Students from new and emerging communities in the University environment require particular consideration with respect to service provision in order to ensure positive outcomes for those individuals. Moving to a new country is often a difficult and stressful experience, and this is particularly the case for humanitarian entrants who have experienced hardship and trauma.

**What can I say about myself and my own culture?**

New and emerging communities are ethnic communities that have experienced a significant percentage increase in the number of people arriving in Australia during recent years.

Larger, more established communities have developed significant community infrastructure over many years. This may include specialist ethno-specific support services, cultural organisations that provide a forum for sharing and supporting each other, aged care and youth programs. The situation is markedly different for new and emerging communities which:

- are small in number and newly arrived
- lack established family networks, support systems, community structure and resources
- can be more vulnerable than established communities if they are from a refugee background and have experienced displacement
- may comprise individuals with low levels of education and skill due to displacement
- may comprise individuals who do not have English language skills
- may comprise individuals who are unfamiliar with mainstream services that are available in Australia and are less likely to be able to locate services that can help them meet their basic needs
- tend not to have community infrastructure and organisations that can attract funding.

Adapted from FECCA New and Emerging Communities Policy Statement 2009.

Humanitarian entrants and new and emerging communities are often more visibly different in appearance and culture to more established migrant groups and this may work against their settlement.

There are three migration streams into Australia with different settlement needs:

- Humanitarian entrants.
- Family stream migrants.
- Skilled migrants.

The Humanitarian Program comprises two components: **offshore resettlement** for people in humanitarian need overseas; and **onshore protection** for those people already in Australia who arrived on temporary visas or in an unauthorised manner, and who claim Australia's protection. The Refugee Program targets people subject to persecution in their home country and in need of resettlement.

The range of ethnic communities requesting humanitarian entrance changes in line with international pressures and events. Recent/current applicants for humanitarian entrance will have different needs to those from previous times.

**New and emerging communities in Australia**

The top 10 countries of birth for humanitarian entrants in 2012-2013 for Australia were: Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Bhutan, Congo (DRC), Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Humanitarian entrants from Iraq comprised 32.5 per cent of all humanitarian entrants, with Burma comprising 19 per cent and Afghanistan with around 8 per cent (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2013).

The Department of Social Services provides useful **Community Profiles** to facilitate a better understanding of the backgrounds and needs of Humanitarian Program arrivals.
Successful settlement and education

Students from new and emerging communities face many challenges in Australia and which impact on their role as students. These challenges include:

- dislocation
- inevitable changes to extended family structures
- different kinds of housing
- different jobs and conditions
- being confronted with an array of cultures different to their former country.

Although the needs of new and emerging communities vary, they are generally concerned with:

- accommodation
- community development
- education and training
- employment
- English language skills
- family and relationships
- health
- legal and justice
- life skills
- social participation.

The successful settlement of new and emerging communities is dependent on the quality and level of support they receive and early intervention measures that are put into place to deal with the issues they may face. The supports and measures that exist within the university environment play a role in this overall settlement process and in positive academic outcomes for students from these communities.

This is particularly important for those who have experienced long periods of displacement and dislocation from their homes due to civil war and ongoing conflict. Some of these individuals have very low education and literacy levels, may have experienced torture and trauma, and have a fear and mistrust of government and authority. Taking such factors into account in interactions with these students and utilising the wide range of services available at Flinders will assist in this transition.

References


The University of Western Australia is the original author of this folio.