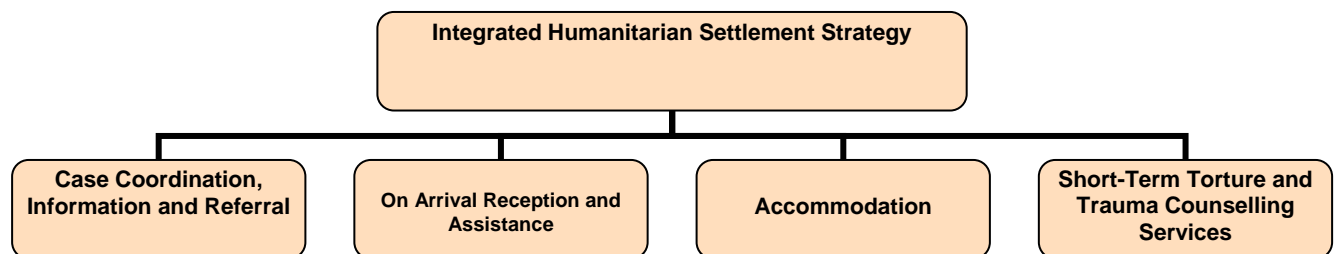
That, in recognition of the impact that the pacing and selection of arrivals can have in an emerging regional settlement location, DIAC ensure that, as much as is possible, the caseload selected contains sufficient numbers to enable:

- arrivals to occur at regular intervals (preferably two to three months);
- adherence to the criteria seen as best suited to an emerging settlement location, namely:
  - intact families with preschool and primary age children;
  - lower levels of torture and trauma;
  - some English capacity;
  - including people with leadership potential; and
- follow on migration to build a viable community.

## 4.7. Implementation

### 4.7.1. Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy

The Department of Immigration’s model for the delivery of initial settlement services to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants is the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). IHSS aims to help these entrants build a new life in Australia, participate in their communities and build self-reliance. Included in the model are six service delivery components.<sup>24</sup>



The Department of Immigration contracts the delivery of these services to agencies in the various regions around the country. The contractor responsible for the delivery of IHSS services in Victoria is a consortium led by AMES. The other major partners in this consortium are Redback, which manages on-arrival reception, the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) which delivers the household formation package and the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (Foundation House), responsible for short-term torture and trauma counselling.

#### i. The Delivery Model

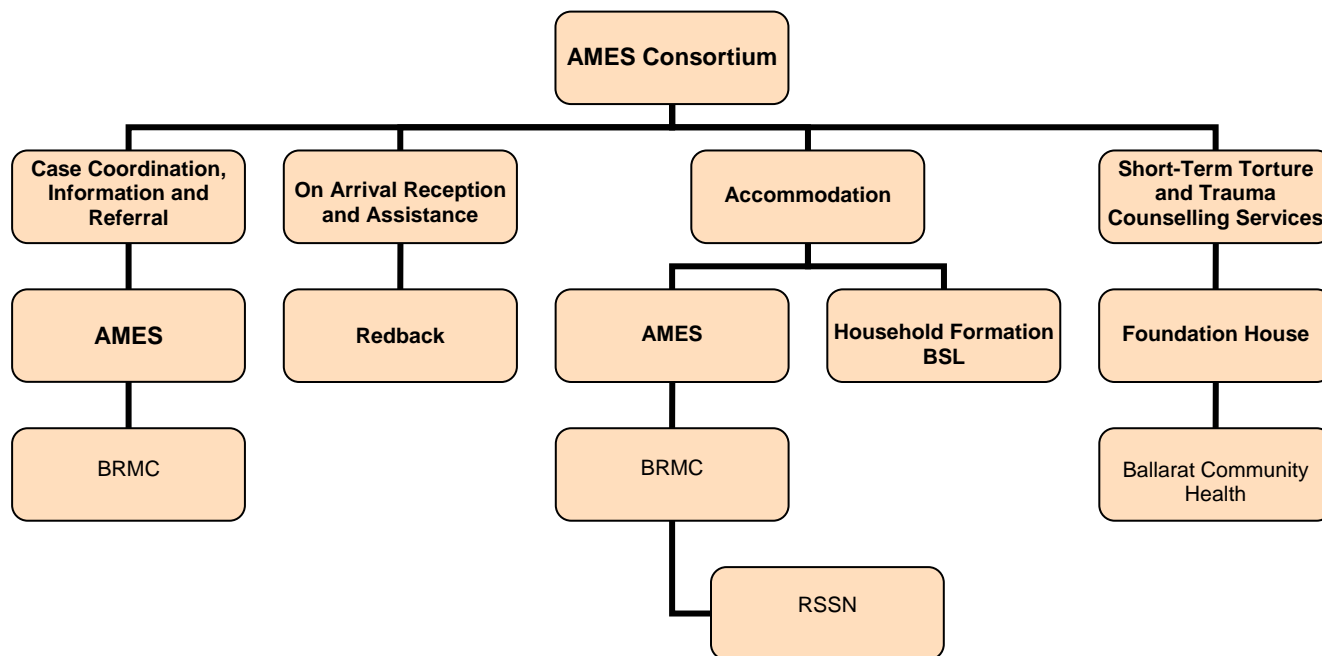
When required to deliver IHSS services in a regional area, it is AMES’ practice to identify a suitable agency at the local level with whom it can enter into a subcontractual agreement for the delivery of the key support services. AMES commits itself to train and support this agency and in return, it recognises that the agency can deliver good contacts with other local service providers and link into the community.

As previously mentioned, AMES had no prior relationship with agencies in Ballarat when the site was announced. They sought the advice of members of the CH-RSPC and others with local

<sup>24</sup> It is relevant to note that the IHSS also encompasses two services not provided directly to entrants but which are intended to provide a broader capacity of community response to settlement needs. These are Raising Community Awareness and Volunteer Coordination and Advocacy.

knowledge, undertook an assessment process and then selected Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC) to be their subcontractor. For some aspects of this work, BRMC also relies upon volunteers from a group it had previously established (the Refugee Settlement Support Network - RSSN) for practical support.

Foundation House went through a similar process in relation to identifying a local agency with the capacity to deliver short-term torture and trauma counselling. They selected Ballarat Community Health and began to work with its psychologists to build their capacity to work with refugees. The resultant delivery model is depicted below:



As will be discussed in Section 4.7.5, the subcontractual arrangement between Foundation House and Ballarat Community Health appears to have worked well. The other subcontractual arrangement, between AMES and BRMC, has not proved as successful. In part, the problems stem from the mode of delivery.

A key challenge facing service providers in regional areas is that the IHSS is funded on a unit cost basis and, in many instances, the number of arrivals is not sufficient to fund a full-time worker. Service providers have tackled this in different ways and with varying degrees of success. In some locations, the worker is an employee of a larger local agency (e.g. a local TAFE) and dovetails their IHSS work with other duties not funded by the Department of Immigration. In other locations, funding from different grants from the Department of Immigration is combined to fund a worker in a full-time or near full-time capacity. The third model sees the IHSS worker employed part-time, solely to undertake IHSS duties.

The third model was chosen in Ballarat. Throughout the project, an IHSS worker has been employed for two days per week. When refugees first arrive, however, they require a level of assistance that can only really be delivered by a full-time worker. As a result, the person in the Caseworker position has ended up working large quantities of overtime.

This, in turn, has caused problems for BRMC. For a start, they have accrued a massive time-in-lieu debt and this is fiscally problematic for any small agency. The stress on workers has also taken its toll and during the course of the project, there have been three workers in what is

essentially the pivotal service delivery role. When the agency tried to 'rein things in' during the course of the project to keep the workload more manageable, it aroused considerable resentment because expectations that had been set up were no longer being met.

#### Lesson #11:

*Initial over-servicing of entrants may lead to certain expectations of ongoing service levels. It is imperative that the level of service throughout the process is consistent for all entrants.*

The funding model has also been detrimental to the project in another way. Because funding is provided on a unit cost basis, a steady flow of entrants is required so that the agency can receive the funding to pay the worker. In the case of the Ballarat project, the first groups arrived at a regular pace giving rise to a series of expectations about cash flow and service levels. Then came the gap of five months between the arrival of the first four families and the next arrivals. Larger agencies could possibly afford to draw down reserves to cover this but small agencies such as BRMC do not have the capacity to cross-subsidise projects. The funding hiatus placed considerable strains on the organisation. It has also been given as a contributory factor to the resignation of the first of the three IHSS Caseworkers.

#### Lesson #12:

*When establishing a new regional settlement location, careful consideration must be given to the service delivery model to ensure that it is appropriately resourced, supported and sustainable, noting that having a worker who is solely funded under an IHSS contract in an emerging settlement location may be undesirable.*

### **ii. Delivery of IHSS Services**

The delivery of IHSS services during the project was not without problems. At the most simple level, a range of concerns was raised by stakeholders including:

- the inadequacy of household goods allowance for the climate in Ballarat (see Section 4.7.3);
- a guaranteed means of communication with the entrants when they were collected from the airport.

It was, however, in relation to the area that is arguably the most important component of IHSS – Case Coordination, Information and Referral – that most concerns were raised.

As indicated above, the delivery model adopted by BRMC was problematic from the start. It was arguably compromised by a lack of experience within the organisation and the high turnover of staff. This resulted in a situation in which stakeholders felt that:

- each new Caseworker struggled to understand the complex demands of their role;
- accepted casework principles do not always appear to have been followed;
- things initiated by one Caseworker were not necessarily picked up by the next;
- the entrants were not able to establish a relationship of trust with their Caseworker;
- none of the Caseworkers were able to build on past experience;
- the Caseworkers were not there long enough to build collegial relationships with other service providers;
- other service providers were confused about what was happening with IHSS; and
- some other service providers felt that they had to “pick up the pieces”.

Turnover of staff and management in the service provider was, therefore, felt to have had a destabilising effect on service delivery to the entrants, the establishment of working relationships and the development of a strong and trusting relationship with the Togolese entrants.

This being said, there was nothing to suggest that the IHSS contractual obligations were not met. Timely referrals were made to appropriate agencies, including Centrelink, health services, English language providers and schools and all the entrants have been assisted to find accommodation.

Lesson #13:

*Failure to ensure that the model chosen for the delivery of IHSS services is robust and sustainable and that the agency responsible for its delivery has the capacity to implement a program based on established casework standards and DIAC Service Principles can have a serious and deleterious impact on the entrants and on the whole settlement service delivery framework.*

AMES has accepted that the settlement process has been difficult. Its latest initiative, undertaken in conjunction with Foundation House, has been to bring together the front-line workers (IHSS, AMEP, health, education, etc) in an effort to define more clearly roles, responsibilities and referral pathways. This work is ongoing and Ballarat Community Health Centre has taken on responsibility for facilitating meetings.

Lesson #14:

*Clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the front line workers delivering services to newly arrived refugees is critical, as is agreement about referral pathways.*

**iii. Exiting**

The model of IHSS service delivery is predicated on the notion that after receiving intensive support for the first 6-12 months after arrival, humanitarian entrants will be linked to other support structures that can provide assistance when issues arise. Workers funded under the Department of Immigration's Settlement Grants Program (SGP) can perform an important facilitating role with the many agencies from which entrants can access support.

In Ballarat, the SGP Worker is employed by BRMC and the person filling this position is also the team leader to whom the IHSS Caseworker reports. The position is funded for three days per week and, as with the IHSS position, having a worker on a part-time salary in this position is considered by BRMC to be unworkable. In reality, the person is usually on duty at least five days per week and the agency has been accruing time-in-lieu entitlements at an unsustainable rate. Further, the SGP Worker has been inextricably linked to the IHSS scenario outlined in the previous section and this has impacted upon the willingness of entrants to seek assistance from BRMC.

Lesson #15:

*As settlement services are predicated on a smooth transition from the high support IHSS program to the more generalised assistance provided under the SGP, it is essential that there be a viable service provider to whom entrants can be referred when exited from IHSS.*

Cognisant of local limitations and the importance of entrants learning about the different services in Ballarat, AMES organised a "Community Expo" in early July 2008. Seventeen organisations had stalls where they had an opportunity to speak with the Togolese and other new arrivals in Ballarat. This was seen by AMES as an important means of informing entrants about their services and building their confidence so that they can transition from IHSS to mainstream programs.

**iv. Community Guides**

The AMES model of IHSS service delivery involves the recruitment of "Community Guides" who support the IHSS Caseworker to implement the settlement plan that should be developed for each



entrant family. These Guides are usually recruited from within the same community and/or language group as the entrants so that they can act as role models as well as settlement guides. When the Ballarat project began, however, it confronted the problem that there were no other Togolese who could be recruited as Community Guides and the only local Ewe speakers (two people of Ghanaian background) were employed as interpreters. Having been informed that a number of the Togolese could speak French, it was decided to seek out French-speaking members of the local community to act as Community Guides. They became casual BRMC employees working under the supervision of the Caseworker.

Along with ongoing service delivery, staff turnover at BRMC also had an impact on the Community Guides program. Concerns were raised that in the early days, lack of direction and guidance led to some over-servicing and blurring of boundaries. When BRMC came under new management, new procedures were introduced to establish service boundaries. Unfortunately, this resulted in the alienation of a number of members of the local community who had previously been involved.

Once the first Togolese families settled and capable members were identified, AMES requested that BRMC encourage them to become Community Guides and provided on-site training for two community members in March 2008. Since then, AMES has encouraged BRMC to use these two new Community Guides rather than those recruited from the local community. While this can be a useful strategy for encouraging individual growth and developing community capacity, there have also been some unfortunate repercussions from the decision to recruit from within the Togolese community. As will be discussed in Section 5, the Togolese community is far from cohesive. It appears that having certain entrants seemingly favoured by the service provider has exacerbated divisions and caused further alienation.

#### Lesson #16:

*The recruitment of people from within an entrant community has many advantages but is also inherently problematic. Those recruiting and supervising must be aware of the complexities involved and ensure that any staff working within their own community are appropriately trained and supervised.*

### **4.7.2. Housing**

Possibly one of the most attractive features of Ballarat as a settlement location is its availability of affordable accommodation. This is in stark contrast with Melbourne and most other major cities where finding rental accommodation for new arrivals has become increasingly difficult.

As previously mentioned, in the initial planning stages a housing subcommittee was established in the expectation that it would scope available housing options, build links with real estate agents and identify houses for each of the families. As it was, the capacity of the former Chair of BRMC to draw on personal links with local real estate agents meant that the subcommittee soon became superfluous.

BRMC made the decision early in the planning process to try to situate the entrants as close as possible to the centre of the city, largely because this is where most of the services are located and also because of the scarcity of public transport. In some ways this meant that compromises had to be made. Many of the affordable rental properties close to the centre are older and not in as good condition as those in the outer suburbs but the advantages of the central location were seen to outweigh these problems.

Prior to the arrival of each family, a short term lease (three to six months) was taken out on a house or apartment that would be suitable for them. The entrants were then given the option of remaining in that property or moving elsewhere. At the time of the evaluation:

- three families were still in the initial six-month lease period;
- four families had renewed their lease;
- two families had moved into public housing;<sup>25</sup>
- two linked families were in the process of seeking a larger house that could accommodate the extended family; and
- one family has indicated a desire to move into community housing.

Also prior to arrival, BRMC called upon volunteers from its Refugee Settlement Support Network to go into each house, clean it thoroughly and make it as welcoming as possible for the new entrants.

### 4.7.3. The Climate

Ballarat has a reputation for extremes of temperature. The last two winters have been especially cold. It is not surprising that the Togolese, who have come from a climate similar to that of Darwin, identified the weather as one of the biggest challenges they are facing.<sup>26</sup> As one provider said, “They just hate the cold and are miserable during winter.”

The impact of the climate has been exacerbated by a number of factors:

- As stated, many of the entrants are living in older houses that are not well-sealed or insulated and, therefore, hard to heat.
- The household formation package provided to them when they first arrived was not tailored to the climate.<sup>27</sup> The bedding, in particular, was not warm enough and additional blankets had to be sourced as a matter of priority. The single heater supplied was also insufficient for the sub-freezing temperatures of most winter evenings.
- Not being familiar with cold weather, the entrants were unaware of measures to keep the cold out such as closing windows and internal doors, drawing curtains and blocking drafts under doors.
- Entrants have been directed to a group associated with a particular church for clothing, supplementary furniture and bedding. Those who elected to attend a different church felt that this source of alms was no longer available to them (this issue is discussed further in Section 4.7.14).
- Because they are so focused on sending money to family members overseas, the entrants are reluctant to spend money on purchasing additional heaters. They are also resentful about the cost of heating.

#### Lesson #17:

*Climate should be taken into account when considering the suitability of a settlement destination for entrants. If the climate of a designated area is very different to that with which entrants are familiar, additional steps need to be taken to ensure they have the necessary clothing, equipment and training to help them make the necessary adjustments.*

When asked, the entrants identified their aversion to the climate as a primary factor that would make them think about moving away from Ballarat.

<sup>25</sup> When these families indicated a desire to move into public housing, the potential problems related to moving into an area where many of the residents have social problems were explained to them.

<sup>26</sup> It is important to acknowledge that the research for this evaluation was conducted during a particularly cold period when maximum temperatures were in single figures and the wind-chill factor made it unpleasant to be outside even in the middle of the day.

<sup>27</sup> The household goods allowance is a fixed price stipulated by the contract and designed as a starter package approved by the Department of Immigration.

#### **4.7.4. Health Care**

As previously mentioned, the CH-RSPC health subcommittee was the most active of all of the subcommittees, drawing heavily on the lessons learnt in Shepparton and engaging in comprehensive planning. It did not, however, begin on a positive trajectory.

Prior to the establishment of the health subcommittee in March 2007 (two months before the first arrivals), all of the discussions around health in the CH-RSPC were in the context of that which was known about migrant health. It was only when the subcommittee was set up and additional practitioners were brought in that the focus was expanded to incorporate the specifics of refugee health and the importance of preventative health.

Strategic intervention in the health area was essential in Ballarat, as in many other regional centres, where there is a serious shortage of doctors. Whereas in Melbourne the ratio of General Practitioners (GPs) to population is 1:600, in Ballarat it is 1:1,600 and only one practice has open books. In addition, because of the lack of diversity in the local population, few health professionals have ever had to use an interpreter, or assist with the complex health needs with which many refugees present.

Key people within Ballarat Health Services and Ballarat Community Health Centre joined forces to establish the subcommittee and secured representation from:

- Ballarat and District Division of General Practitioners
- MedicAid
- Eureka Medical Clinic
- Central Highlands Primary Care
- Western Hospital
- Department of Human Services
- Foundation House

Included in the subcommittee were people with expertise in a range of relevant disciplines including infectious diseases, emergency medicine, psychiatry, torture and trauma counselling, maternal and child health and health practitioner training. The Refugee Health Nurse, who had been employed in Ballarat when the Sudanese refugees started to arrive and the project was on the horizon, was also a member of the subcommittee.

Guided by the report of the Shepparton pilot and their discussions with those involved in health delivery in Shepparton, the subcommittee members:

- undertook a needs analysis;
- mapped local service capacity;
- developed risk management strategies;
- identified what additional resources would be required;
- sourced additional funding and resources;
- organised training; and
- made links with experienced refugee health providers.

The subcommittee worked efficiently and effectively, in large part because of the skill and goodwill of the people involved. Stakeholders also felt that some of its success was attributable to having a good mix of people with relevant expertise to provide guidance, as well as people with sufficient seniority to approve implementation strategies. Being flexible and willing to adapt to change was also seen as a vital ingredient of the subcommittee's work.

### Lesson #18:

*Careful consideration should be given to selecting people for subcommittees. Ideally there should be a good mix of people with relevant expertise and those with sufficient seniority to approve implementation strategies. Committee members should also be prepared to put in the necessary time, be able to work collaboratively and flexibly, and be totally committed to the shared goal.*

As important as the planning was, there is general agreement that the reason things worked as smoothly as they did on the ground was the presence of the Refugee Health Nurse. She undertook a vital brokerage and interpretive role that involved, *inter alia*:

- identifying suitable GP practices and encouraging them to take on Togolese patients;
- convincing practice managers that they should allocate more than 10 minutes for the first appointment (and referring them to the special Medicare billing code);
- briefing GPs and practice nurses about the entrants, refugee health screening protocols, how to work with interpreters etc;
- ensuring the surgeries were registered with the interpreter service;
- alerting health professionals to possible health issues in the cohort (for example, vitamin D deficiency<sup>28</sup>) which are not generally encountered in the broader Australian population and providing information about these;
- sensitising health professionals about working with victims of sexual violence;
- gaining the trust of the Togolese entrants so that she could learn about their background and health status;
- ensuring all entrants received comprehensive health assessments;
- ensuring children received immunizations;<sup>29</sup>
- supporting the health professionals so they did not feel they needed to cope alone;
- ensuring entrants understood and followed the instructions given to them by GPs; and
- ensuring medicines were obtained and properly stored.

In her role, the Health Nurse introduced some simple strategies that made things run more smoothly. These included:

- giving each of the families a diary which they were encouraged to leave on the kitchen table. It was negotiated that those working with the entrants would write any appointments in the diary so that everyone would know what else was happening and when they could schedule appointments for the entrants. She also reinforced with the entrants the importance of checking the diary each morning so that they knew which appointments they had and where they were required to be; and
- purchasing plastic containers with securely fitting lids, marking them with a big red cross and then giving one to each family. Entrants were then asked to put all their medicines in this container and leave it on the top of the fridge or somewhere else out of reach of children.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that is naturally present in a small number of few foods, added to others and available as a dietary supplement. It is also produced by the body when exposed to sunlight. Without sufficient vitamin D, bones can become thin, brittle, or misshapen. Vitamin D deficiency can cause rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults. Together with calcium, vitamin D also helps protect older adults from osteoporosis. Vitamin D has other roles in human health, including modulation of neuromuscular and immune function and reduction of inflammation.

<sup>29</sup> Few of the entrants arrived with health records and these made no mention of the immunization status of children. Because there was no way of guaranteeing that the children had been immunized appropriately, health officials decided to "start with a blank slate". All of the Togolese children were thus given the mandatory inoculations.

<sup>30</sup> This was prompted by concern about the way the entrants would leave their medicines within easy reach of young children.

### Lesson #19:

*There are many simple strategies that can make things run more smoothly. It is thus important for workers to think laterally and creatively about issues as they present and focus on finding solutions that can accommodate their needs, those of the entrants and those of the others working with the entrants.*

It would appear that one of the consequences of the high turnover of workers at BRMC was some confusion about health undertakings. In February 2008 the Refugee Health Nurse, while normally a role for the IHSS Caseworker, took on the responsibility of ensuring that entrants who arrived with a health undertaking received the necessary checks.

The Refugee Health Nurse and other members of the health subcommittee are very pleased with how the GP practices have responded to the Togolese, although some still need prompting to use interpreters. Even some of the more conservative practitioners have “bent over backwards” to accommodate their new patients. Health subcommittee members attribute this response to the fact that practitioners know they can refer to the Refugee Health Nurse for guidance and support if required.

Stakeholders identified that the hospital was initially less responsive and this was attributed in part to many doctors and nurses not fully appreciating how much they did not know about the health needs of refugees. Here too, the presence of the Refugee Health Nurse has been critical in terms of encouraging attitudinal changes and giving practical advice about working with the Togolese. There is now a sense that the hospital is moving in the right direction and that staff are learning and adapting.

Two of the Togolese women were pregnant when they arrived and another two have become pregnant since their arrival in Australia. The births went very smoothly and the mothers have been diligent about attending antenatal clinics. The only real issue raised in relation to this area was the desire by health workers to learn more about traditional birthing practices in Togo and the difficulty they were having finding out any information about this.

It did emerge, however, during consultations with entrants that they were using traditional medicines (for backache etc) but had not thought it important to disclose this to the Refugee Health Nurse or their doctor. This raises an important issue for those working with people from very different cultures as some traditional medicines react adversely with western medication.

### Lesson #20:

*Those working with refugees should be aware of cultural differences in health care practices, including the use of traditional medicines, and ensure they specifically ask their patients/clients about this.*

Contrary to expectations, the dental health of the entrants was quite good, although some of the adults had trauma-related dental problems that required intervention. Because of the length of the waiting list for subsidised dental treatment (in excess of four years), the Refugee Health Nurse was required to find dentists who would help out. She also recognised that the Togolese had little knowledge about dental hygiene and thus worked with the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provider to include training about this in their language instruction.

The AMEP provider and the Refugee Health Nurse also worked closely together to develop material for English classes that included instruction on other health-related issues. Themes covered included:

- when you do go to a doctor and when you don't;
- identifying and managing colds and flu;
- contraception; and

- managing vitamin D deficiency.

Further collaboration is planned.

Other health related issues with which the Togolese presented included:

- visual problems: all of the adults over 45 were found to be long-sighted (hyperopic);<sup>31</sup> and
- anaemia in some of the children, also easily treated.

The Shepparton pilot had alerted service providers to the possibility that there might be dietary issues to manage. In Shepparton, some of the entrants developed a taste for soft drinks, fast food and other products with high calorific and low nutritional content. However, this did not happen with the Togolese families and the Refugee Health Nurse reports that she has not had to intervene in relation to the entrants' diet. It is interesting to surmise that one of the things that might have helped the Togolese to retain their traditional diet and not be lured by "western food" was a cookbook project that they were engaged in not long after arrival (see Section 4.7.15). The women, in particular, are very proud of this achievement and excited that others are interested in their food.

As previously mentioned, the fact that the delivery of health services to the Togolese has been relatively smooth is a combination of good planning and the presence of the Refugee Health Nurse. Everyone agreed that the person selected to fill the Refugee Health Nurse position was ideal for the role. She had worked in Africa and clearly has both a passion for and professional approach to her job. When she was appointed, she took it upon herself to do significant research about the health needs of refugees and refugee health screening protocols and visited a number of Melbourne-based centres that worked with refugees. It is significant to note that all of this was self-initiated and she was not offered any training when she was appointed, nor supported to make contact with her peers. She feels this is a deficiency in the system.<sup>32</sup>

### Recommendation #3:

*Given the importance of the role of Refugee Health Nurse, the Department of Human Services should ensure that those appointed to this role receive specialised training.*

There is general agreement amongst the entrants that they are satisfied with health services in Ballarat. The exception to this is one entrant with chronic health problems. It would appear this individual was told, or believes they were told, when in Africa that Australian doctors would be able to cure their health problems straight away. This individual is clearly upset and frustrated that this has not occurred. While this was only a single incidence, it does point to a useful lesson for health providers.

### Lesson #21:

*One of the challenges of working with refugees is managing their expectations about the extent to which Australian health providers will be able to solve chronic health problems.*

Finally, it is important to recognise that the Togolese and other refugees in Ballarat will have ongoing health needs that will need to be addressed at the local level. Whether these are best addressed by the health subcommittee, which after all was established for a specific and finite

<sup>31</sup> They were initially given reading glasses but struggled with these because they had to take them off to see the blackboard in their English classes. They were then taken back and given bifocals that were clear at the top. They were not interested in using half-frame glasses.

<sup>32</sup> It is acknowledged that Foundation House currently runs a series of workshops during the year for Refugee Health Nurses and that DHS funds a one day a week Refugee Health Nurse Facilitator position at Western Region Health Centre in Footscray.

purpose, or by another committee is a decision best made at a local level. Either way, there would be merit in building on the good relationships that were established by this subcommittee to form a standing committee with a specific focus on addressing the health needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants residing in Ballarat.

Recommendation #4:

*That a standing committee of health providers, health educators, counsellors and other relevant parties be established to ensure that the health needs of refugees in Ballarat are addressed.*

#### **4.7.5. Torture and Trauma Counselling**

Those working with the Togolese entrants are conscious that most have experienced considerable trauma and loss in the past and this has been exacerbated by long periods in refugee camps<sup>33</sup> and separation from members of their extended families.<sup>34</sup>

Foundation House, the AMES Consortium member responsible for torture and trauma services, identified Ballarat Community Health as the best-equipped agency to deliver these. Three counsellors (two females and one male) were selected to receive specialist training in working with traumatised refugees. All are experienced counsellors who have “taken ownership of their roles” and are reported to have approached the challenge with skill and confidence. Foundation House provides professional supervision and informal support for the counsellors.

In recognition of high levels of trauma, the entrants have been automatically referred to the counsellors after they have been in the country for three to four months. In addition, some direct referrals have been made by the school and other service providers in relation to specific concerns.

The counsellors have found this work demanding, in large part because of the high levels of trauma experienced by their clients and the challenge they confront in finding the best way to support them. Like their colleagues elsewhere, the counsellors have found it hard to explain their function to their clients who are unfamiliar with counselling and consider it to be for “mad people”. Some entrants also expected the counsellors to be able to “solve all their problems immediately” and became disillusioned when they realised the sessions were “just about talking”. Overall, the women have been more responsive to counselling than the men.

Lesson #22:

*One of the challenges confronting those providing torture and trauma counselling is to help their clients understand the nature of their work. It is therefore important that counsellors draw on the experience of those who have been working in the sector for some time in order to develop a repertoire of strategies that will assist them in this matter.*

While Foundation House has run a series of training courses and information sessions, it would appear that not all service providers have a full appreciation of the role of the torture and trauma counsellors and the necessity of this aspect of the service. The latter is linked to the lack of past experience in Ballarat with refugee settlement and staff turnover.

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<sup>33</sup> Some of the entrants spent more than 15 years in camps.

<sup>34</sup> See Section 4.7.12.

### Lesson #23:

*In a region unfamiliar with humanitarian settlement, it is probable that other service providers will not be familiar with the rationale behind torture and trauma counselling and the strategies that counsellors use. Briefing sessions for other workers about torture and trauma counselling should therefore be seen as an integral part of the planning for any new regional settlement initiative.*

#### **4.7.6. Income Support**

Like all humanitarian entrants, the Togolese were eligible for Centrelink benefits from the date of arrival. The fact that a representative from the local Centrelink office had been involved in the planning from the start contributed to the ease with which this was delivered. The local Centrelink office had the benefit of the information about the project and the entrants that was provided by the Department of Immigration to the CH-RSPC. Centrelink also used internal structures to train staff about the entrants' entitlements and cross-cultural service delivery.

Stakeholders raised some concerns about Centrelink's capacity to continue providing the same level of support as resource constraints forced the local Centrelink office to shed the position of Multicultural Officer. Because of the pivotal role played by the person previously in this role, both internally and through liaison with other agencies (in particular the IHSS and Job Network providers), this change is significant for existing CALD background clients (not just the Togolese) and for any plans for further humanitarian settlement in the future.

### Recommendation #5:

*That if direct humanitarian settlement is to continue in Ballarat, DIAC enter into discussions with Centrelink about ensuring there is sufficient local capacity to accommodate the needs of the entrants.*

#### **4.7.7. English**

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provider in Ballarat is the University of Ballarat<sup>35</sup>. Prior to the arrival of the Sudanese, their English language program was very small, with less than 30 students per year, a third of whom were AMEP students. Over the last two years, their program has changed significantly, first due to the relocation of Sudanese refugees to Ballarat and then with the arrival of the Togolese.

They now have some 80 students enrolled, two thirds of whom are AMEP students, the rest funded by the state government. Courses are offered at four levels: Preliminary and Certificates I, II and III.

The teachers were grateful that they had a chance to build capacity and experience with the Sudanese prior to the arrival of the Togolese. The arrival of the Sudanese also gave them the numbers to be able to offer courses at a far greater range of levels and in a far more flexible manner than they would have if the Togolese were their only students.<sup>36</sup>

This being said, they did find preparing for the Togolese challenging, in part because they could not plan in advance (not knowing when they would arrive, how many would come and what their English capacity would be) and in part because they had to balance their needs with those of other students. They were anxious to ensure that their focus on the Togolese (through participation in the CH-RSPC and other fora) would not be to the detriment of their Sudanese and other students. They were also conscious of the potential impact a relatively sudden influx of

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<sup>35</sup> The University of Ballarat was formerly SMB (School of Mines and Industry Ballarat) TAFE and is still often referred to as SMB, TAFE or SMB TAFE.

<sup>36</sup> AMEP is funded on the basis of the number of students enrolled.



African students would have on the faculty's other students, many of whom are disadvantaged and/or have an intellectual impairment. Considerable thought was put into strategies that would help the students understand each other and create a safe, accepting environment for all.

In preparing for its first group of newly arrived AMEP students, the University has had to think about and adapt their procedures. One of the major changes has been to the assessment interview. Previously this would take up to one hour but with the assistance of the first IHSS Caseworker, they were able to pare this back to 15 minutes. They have also revisited their teaching material, including instruction based on things their students were likely to encounter during their initial settlement.

The Togolese attend AMEP classes three days per week (15 hours in total). All of the students are willing participants and work very hard. The entrants' only complaint about AMEP is that the classes are not full-time. As one of the teachers remarked, "They want their lives back yesterday." In addition, because of the changes at BRMC, the AMEP teachers have become the "constant" in the entrants' lives and are seen as the people to whom they can turn for advice and support.

The AMEP classes are also thought to have helped the entrants in another way. Because these are held on the University of Ballarat campus, the entrants have been exposed to a wide range of students doing many different courses. The transition to general education programs is thus seen as not as great as it might otherwise be.

This is not to say that this transition will be easy. In the consultation with the Togolese men, a number expressed uncertainty about how they could get from where they are now to where they would like to be (in as little time as possible). The women were aware that a certificate course in hospitality offered on two days a week could fit in with their three days at AMEP but whereas childcare is provided for AMEP, it is not for other courses. Therefore they did not feel able to avail themselves of this option. For the men and the women, pathway planning and career counselling will have an important role to play in helping the entrants identify achievable pathways to further education and employment.

#### Lesson #24:

*AMEP performs a critical function in the lives of new entrants, not just teaching them English but also enabling them to understand their new environment and plan for their future.*

The entrants' enthusiasm for the English classes has clearly paid off. The men in particular have made remarkable progress, especially those who are better educated and already speak two or more languages. A number of these men have moved on from AMEP to further study. The other men were comfortable enough in English to bypass the interpreter during the consultations. The women, many of whom have much lower levels of education and some of whom are older, are clearly taking longer to learn English, although most say they can now ask directions and engage in simple conversations.

### **4.7.8. Employment**

Those outside Ballarat are quick to identify the region's high unemployment rate as being potentially the largest obstacle to humanitarian settlement in Ballarat. Locals concede that the rates are high but do not necessarily agree that the entrants will find it too difficult to find employment when the time comes – but are quick to add that this will only happen if they receive targeted support.

The areas in which employment is most plentiful in Ballarat include hospitality and cleaning. The problem with these jobs, however, is that they are usually part-time and casual. There is a large

pool of university students and local young people who are both keen to get these and attractive to employers, as they can be paid youth wages.

Ballarat also has a number of large factories (including McCains), the largest steel-frame builder in Australia, four foundries and a big gold mine, all of which employ both skilled and unskilled labour.

Until recently, the construction industry was strong but this has been hit by the rising interest rates and the decline in consumer confidence. There are still jobs available but only for those with trade skills.

Despite its size, Ballarat operates a bit like a country town when it comes to employment. It is very much a case of “who you know”. Very few jobs are advertised and many entry-level jobs go to “sons and daughters of friends and family”. In light of this, newcomers really need assistance to find their first job.

When the Sudanese secondary movers began coming into Ballarat, funding was sought from the state government<sup>37</sup> for a special employment support program. Called *African BEAT*,<sup>38</sup> this program adopted a two-pronged approach. It worked with:

- the Sudanese refugees to help them understand the Australian workplace; and
- employers to help them understand the background and support needs of the refugees.

When the program started, there were only one and a half jobs between 20 Sudanese families. Nine months later, 20 people were employed. The seed funding for *African BEAT* has been exhausted and the program folded before it could be of benefit to the Togolese. There have been discussions about seeking funding from the federal government and/or industry to restart the program but this is yet to be done.

When considering the issue of employment for the Togolese entrants, it is important to note that the majority had been in the country for less than 12 months at the time of the evaluation and several for less than six months, so it is too early to make any definitive assessment of the entrants’ employment outcomes. All that can really be considered are the entrants’ aspirations and the preparedness of support agencies to help them to meet these.

As previously mentioned, the male entrants in particular have had vastly different educational and employment histories. Included in the group are:

- a mining engineer;
- an architect;
- a computer technician;
- a plumber (who has also worked as a plasterer and a photographer);
- a mechanic;
- a steel bender; and
- two taxi drivers.

The fact that their qualifications have not been recognised in Australia has been the source of great frustration to some of the entrants, in particular those with trade skills. One has managed to secure an apprenticeship but is finding this very difficult, in part because of the low wages (“they

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<sup>37</sup> The program was set up using discretionary funds made available by the Department of Planning and Community Development, with additional funding from the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development.

<sup>38</sup> BEAT is an acronym for “Building Employment Acceptance Together”.

might be enough for a teenager but I have a wife and children”) and because he sees it as “embarrassing” to be required to “go back to school”.

Many of the men exhibit a strong compulsion to join the workforce, most likely driven by:

- strong cultural values that dictate that the man is the head of the household and that he must provide for the family;
- a sense that their lives have been put on hold for far too long and that being employed is the best way to get them back on track; and
- the imperative to earn as much as possible so that they can fulfill their obligations to support their family and friends who are still in refugee camps.

At the same time, several of these men seem to have very little appreciation of the necessity to upgrade their skills (both in English and in their chosen area of work) and adapt to Australian workplace conditions. This subgroup wants work “now” and the men are frustrated that they cannot instantly walk into a well-paying job. Complicating this are the barriers to combining AMEP and employment. Many workers feel that if there was greater integration between language instruction and employment, and more structured pathways to employment, the entrants would not be as frustrated.

#### Lesson #25:

*Given that many humanitarian entrants seek to enter the workplace as soon as possible after arrival, it is important to have flexible delivery models for AMEP so that those who enter the workforce will not be denied the possibility of learning English.*

The better educated entrants tend to be more pragmatic and philosophical. They recognise that they will need to build on their qualifications and that it will take time before they can secure full-time work. Once they completed their AMEP course, most went on to further study and in some cases, combined this with part-time work.

The Togolese women are also very keen to secure employment (driven by the same imperative as the men to earn money for remittances) but as previously mentioned, their English is not nearly as advanced as that of the men and most are unskilled. Two of the women are also much older than the rest of the group and several others have infants and young children. These women will therefore face additional barriers. With the exception of a couple of women who have skills and are engaged in vocational study, most of the women will need considerable support if they are to enter the workforce.

The younger adults, both men and women, seem to be very excited about the prospects of being able to study and the fact that employment possibilities denied to them when in camps are now opening up. Their only concern is the cost of tertiary education.

Employment facilitation for the Togolese is the responsibility of the Job Network providers who are still in the process of learning about working with humanitarian entrants. One of the things they have already learnt is that the entrants are far from being a homogeneous group and thus respond better to individual support than group sessions.

#### Lesson #26:

*Specialised employment support for humanitarian entrants is required to prepare them for the Australian workplace, assist them to find employment and educate employers about their needs.*

Mention has been made of some of the negative aspects of the link between the project’s subcommittees and the Council’s Migrant Attraction and Retention Population Strategy (MARS) Committees. However, one positive outcome identified is the presence of key people from

commerce and industry in these committees. People potentially able to play an important facilitating role in terms of the entrants' access to the workplace were thus exposed to much more information about the Togolese project than otherwise would have been the case.

#### 4.7.9. School Education

In 2005 there were barely any English as a Second Language (ESL) students in Ballarat schools. In 2006, the Sudanese families started to arrive, as did a small number of Chinese families who were in Australia on temporary work visas.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, by the time the Togolese regional settlement project was being discussed, schools in Ballarat were already on their way to setting up new structures to accommodate students who needed language support and these have been evolving ever since.

The first ESL program was set up in early 2006 at Macarthur Street Primary School, a school close to the centre of town that had unallocated classrooms. There was an expectation that it would be an interim arrangement, with the program moving elsewhere when new classrooms were constructed. During this initial period, the ESL program was run quite separately to Macarthur Street Primary, with staff employed externally and students brought into the school from their home schools twice a week.

A review at the end of the trial period identified that the "visitation model" was disruptive and did not allow the students to make connections with either their home school or their ESL classmates. Further, having older students (up to 16 years old) at Macarthur Street Primary was not in the best interests of the ordinary students at the school. The review recommended that:

- secondary school age students be integrated into a high school where they would receive ESL support;<sup>40</sup>
- a specialist ESL centre be established for primary students.

Grouping the new arrivals together has had two immediate benefits. It has enabled:

- resources to be pooled so that the schools have been able to set up viable programs;
- the students to become members of their school community.

The two government secondary schools in which ESL students are currently enrolled are Berkley Street and Sebastopol High Schools. Students receive six sessions of ESL instruction each week and spend the rest of their time in classes with their peers.

Macarthur Street Primary School was identified as the school for the specialist ESL centre. In the last couple of years, it has undergone a significant shift in character from a small largely monocultural school to a school in which 17 of its 95 students are from non-English speaking backgrounds.<sup>41</sup> These students are predominantly but not exclusively from Togo and Sudan.

The school now has five staff employed with ESL funding:<sup>42</sup>

- two teachers at 0.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) to provide intensive ESL instruction for students in their first 12 months in Australia;

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<sup>39</sup> Visa subclass 457.

<sup>40</sup> Contrary to the recommendation of the review that just one high school be used, two schools now accept ESL students.

<sup>41</sup> The Principal stressed that this is possibly close to the maximum number of ESL students the school can support. If there is a significant increase in the number of ESL students in Ballarat, it will be necessary to establish a second ESL centre.

<sup>42</sup> Funding is from the (Victorian) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

- two 0.6 FTE teachers who visit schools where students have completed the ESL program after 12 months and moved on to other schools;
- one multicultural education aid who works with ESL students on an as-needs basis.

The students' time is divided between ESL classes and classes with their age peers. Drawing on lessons learnt during the trial period, there is a strong focus on combining ESL and mainstream students, as soon as possible, for art, music and sport and then gradually integrating them for other lessons.

The teachers of Macarthur Street Primary School acknowledge they have been on a steep learning curve. The Principal reflects, in hindsight, that more intensive staff training before the students enrolled would have been of great benefit. He says he would also have set up links much sooner between the school and Foundation House.

The African ESL students at Macarthur Street Primary have proved to be “very needy”. It is said of them that they have “an insatiable hunger for food, knowledge, teachers and experiences ... They find it difficult to delay gratification and are reluctant to share”. In other words, they have been exhibiting behaviour typical of children who have had limited experience within a structured environment and have been exposed to long periods of deprivation. Hence the necessity of teachers and support staff to set boundaries and model constructive behaviour patterns. They have also been required, on occasions, to support students whose frustration has boiled over and led them to lash out: “There are times it feels like two steps forward and one back but we are moving in the right direction”.<sup>43</sup>

The Togolese students vary significantly in their ability and in the speed with which they have adapted to school life. As would be expected, there are direct parallels between the children's approach to learning and the educational background of their parents.

A considerable amount of effort has gone into working with both the mainstream and ESL students at each of the schools to build connections and establish a whole of school culture. By and large, the other students have been very accepting of the newcomers, with sport seen as a good way to break down barriers and build mutual understanding and trust. Predictably there have been some “incidents” but none deemed serious and the schools have been vigilant to quash any signs of racist behaviour.

Many feel that the schools would have experienced greater difficulty if not for the appointment of a Transition and Community Liaison Officer by the Department of Education. This person performs a multitude of tasks including, *inter alia*:

- organising professional development for teachers;
- helping to enrol students;
- educating parents about Australian schools and what is expected of parents;
- acting as a liaison person between parents and the schools,
- acting as liaison officer between schools and between schools and the Department of Education;
- ensuring entrants get their entitlements (such as bus passes);
- providing advice to teachers and parents about constructive ways to discipline children; and
- keeping a watchful eye on family dynamics.

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<sup>43</sup> Quote from interview with Transition and Community Liaison Officer.

#### Lesson #27:

*Having a dedicated and experienced Transition and Community Liaison Officer within the school system significantly contributes to the entrants' ease of transition into the system and the schools' capacity to respond to their needs.*

Before leaving the subject of education, it is important to note that one of the Togolese students has been awarded a full scholarship to the most prestigious private school in Ballarat. This covers tuition, uniforms, textbooks and excursions for six years. At the time of the evaluation, there was a suggestion that a second scholarship might be awarded.

#### Lesson #28:

*The personal connections and sense of community one finds in regional centres can sometimes result in extraordinary acts of generosity towards the humanitarian entrants.*

### **4.7.10. Transport**

Ballarat is by far the most populous of the regional settlement project sites and it also has sprawling suburbs covering a large area. While it has excellent links to Melbourne, it suffers the lot of most regional centres when it comes to public transport at the local level. Bus routes radiate from the railway station and go in most directions but services are infrequent (most are hourly) and not coordinated. It can take an hour and a half to make a cross-town journey by bus that could be done in 10 minutes by car. It was largely because of this that the decision was made to find accommodation for the entrants within walking distance of the central business district.

At the time of the evaluation, BRMC was in the process of trying to set up a bicycle project. They managed to obtain 28 bicycles but had not yet been able to identify a pool of suitable volunteers who could manage the bicycle training which they felt should precede distribution.

A number of the men indicated they were very keen to get driver's licences and seemed frustrated that they had to sit for a test, especially those who had been taxi drivers before coming to Australia. As in many aspects of their life, they are clearly impatient about anything that seems to get in their way of reclaiming their lives as quickly as possible.

They indicated that they would like BRMC to organise a driver education program to help them pass their test but this has not eventuated.

#### Lesson #29:

*Driving is both an important part of regaining independence and an area accompanied by considerable risk. It is therefore important that entrants can access driver education that both assists them to prepare for their driving test and alerts them to all the things they need to know about owning and running a car (registration, insurance etc).*

### **4.7.11. Law and Order**

A representative from Victoria Police participated in some of the planning meetings of the CH-RSPC and, since the arrival of the Togolese, has maintained contact with BRMC.

One orientation session was organised at the local police station so that the Togolese entrants could learn about police in Australia and relevant laws. The Togolese have also participated in a number of other activities organised by the police and/or involving police officers. These have included:

- schools session run by the Youth Resource Officer;
- the Youth Bus; and

- police involvement in local soccer clubs.

The police have been very impressed with the reaction of the local community to the arrival of the Africans (Sudanese and Togolese). They are aware of a few isolated incidents of racism but do not believe that this is a widespread problem. They are also impressed by the fact that the Sudanese seem to have been very accepting of the Togolese entrants and are not aware of any problems between the two communities.

Nevertheless, one issue that has come to the attention of police and is of concern to service providers is the tension evident within some of the entrant families. The resettlement process is enormously stressful and specialist support is required to assist entrants understand how this will affect them and to give them a range of strategies for managing in their new environment.

Recommendation #6:

*That DIAC provide information to the planning committee and relevant agencies about programs addressing cultural transition and interpersonal relations within families<sup>44</sup> with a view to using these as models for support programs in Ballarat.*

#### **4.7.12. Family Reunification**

In both of the group consultations with the Togolese entrants, particularly that with the women, the issue of family reunification loomed large. The women seemed reluctant to talk about health care, education or anything else. They just wanted the researcher to understand how worried they were about family members still in camps in Ghana and Benin and how terrible the conditions in these camps are. They were very emotional when speaking about their families and it became apparent that three things had contributed to this:

- The Togolese believe they were told before they came to Australia that many more Togolese would follow. They have now realised that this is unlikely to happen;
- They interpreted the fact that they were encouraged to put down the names of relatives on their applications as meaning that these people would be given visas to come to Australia. They spoke of this as a “trick” to make them come and leave others behind;
- One of the families had close links to a family that was due to come to Ballarat in January 2008 but the Department of Immigration was unable to get confirmation from service providers that they were able to accept the family.<sup>45</sup> The family was therefore sent to Perth.<sup>46</sup> This had a profound impact on the linked family and significant flow-on effects to others in the community.

Clearly, the Togolese feel angry and believe that they have been misled.

BRMC has tried to assist the entrants by bringing a migration agent from Geelong on a sessional basis to advise them about their options to propose family members under the Special Humanitarian Program. Nonetheless, this seems to have made things worse. The agent’s attempts to explain that this is not a straightforward process and that there is no guarantee of success appear to have contributed to the entrants’ anger.

<sup>44</sup> Including the STARTTS Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program.

<sup>45</sup> The problems can be linked to a failure to establish clear lines of authority while key people were on leave.

<sup>46</sup> The Department of Immigration advised that another factor influencing the decision to send the family in question to Perth was the identification, late in the process, that this family had links to three other families who had been assessed as unsuitable for regional settlement. This created a situation in which no matter what choice was made, the family would be separated from other families to whom they had links. Because of the short travel timeframe and high needs of the families, the Department needed to make a decision quickly. The fact that key stakeholders in Ballarat were on leave meant that the decision was made without the level of input that would ideally have been sought.

This issue is clearly affecting the entrants in many ways. Several spoke about not being able to sleep or to concentrate on their studies because they were so worried. According to them, “It disturbs our brains.” All spoke about making sacrifices (like heating) because they had to send every spare cent overseas. Many of the men were clearly frustrated that it was taking them time to learn English because they were driven by an imperative to move on and earn as much money as they can.

Recommendation #7:

*That relevant areas within DIAC, in particular the offshore program management staff, if possible together with a representative from UNHCR, consider options for meeting with the Togolese entrants to listen to their concerns about the safety of refugees in the camps in Ghana and Benin and provide them with authoritative information about prospects for resettlement of Togolese refugees.*

### **4.7.13. Preparation of the Host Community**

Frequent reference was made to the lessons learnt from the Shepparton pilot. Some stakeholders felt the lead up to the arrival of the Togolese was managed very well. Good connections between the then Chair of the CH-RSPC and the press meant that a number of articles appeared in the local paper (an example of these is included as Appendix 4)<sup>47</sup> and stories were run on local television and radio. These were followed up with more stories about the Togolese such as that included at Appendix 5. Other stories were run to coincide with Refugee Week, activities at the school and similar events and about the contributions some of the Togolese are making to the community.

On the other hand, some people reflect that the level of publicity generated unrealistic expectations from sections of the community about engagement with the Togolese entrants. As will be discussed in Section 4.7.16, there was not a structured volunteer program for people to join and so a number of locals “did their own thing”. Some of this was very constructive but by no means all.

This being said, everyone seems to agree that the local community has been very accepting of the refugees from Togo, as well as the Sudanese who preceded them.

One lesson from the Shepparton report that was not heeded related to preparing the local indigenous community. As these settlement projects are all about inviting new people into the community, it is respectful for those issuing the invitation to advise the local indigenous elders, as custodians of the land, about the background to the project and who would be coming. It is also important to ensure that their community is aware of the background of the other “black people” they will see in town.

Recommendation #8:

*That in the spirit of the Prime Minister’s apology to indigenous Australians, those responsible for the planning of any new regional settlement initiative ensure local indigenous elders are informed about the project and that their endorsement is sought. It is also important that indigenous elders be encouraged to help disseminate information about the settlement initiative to the members of their community. This could help to minimise the potential for misunderstandings and resentments, especially around the eligibility of benefits.*

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<sup>47</sup> With only one exception, the stories in the press were positive. One negative story appeared in the local paper early in the pilot and the then Chair of BRMC and the CH-RSPC lodged a complaint that resulted in the reassignment of the journalist and an agreement that all subsequent articles should be cleared with BRMC prior to going to print.



#### **4.7.14. Links to Faith Communities**

Faith is very important to most if not all the entrants. Christianity is not just something they express at church on Sundays; they carry it with them at all times and it defines who they are. Linking them into appropriate faith communities was thus very important.

In Shepparton, the steering committee included a member who took responsibility for advising clerics and other faith leaders about the refugees' arrival and providing information about the best ways they and their congregations could become involved. By contrast, it would appear that there was little prior preparation in Ballarat. There appeared to be an expectation that the entrants would worship in a particular church, irrespective of their denomination, and this caused considerable tension.

Entrants who wanted to worship elsewhere felt as if they were being "ungrateful to their hosts". Tensions were also felt when those who moved away from this church thought they were not able to access material support (clothing, homewares) distributed through this congregation (discussed further at 4.7.16 – Volunteers and Donations). Entrants also experienced difficulties in making initial links with other congregations as other churches had not been informed of their arrival.

##### Lesson #30:

*Leaders of the various faith communities in a new settlement location should be advised that refugees will be coming into the community and given information about the project. Further, these leaders should be encouraged to educate their congregations about the entrants and steer those who want to become involved towards established volunteer structures.*

##### Lesson #31:

*Entrants must be allowed to either practise the religion of their choice or decide not to worship, and be supported to make links to an appropriate faith community. Entrants who choose not to join a faith community should not be disadvantaged in terms of their access to support.*

#### **4.7.15. Recreation and Other Activities**

An important aspect of the settlement process for any new entrant is to make links with the wider community. One of the best ways for the entrant to do this is to participate in activities that enable them to meet people and share experiences. As outlined in Section 4.7.13, being part of a faith community is one way to do this but by no means the only way.

Sport is a good avenue through which the men and younger entrants can meet others. One of the entrants played soccer at a representative level in Togo and thus was a welcome addition to the local team. Another is a very promising runner. BRMC has signed an agreement with the Football Federation of Victoria that will see them run coaching clinics and information sessions for the Togolese and other refugee communities. In addition, BRMC has linked ten of the children to volunteers who take them swimming.

Meanwhile, some of the women took part in an interesting project. During a placement with Ballarat Community Health Centre, a final year student at the University of Ballarat developed the idea of producing a cookbook featuring recipes from Togo. Supported by the Refugee Health Nurse, she worked with the women (one in particular) to learn about and document their favourite recipes. These were then compiled into a colourful book that is being sold by various shops in Ballarat. The proceeds from these sales are going to support projects within the Togolese community. Another useful spin off for the entrants is that because of the project, a local food supplier agreed to stock a number of the specialist ingredients so the Togolese no longer have to travel to Melbourne to buy them.

BRMC is well known in Ballarat for organising cultural festivals and events and the Togolese have been encouraged to participate in these. Particular reference was made to the Christmas Party and Australia Day celebrations.

Lesson #32:

*It is important to help entrants identify activities of interest to them and facilitate their participation in these so that they can engage in productive recreational pursuits and mix with members of the local community.*

#### **4.7.16. Volunteers and Donations**

Because of the use of the Community Guide Model (see Section 4.7.1), BRMC has not specifically recruited volunteers for the project. This being said, existing members of the Refugee Settlement Support Network did a great deal of work to prepare the rented houses for the arrival of the entrants, cleaning them thoroughly and ensuring they were welcoming.

While BRMC might not have had a formal volunteer program, it would appear that a number of people became involved with the entrants, either individually or as part of a group such as a church fellowship. When such things happen, there is a real danger that lack of training and coordination can cause significant problems for the entrants and the workers and lead to the volunteers becoming frustrated and disillusioned.

Lesson #33:

*Successful management of volunteers is dependent on ensuring that there is well- designed and well-managed volunteer support program in place before entrants arrive and securing the cooperation of key people/agencies to ensure that anyone wanting to help links to this program.*

BRMC did not seek donations of goods or clothing from the public. Instead they relied on local charities (such as Uniting Care), with distribution coordinated by the Church of Christ. As previously mentioned, some of the entrants feel that access to donated goods is conditional on their attendance at the particular church and feel that their decision to worship elsewhere means they can no longer ask for support.

## 5. The Experience of the Entrants

When the consultations with the Togolese entrants began, they were very anxious to speak about how grateful they are to be in Australia and how they “thank Australia and God” for the chance to get away from the camps.

They spoke with gratitude about the generosity that has been shown by the local community and various individuals recounted instances in which:

- a totally unexpected birthday present was received;
- a stranger stopped to give one of the women a lift when she was walking home with heavy shopping;
- a bus driver, after realising one of the Togolese children had alighted at the wrong stop, went back to pick him up and take him to the correct destination; and
- the parents of a newborn baby received all the equipment they needed from community supporters.

“Not a day when we do not have a visitor that gives us something,”<sup>48</sup> said one of the women. When asked whether this bothered them in any way, the women were quick to disabuse this notion.

Beyond the gratitude and the natural reticence to be too critical to their hosts, one does, however, get the sense that the entrants have not had an easy time. There are many elements to this:

- None of the entrants seemed to be aware that they were going to be sent to Ballarat before they actually arrived. They thought they were going to Melbourne and got quite a shock when they discovered this was not to be the case. While in the total scheme of things, this does not appear to have caused them too much distress, it did set up a dynamic of being suspicious about what they were being told and not being entirely sure they could trust what people said to them.
- As previously mentioned, the entrants are very anxious to be reunited with family members and to be linked up with other Togolese. After the first four families arrived, however, there was a lengthy gap before the next families came. The entrants in Ballarat at the time became increasingly anxious during this time that no more families would come. Their anxiety was heightened when the then Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews, made negative comments about the settlement capacity of African refugees.<sup>49</sup> This was interpreted by some to mean that no more visas would be issued. This distressed the Togolese greatly and further undermined their willingness to trust people because, after all, they had been told that at least ten families would come but then “the man in charge said that no more Africans would come”.
- After the Minister’s comments, they had to wait for almost two months for confirmation that more Togolese would actually be coming to Ballarat. Four more families came in late November and early December 2007. This eased the situation a little but not for long. The next family that was due to arrive had close links to a family already in Ballarat. As mentioned earlier, the Department of Immigration was unable to receive confirmation from service providers in Ballarat during the holiday period that they were ready to support this family. As a consequence, the family was sent to Perth. The linked family in Ballarat was very distressed and angry about this and their emotion has clearly been transferred to others in the group. The group sees themselves as isolated from their community. The

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<sup>48</sup> Comments in quotation marks in this section are the entrants’ own words.

<sup>49</sup> These comments were made in October 2007, at which point it was over three months since the last arrival.

presence of a larger Togolese community in Perth, together with the perception that work is plentiful there<sup>50</sup> and the climate more tolerable, seems to have convinced them that “Perth is so much better”.

- In an unfortunate twist of fate, the changes at BRMC occurred at roughly the same time as the hiatus in arrival and the Minister’s comments. In a relatively short space of time the IHSS Caseworker, whom the entrants had come to know and rely upon, left Ballarat. A new person took over for a brief period of time and then a third person assumed the role. At the same time, other people they knew within BRMC had also left only to be replaced by people they did not know.
- As each new Caseworker came on the scene, the entrants compared them to the last. They did things differently and more recently, appear to have limited the amount of support to the entrants. Entrants were not entirely convinced that each of the new Caseworkers knew what they were doing and that they were giving the right advice. They also felt that their Caseworker was not available when needed: “He is only there two days a week. It is not enough”.
- During the consultations it became clear that the entrants are still fairly confused about a number of things – why schools are asking them to do certain things, where you get information about courses, how you sign up for certain entitlements etc - and they are not sure who to ask and who to trust.
- The changes within BRMC appear to have made another impact on the entrants. Entrants feel they have been differentially favoured by the old and new staffing regimes. The resultant dynamics within the community have not been positive, fuelling the potential for division within a small group of people from such diverse backgrounds. As a result, there are now significant rifts within the Togolese community.
- The divisions within the group (and tensions within families) have been exacerbated by the high level of past trauma and the complexity of the family structures<sup>51</sup>
- BRMC assisted some of the entrants to set up a Togolese Association but this organisation is not representative of the group as a whole.
- Some of the adults say they now actively avoid contact with the others. It would seem that some of the tensions extend to the children as it was reported that Togolese children have been seen walking separately to school.
- As previously mentioned, the Togolese are very impatient to reclaim their lives (to get jobs, make money, buy a house) and they want everything immediately. They are also adamant that they are not refugees.<sup>52</sup> Being a refugee is equated to being powerless and without a future. It might be drawing a long bow but one could speculate about whether their insistence that they are not refugees is being used to mask their ongoing uncertainties about how to interact with their new environment and what their future holds.

The fact that things have not gone smoothly in Ballarat has clearly had a profound impact on the entrants and caused them considerable frustration. Many say that they are thinking of moving elsewhere, probably to Perth. If they are unable to secure employment when they finish their English classes and/or other training, it is possible they will.

In considering the response of the entrants, however, it is necessary to be mindful of the fact that it is typical for refugees to embark upon an emotional roller-coaster when they arrive in Australia. Initially they tend to be very excited about having escaped from the uncertainty and sometimes danger of their life in the country of first asylum. They see Australia as a land of plenty and believe their lives will be better, richer and more fulfilled. This time in the entrants’ lives is often referred to

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<sup>50</sup> It would appear that the Sudanese in Ballarat share (possibly have even perpetuated) this view.

<sup>51</sup> It was reported that a number of families have complex blended structures.

<sup>52</sup> It is for this reason that an effort was made to avoid calling them “Togolese refugees” in this report and to refer to them as “the Togolese” or “the entrants”.

as the “honeymoon period”. Some weeks or months after arrival, they begin to realise that their new life is not as easy as they thought it might be. Everything around them is strange and challenging. It will take time to learn English and their qualifications are not recognised. Whatever status they did have has slipped away and they cannot see a way to reclaim this.

It is thus very difficult to establish, in the context of the research undertaken for this evaluation, whether the frustration exhibited by the entrants is a result of their experiences in Ballarat, part of the normal adjustment process, or a combination of both. Irrespective of the cause, however, it is apparent that additional work is required if the entrants are to move beyond the “crash period” and towards integration.

*Recommendation # 9:*

*That DIAC, together with AMES, meet with the entrants to talk about their particular situation and try to identify strategies to ameliorate some of the problems that have developed.*

## 6. The Future

It is not possible to make definitive recommendations about the future of Ballarat as a site for regional humanitarian settlement. There are definitely many things in Ballarat's favour including, *inter alia*:

- A dedicated group of professionals who have been working together under the auspices of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee. They have exhibited great passion and commitment during the project and have a strong desire to see more humanitarian entrants come to Ballarat;
- Affordable housing – something that is in short supply in most major centres;
- Good infrastructure, especially in the areas of AMEP instruction, education and health;
- People in many of the key service delivery positions who have acquired valuable skills in working with humanitarian entrants;
- A very welcoming element within the community who have reached out to the entrants;
- Its proximity and ease of access to Melbourne so that anyone who wants to partake of things not offered in a smaller centre can “simply hop on a train”.

These have to be weighed up against another set of factors including:

- The winter climate. This is something about which many of the locals complain and to which the Togolese have not adapted. It is clearly not an ideal destination for people accustomed to a tropical climate;
- The drought. One should ask whether it is responsible to be advocating that more people be sent to a city whose water supply is currently at 14% of capacity and which has had another dry winter;
- Employment prospects. While many seem confident that the Togolese will be able to find employment in Ballarat, this has yet to be proven. The unemployment rate in Ballarat is significantly higher than the state average and humanitarian entrants do start from a position of disadvantage when competing for jobs;
- The capacity of Centrelink to support newly arrived refugees – noting that unless Centrelink reverses its decision to abolish the designated position of Multicultural Officer, an important component in the settlement service delivery matrix is not as robust as it should be;
- The key stakeholders – whether it will be possible to recapture the level of enthusiasm and commitment from the Council, service providers and the community that existed when the project began.

Possibly the most significant issue, however, in determining the future of Ballarat from the regional humanitarian settlement perspective is its capacity to deliver the crucial DIAC funded settlement services. The implementation of the model that has been adopted for the delivery of these services encountered some localised challenges and has clearly not met the needs of the current cohort of entrants.

### Recommendation #10:

*That DIAC closely examine the delivery of IHSS and SGP services in Ballarat with a view to determining the sustainability of the model and the extent to which DIAC Service Principles have been implemented.*

While key stakeholders in Ballarat are very keen to see more humanitarian entrants come to their city, they are mindful that significant changes in service delivery must precede any decision about future settlement.

Finally, there is the issue of whether other towns in the region would be suitable for humanitarian settlement. As its name would suggest, it was originally intended that the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee would have a brief that extended beyond Ballarat and into other regional cities such as Horsham and Ararat, and would include developing stronger ties with Bendigo. When the project commenced, however, the Committee was preoccupied with the challenges of building a new settlement program. Then, as the year progressed, there was little energy to deal with anything other than the issues at hand. Consequently, no attention of any substance was given to developing regional networks or considering the capacity of other sites to support regional humanitarian settlement. It is, therefore, not possible to make any findings in relation to this.

## 7. Acknowledgements

In closing, it is important to acknowledge the contributions made to this evaluation by many people. Particular thanks go to:

- Peter Marshall and Ann Kemeny from DIAC's Melbourne Office;
- state and local government representatives;
- current and past members of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee; and
- the other service providers in Ballarat.

Each, in their own way, provided invaluable insights and perspectives.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Togolese entrants who spoke about their lives in Ballarat and the things that concern them. I am acutely aware that some of these discussions touched upon painful memories and unearthed fears and anxieties about their futures. I am also mindful of the collective responsibility we have to ensure that everything possible is done to overcome the challenges they have hitherto faced and ensure they are well supported into the future.



**STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED:**

**1. *DIAC Central Office***

NAME	POSITION
Sophie Montgomery	Director Settlement Planning and Information
Michael Kreskas	Assistant Director Settlement Planning and Information

**2. *DIAC Melbourne Office***

NAME	POSITION
Ann Kemeny	Manager Humanitarian Settlement
Peter Marshall	Contract Manager Humanitarian Settlement Section

**3. *Victorian State Government Representatives***

NAME <sup>53</sup>	POSITION/AGENCY
Andrew Waugh-Young	Policy Officer <b>Victorian Multicultural Commission</b>
Nick Chiam	Manager Strategic Policy <b>Department of Planning and Community Development</b>
Barbara Hahs	Client Manager Employment <b>Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development</b>

<sup>53</sup> A number of these people are or have been members of the Settlement Planning Committee.

Graeme Blore	Rural and Regional Coordinator <b>Department of Human Services</b>
Tom Niederle	Manager Public Health Grampians Region <b>Department of Human Services</b>

**4. Local Government Representative**

NAME	POSITION/AGENCY
Narelle Hibbert	Executive Officer Ballarat Migration Project <b>City of Ballarat</b>

**5. IHSS Provider and Subcontractor**

NAME	POSITION/AGENCY
Ramesh Kumar	Manager Settlement Services <b>AMES</b>
Susan Chou Allender	General Manager Settlement
Mirta Sapoja	Rural Team Leader
Therese Meehan	<b>Foundation House</b>
Frank Williams	Chairman <b>Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC)</b>
Litsa Chung	Team Leader (Settlement) and SGP Worker <b>BRMC</b>
James Abraham	IHSS Coordinator
George Fong	Former BRMC Chairman
Barbara Fong	Former BRMC Manager

## 6. *Members of the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee*

NAME	POSITION/AGENCY
Robyn Reeves	Chair CH-RSPC <sup>54</sup>  Coordinator <b>Ballarat Community Health Centre</b>
Paul Ford	Formerly Multicultural Services Officer <b>Centrelink</b> Ballarat
Karen Werner	Refugee Health Nurse
Lorraine Yeomans  Les Hood ) Deb Sharrard )	Head Department of Humanities and Further Education School of Human Services <b>University of Ballarat</b>  AMEP Teachers
Effie Litras	Regional ESL & Multicultural Project Officer <b>DEECD - Grampians Region</b>
Tracey Wilson	Manager Population Health and Strategic Planning <b>Ballarat Health Services</b>

## 7. *Entrants*

Three face-to-face consultations and one telephone interview were conducted with the Togolese entrants. In all, 21 Togolese were interviewed (12 women and 9 men). Of these, two would be classified as “youth”, the rest were adults.

<sup>54</sup>

Since the consultations were held the Chair of CH-RSPC has transferred to Effie Litras.

## 8. *Other Key Stakeholders*

NAME	AGENCY/AFFILIATION
Brad Dixon	Senior Sergeant Regional Training Officer Ballarat HQ <b>Victoria Police</b>
Richard Elsworthy	<b>Direct Recruitment</b>
Andy Backwell	Principal <b>Macarthur Street Primary School</b>
Ivana Janousek	Transition and Community Liaison Worker <b>DEECD</b>
Sue Van Styn	Coordinator <b>Maternal and Child Health Service</b>

## 9. *Local People*

Two members of the local community were asked for their own opinions about the entrants and about any views expressed to them by members of the local community.

**BALLARAT REFUGEE SETTLEMENT PILOT PROGRAM: PLANNING COMMITTEES**

**Ballarat Migration Project**

START YOUR FUTURE HERE | Live and Work in the Ballarat Region



**Ballarat  
Refugee Settlement Pilot Program**

**Compiled on behalf of the  
Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee**

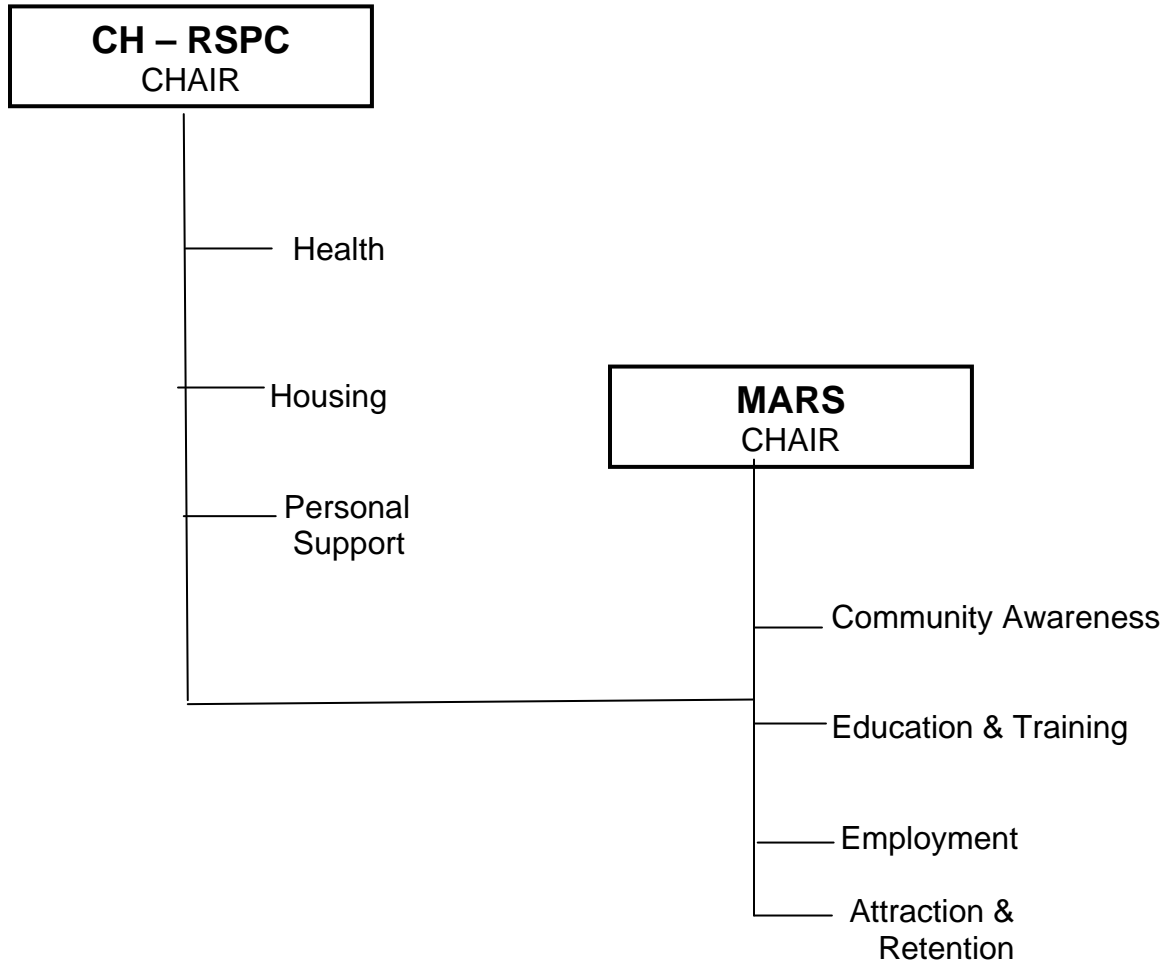
Preparation of Committees  
February 2007

## **OVERVIEW**

The City of Ballarat coordinates a number of Committees for MARS. These Committees have expanded their brief to incorporate the Refugee Settlement Program.

Three new committees have also been established in response to the specific needs of the refugees.

All committees have met to define their role in relation to the Refugee Settlement Program and identify a checklist to action prior to (or close to) the first arrivals.



*All committees are coordinated and resourced by the Ballarat Migration Project. Independent Chairs represent committees on CH – RSPC or MARS. The Executive Officer of the Ballarat Migration Project attends all meetings.*

### **Attraction and Retention Committee**

Role of the Committee:

- Link closely with the Community Awareness Committee
- Increase retention of refugees
- Attract sponsorship of the others/family members

- Link with Housing Committee regarding cultural influence in housing of refugees
- Has a strategic, long term focus rather than immediate challenges (other committees' feedback, long term issues to Attraction & Retention Committee)

#### Attraction & Retention Issues Identified:

- Less focus on attraction, initially more retention
- Prevent settle and move on
- Colac and Warrnambool experience – learn from their experience
- Facilitate empowerment for refugees to say “I choose to be in Ballarat”

#### Process & Actions:

- Long term planning beyond first 10 families
- Develop retention policies (i.e. funding resources) to be lobbied by the CH-RSPC to all levels of government
- “Zero Tolerance”. Broader strategic planning regarding racism and cultural diversity awareness (i.e. legal consequences)
- Question two or three families arriving first so they can support each other in initial settlement
- Identify other cultures with which the new arrivals could form links (i.e. Sudanese)
- Research and produce recommendations regarding location within the Ballarat Community (spread out or close together) and identify broader issues such as education and transport opportunities

### **Education & Training Committee**

#### Role of the Committee:

- Identify education pathway for all family members
- Priority on language development for adults/school leavers
- Further education/training opportunities
- Establish links with employment goals of individual refugees

#### Education & Training Issues Identified:

- English
- Literacy in own language
- Mentoring support
- Value previous education and goals even though engagement in language training is not essential
- Wife/mother engagement in language training is essential

#### Process & Actions:

- Compile list of all English language classes
- Identify gaps – type, time, flexibility of classes
- Form partnerships with training providers to meet the gaps
- Coordinate development of classes/programs to avoid duplication and ensure all gaps are filled
- Australian culture/lifestyle training for the refugees
- Ballarat culture training for the refugees
- Employment preparation training
- Individual plan for refugees – language, professional development, community connectedness/social link
- Assistance with “upgrading” overseas qualifications where applicable

## **Employment Committee**

### Role of the Committee:

- Identify employment opportunities/pathways for the refugees
- Educate employers on benefits of multiculturalism in the workplace
- Establish links with social, corporate conscious “Ballarat Cares”

### Employment Issues Identified:

- Unskilled
- Skilled but qualification not recognised
- Language
- Prejudice
- Reluctance of employers to experiment
- Health – physical, mental
- Part-time work experience
- Refugees understanding Australian workplace culture

### Process & Actions:

- Individual plan: Skills audit  
Qualification recognition  
Resume development  
Mentoring  
Reverse marketing  
Identify ongoing education & training needs
- Employer forums – benefits, challenges, support available
- Central coordination of reverse marketing/promotion to employers to prevent duplication of networks
- Identify funding opportunities (i.e. WPP) to develop a training/mentoring program for the refugees
- Present profiles to Committee of Ballarat and services clubs
- Identify potential Service Club Projects
- Employment preparation training

## **Community Awareness Committee**

### Role of the Committee:

- Educate the community via media opportunities and public presentations
- Increase community awareness and understanding
- Link with all other communities regarding specific issues
- Empower community to accept “Zero Tolerance” of discrimination

### Community Awareness Issues Identified:

- Increase/broaden membership of the committee
- Racial vilification in the workplace or as customers
- Target youth in particular
- Managing decent people and good will – identify and promote practical ways they can help

### Process & Actions:

- Develop generic presentation pack for various representatives to deliver
- Workshop with Shepparton – what worked?
- What community groups can do



- Presentation schedules for service clubs, schools, sporting clubs, senior citizens, churches, employer groups
- Media topics – profile skilled migrants, ambassadors, refugees, geography/culture; address the myths; understand the Sudanese experience
- Youth – guides, scouts, sporting clubs, youth groups, school leadership team
- Multicultural Ambassador Program – all ambassadors to include a standard slide as part of their personal presentation
- Suggest a personal story hook to the announcement of the settlement program

### **Food, Clothing & Personal Support Committee**

#### Role of the Committee:

- Provide and coordinate approach to services
- Think broader than pilot program – refugees sponsor families who may not be eligible for funding
- Broader focus of CH-RSPC on all new arrivals
- Identify potential partnerships with agencies
- Link with financial/emergency aid working group which is reforming

#### Personal Support Issues Identified:

- How much funding will be provided
- Identifying the gaps
- Managing the goodwill of the community
- Adequate heating: usage and payments
- Broad financial issues
- Volunteers to support paid staff

#### Process & Actions:

- Channel the community donations to the existing “op shops”
- Work with agencies to develop processes
- Special days or packages for the refugees to access goods
- Coordinate several information sessions about financial management and follow up
- Research method for collecting cash donation from individuals, schools and services clubs including guidelines/process for distributing funds
- How would BRMC respond to cash donations currently without something formal in place?
- Establish potential volunteer management via existing BRMC programs
- Food – What are the Sudanese doing to purchase their food items? – Can that process be extended to a new community, if African?

### **Health & Medical Committee**

#### Role of the Committee:

- Coordinating health services provision for a specific client group
- Information sharing
- Specific issues resolution
- Workshops for health provider staff
- Management/strategic focus
- Link with cultural services providers (network regarding more client based issues)
- Identify pathways for service provision
- Research/identify potential risk management strategies unique to the country of origin

#### Health & Medical Issues identified:

- Language/interpreters

- Understanding medication
- Cultural sensitivity (e.g. services for women)
- Medical diseases/conditions and potential lack of resources
- Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases
- Parasites
- Assessment and screening
- Community health – nutrition; allied health
- Children's health
- Torture and trauma
- Pharmacy
- Communication link between key providers
- Transport
- Training of Service Providers

#### Process & Actions:

- Circulate interpreter information to health providers when country of origin is advised
- Presentations to immediate/secondary groups
  - Division of GPs
  - Pharmacy sub-committee
  - Hospitals
  - Ambulance
  - District Nursing
  - Maternal and Child Health
  - Dental
  - School of Nursing
- Review DHS State of Readiness document
- Access resources on cultural sensitivity for the country of origin (i.e. Royal Women's Hospital)
- Division of GPs: identify GPs with specific interest in working with refugees
- Working group meeting with Shepparton health committee
- Facilitating linkages to Foundation House
- Open seminar on psychological/mental health issue
- Establish contact with Shepparton Division of GPs
- Research availability of GPs to provide medical assessment and care of refugee families
- Investigate whether (name deleted for the purpose of this report) is available to undertake secondary consultation in infectious diseases
- Investigate whether a network of pharmacists exists
- Investigate TB coverage for Ballarat
- Identify counsellors who can work with refugees
- Establish contact with Ballarat City Council Youth Services
- Dental health screening and services
- Ballarat Women's and Children's services
- Maternal and Child Health, Immunization
- Draft GP training program circulated

#### **Housing Committee**

##### Role of the Committee:

- To review housing options for the refugees
- To work with real estate agencies to identify and source suitable housing
- To identify locations that are close to schools and transport
- Collate information/statistics on rental availability

#### Housing Issues identified:

- Are we taking housing from local people?
- Convincing owners to participate:
  - Rent will be paid on time
  - Looking after property
  - Lifestyle influences such as cooking aromas
- If there is a problem, who do the agents contact?
- Current low vacancy rate – take what is available – limited choice on location
- Additional occupants beyond original lease

#### Process & Actions:

- Presentation to property managers group
- Lines of communication and support
- Identify locations that are close to public transport
- Generally need four bedroom homes for families with five children (\$220 – \$300)
- Three bedroom homes more readily available (\$200 – \$250)
- Process to identify available properties:
  - Email needs to (name deleted for the purpose of this report)
  - (Name deleted for the purpose of this report) emails property managers
  - Short list compiled for inspection
- Introductory letters as reference requirements
- Perhaps include garden maintenance in the rent

### Recommendations from the Evaluation of the Regional Settlement Pilot in Shepparton relevant to the formation and functioning of a Steering Committee and its Subcommittees.

1. That for each new regional settlement initiative, a Steering Committee be established and that:
  - a Chairperson be appointed on the basis that the person has the time and capacity to take an active oversight role, ensuring things remain on track;
  - the responsibility for acting as Committee Secretariat is designated to someone with the skills, time and resources to enable this important function to be handled efficiently;
  - both DIAC and the IHSS provider play an active role in the Steering Committee;
  - the role of the Steering Committee and the responsibilities of its members are clearly defined from the outset;
  - the Steering Committee be an active participant in formulation of the project objectives;
  - one key responsibility for the Steering Committee be identification of what resources will be needed to settle the entrants, where these can be sourced and what gaps exist;
  - the Committee's work commences with the development of a workplan that identifies tasks and provides outlines timelines and responsibilities;
  - implementation of the workplan be delegated to thematic subcommittees that report to the Steering Committee;
  - there be active and regular review of the workplan and reformulation where necessary;
  - all decisions are clearly documented; and
  - throughout, all parties are clear that the focus should be on meeting the needs of the entrants rather than creating neat structures.
  
5. That subcommittees be established to take on responsibility for the implementation of the tasks identified by the Steering Committee and that each of these subcommittees:
  - is chaired by someone with the skills, sectoral knowledge and local contacts to ensure that the role is performed competently and effectively;
  - is responsible for seeking out information about the entrants relevant to their area of responsibility (with DIAC's active assistance in this);
  - is responsible for identifying people with relevant expertise, both locally and in the nearest major centre;
  - develops its own workplan in which the tasks outlined in the broader workplan relevant to the subcommittee are further broken down into specific activities to which timelines and responsibilities are attached;
  - reports on progress to the Steering Committee; and
  - takes responsibility for making recommendations to the Steering Committee about any necessary changes in direction.
  
6. That those invited to join the Steering Committee and its subcommittees be carefully selected for the particular contribution they can make towards achieving the specific objectives of the Committee or subcommittees and that the following be borne in mind:

In recognition of the role of the Steering Committee as providing guidance and overall direction, and ensuring that things move forward smoothly, its numbers should be limited and it should be made up of:

- representatives of Commonwealth, state and local government of sufficient seniority to be able to make decisions, influence policy and facilitate access to funding;
- the IHSS manager;
- senior service providers in managerial roles;
- people who have excellent networks, including links to local volunteer or charitable groups;
- at least one person from within the community who commands wide public respect, is able to influence public opinion and who can, when required, act as a spokesperson; and
- someone with overall expertise in refugee settlement.

In recognition that Subcommittees are responsible for the implementation of the overall workplan, membership should be more inclusive and ideally comprise:

- at least one member of the Steering Committee to ensure efficient representation and information exchange;
- IHSS caseworkers;
- those who will be actively involved in implementation in the relevant sector; and
- where relevant (and especially in the case of the health subcommittee) someone with specific expertise working with refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Ballarat Courier: 09/03/2007

# Out of Africa

## Togolese refugees to call Ballarat home

BALLARAT is to become home to 10 refugee families from the troubled west African country of Togo.

The families will be brought to Australia from a refugee camp in neighbouring country, Ghana.

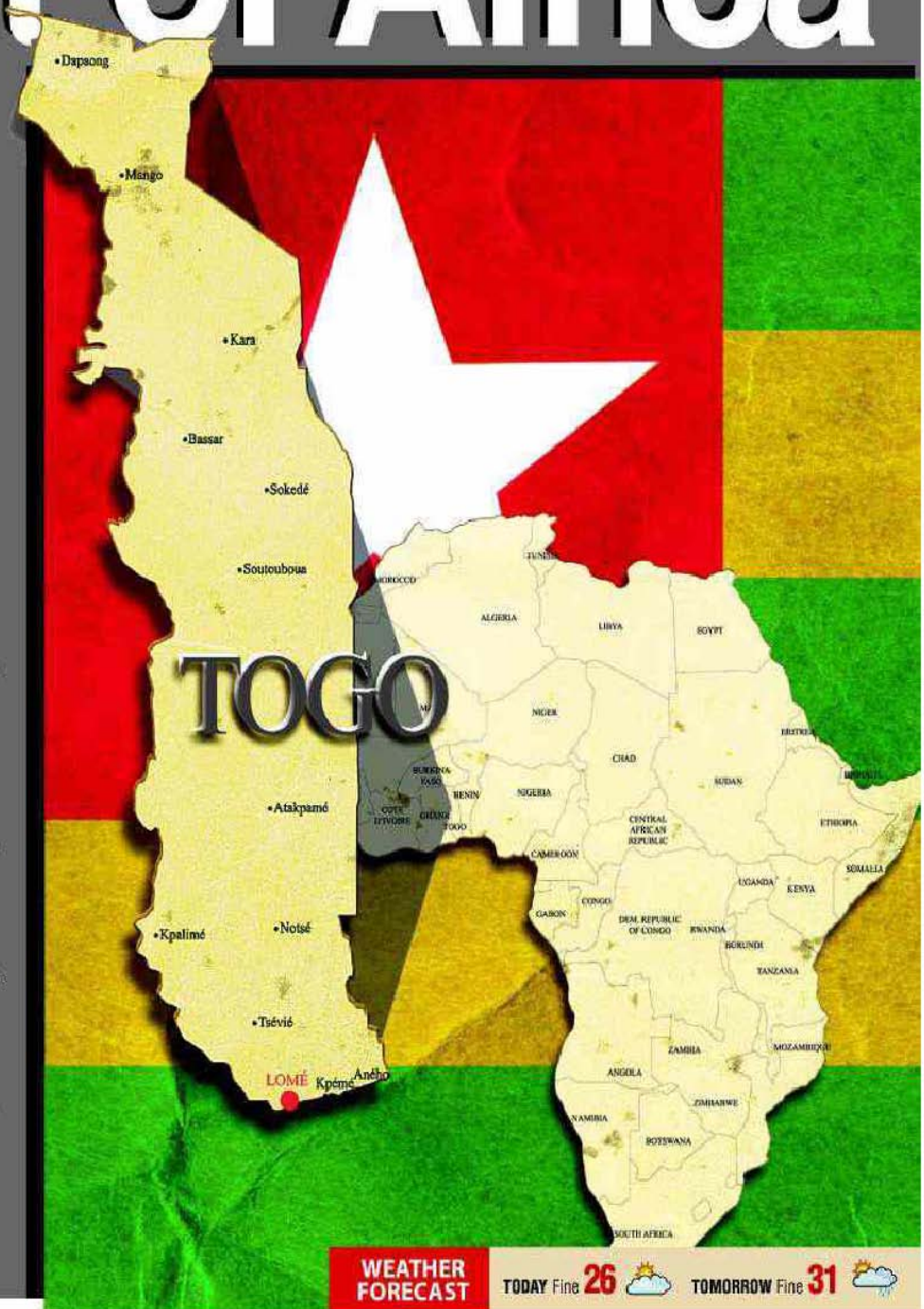
The announcement yesterday by chairman of the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, George Fong, follows a decision late last month by the City of Ballarat to approve the city's participation in the Federal Government's migrant settlement program.

In the early 1990s about 300,000 Togolese were displaced after clashes between security forces and opponents of then leader, Gnassingbe Eyadema.

Renewed violence in 2005 following Mr Eyadema's death and the installation of his son, Faure Gnassingbe, as the country's new president saw a further 40,000 flee Togo's borders.

Mr Fong said some of the refugees were believed to have spent up to a decade in a makeshift camp.

Full reports  
pages 4,5



WEATHER  
FORECAST

TODAY Fine 26



TOMORROW Fine 31



# City to become new home for 10 families

## Togolese to arrive by month's end: Fong

THE first of 10 Togolese families could arrive in Ballarat by late next month. Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council chairman George Fong said he had been advised the families had been processed by the Federal Government and issued with visas.

Mr Fong said the United Nations had placed the refugees into three categories: those able to return to Togo, those able to remain in the country to which they had fled and those who should be resettled in another country.

"In the case of the Togolese in the Krisan Camp in Ghana, the first two options are out," Mr Fong said.

"Many of these families have spent upwards of 10 years in the camps. Some of the families have children who have never seen life outside a refugee camp.

"Our understanding is that the families that have been identified by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship have a variety of backgrounds. We understand that they are likely to be French-speaking although the native language is Ewe and it is possible they will speak both.

"Many of them have some form of training, although they may not necessarily have completed that training.

"They are nuclear families so with a mother, father and children of between one and five in number and aged from infancy to 17, 18-years-old.

"We understand all those families have been processed by the Australian Federal Government and the remaining process includes the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee finishing off a comprehensive series of checklists."

Mr Fong said the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council had been chosen by Federal Government agency Australian Multicultural Education Services to bring the refugees to Australia and the final details of this contract were still being finalised. Ballarat Mayor David Vendy said the city had always been a caring and compassionate city.

# Life after Togo

Ballarat Courier - 17/09/2007



HOME: New residents include Komi Dzagba and his wife Josephine pictured with two of their five children Manasse and Eliezer, Lucien Assogba, front right, Richard Koffi, back left, and Kwami Assimadi

ELIEZER Dzagba took his first steps in Ballarat.

But not too long ago the one-year-old was surviving in a refugee camp in Benin with his parents Komi and Josephine and four siblings.

Mr and Mrs Dzagba, spent years in the camp after fleeing their native Togo, a small country in west Africa that has experienced political turmoil and become unsafe for many of its residents.

Now they are one of four Togolese families who have settled in Ballarat with the aid of the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, the Federal Government and the general community.

The Dzagba family arrived in May along with Lucien Assogba and his wife and three children, who had spent 14 years in a refugee camp in Ghana.

Mr Dzagba, an architect, said the family was enjoying Ballarat life and now considered the city home, although they found it a little cold at first.

Mr Assogba worked as a plumber and photographer in Togo and has now begun a plumbing apprenticeship in Ballarat.

In June two more families arrived from Ghana.

Teacher Kwami Assimadi and his wife, Claire Gbedey, have settled with their two children while mechanic Richard Koffi and his wife, Reine Sogo, have brought their only child.

The families are now studying English.