

Refugee Health and Wellbeing

A Policy and Action Plan for Queensland

SUMMARY REPORT 2017 - 2020



REFUGEE HEALTH
NETWORK QUEENSLAND

Acknowledgements

Our vision is that all refugees settling in Queensland have access to the right care, at the right time and in the right place, to ensure they have the best possible health and well being.



Refugee Health Network Queensland (the Network) would like to acknowledge and thank the individuals and organisations who make up its members. Without their shared commitment to working towards the actions outlined in the *Policy and Action Plan* this work would not be possible.

Members of the Mental Health, Oral Health, Interpreter, Policy and Evaluation Working Groups, the Refugee Community Advisory Group (G11) and the Clinical Advisory Group along with the Refugee Health Partnership Advisory Group Queensland have been instrumental in driving the actions in this plan.

Queensland Health have funded the Refugee Health Network Qld and provided support to enable this policy and action plan to be developed and implemented. Their ongoing leadership in this area and commitment to supporting refugee health and wellbeing is acknowledged and deeply valued.

Last but not least, the Network would like to express gratitude to the community leaders and members who work tirelessly to support the health and wellbeing of their communities. Their leadership, partnership and generosity have shaped the Refugee Health Policy and Action Plan to ensure it reflects the wisdom and needs of the diverse communities in Queensland.

Executive Summary



Following the 2016 publication of the *Refugee Health and Wellbeing: A strategic framework for Queensland*, Queensland Health endorsed and funded the Refugee Health Network Queensland (the Network) which was formally launched alongside the Policy and Action Plan in 2017.

Over three years from 2017 to 2020, the Network along with its partner organisations worked to implement the *Refugee Health and Wellbeing: A Policy and Action plan for Queensland 2017-2020*. Queensland Government funded an independent evaluation which was conducted by QUT. The ethics approved mix method evaluation assessed the impact of the Policy and Action Plan on the healthcare experience of people from refugee backgrounds settling in Queensland.

Between 2017 and 2020, Queensland welcomed more than 8600 refugees into the state. Primary settlement locations in Queensland include: Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Logan/Gold Coast/Ipswich and Brisbane. On various visa types including: Refugee, In-country Special Humanitarian, Global Special Humanitarian, Emergency Rescue, Women at Risk and Protection – Permanent. Approximately three quarters of these new arrivals entered with no English Proficiency.



Image: Refugee Health Showcase 2018

The Action Plan identified seven priority areas for action while focusing on the five principles of: Collaboration and partnerships, Cultural responsiveness, Consumer and community voice, Continuous improvement and Clinical excellence.

Seven Priority Areas of Action

1. Communicate and collaborate with colleagues
2. Establish the state-wide refugee health and well being Network
3. Modify usual practices to meet the health and well being needs of refugees
4. Use professional interpreter services
5. Engage with the community
6. Measure, collect, collate, monitor and innovate
7. Deliver evidence-based quality healthcare to people from refugee backgrounds

This report outlines the progress made in these areas and recommendations moving forward based on the evaluation findings.

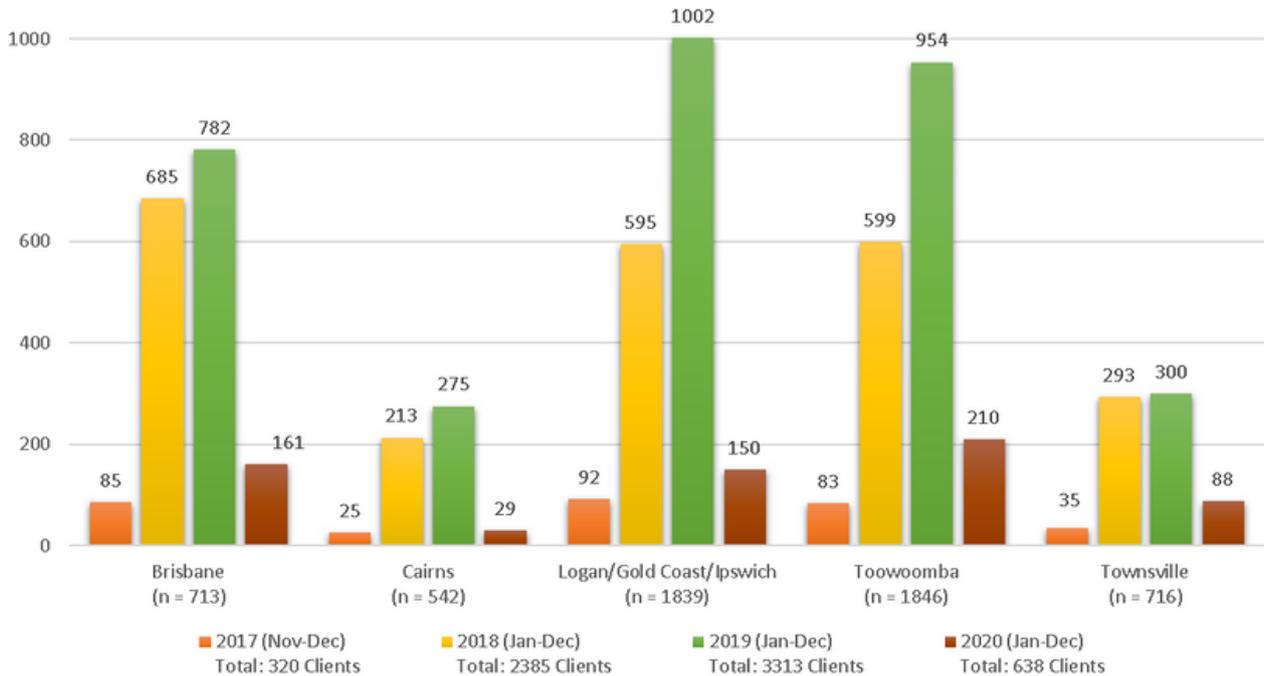
In March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared COVID 19 a global pandemic. This dramatically changed the capacity of the Network to continue to deliver on the planned actions and activities in the Plan. The Network's well-established mechanisms and collaborations were redirected to support services and refugee and asylum seeker communities through the COVID 19 crisis. Often acting as the conduit between health, sector services and CALD communities by leveraging existing relationships and rapidly developing new partnerships. The Network worked with partners more closely than ever before to coordinate efforts in co-designing and sharing information about COVID 19 to people from a refugee background. The ongoing COVID 19 response has highlighted the importance of community engagement and partnerships which can only be sustained through investing in structures that build bridges between communities and systems.

Queensland Settlement Data

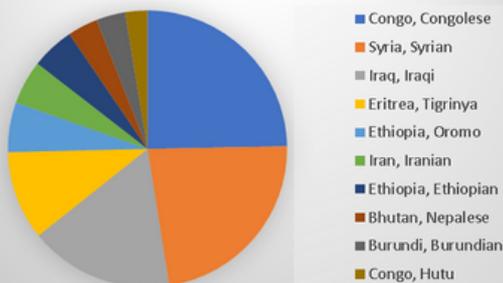
Data provided by Multicultural Australia, Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) Arrivals, November 2017 to December 2020

New Arrivals only (Exclude: Transfer in, SIS referrals, Transit clients)

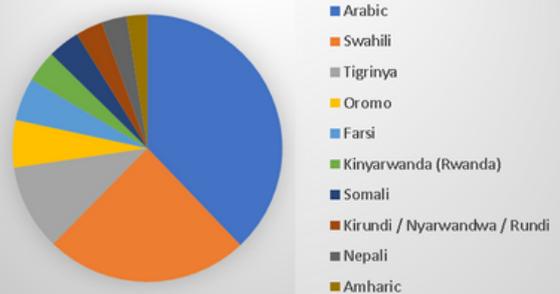
HSP arrivals by year and location



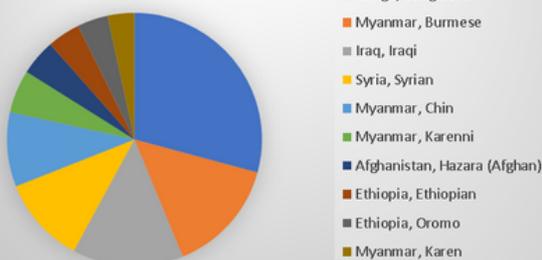
Brisbane top 10 arrivals by Citizenship/Ethnicity



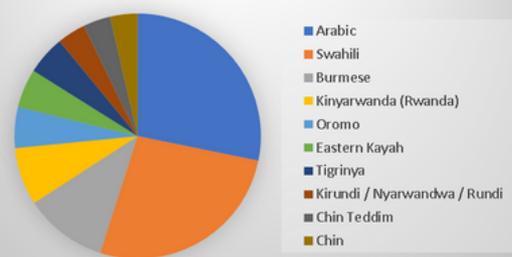
Brisbane top 10 arrival Language groups



Logan/Gold Coast/Ipswich top 10 arrivals by Citizenship/Ethnicity



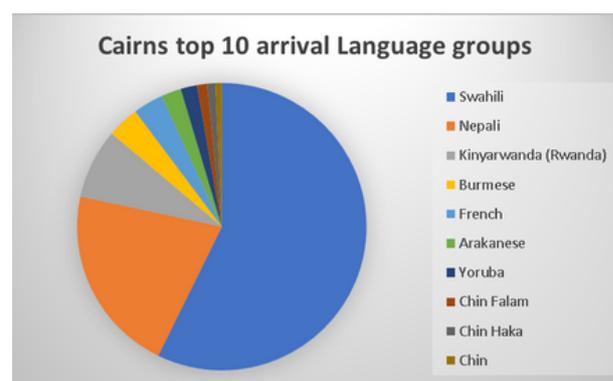
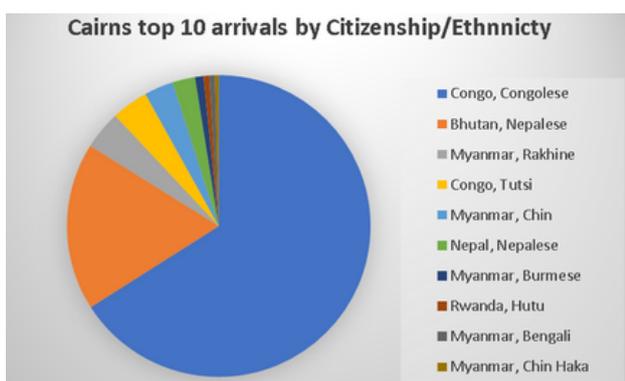
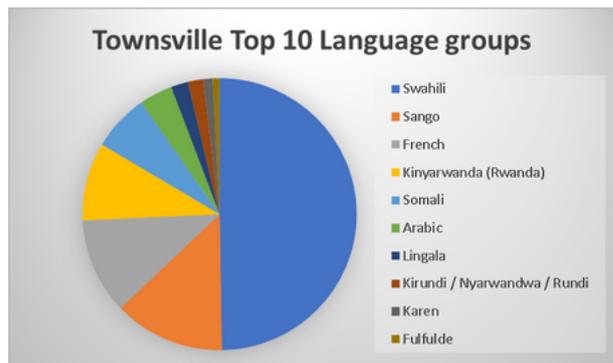
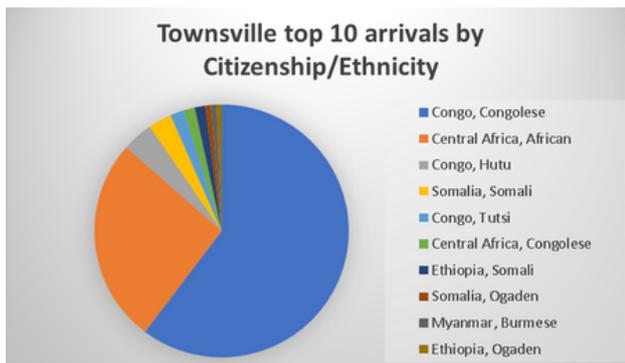
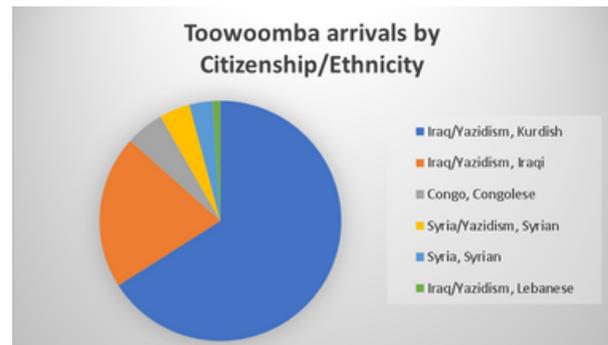
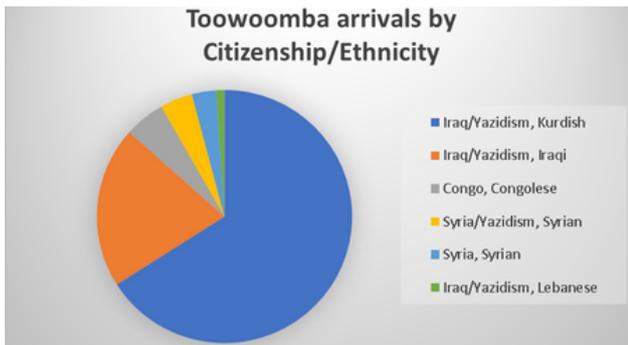
Logan/Gold Coast/Ipswich top 10 Language groups



Queensland Settlement Data

Data report provided by Multicultural Australia, Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) Arrivals, November 2017 to December 2020.

New Arrivals only (Exclude: Transfer in, Specialist Intensive Services, Transit clients)



Additional data available: Humanitarian Settlement Program - New Arrivals Report (Qld) 2018-2021 (FY) or visit: www.refugeehealthnetworkqld.org.au/settlement-data-2

Queensland Settlement Data

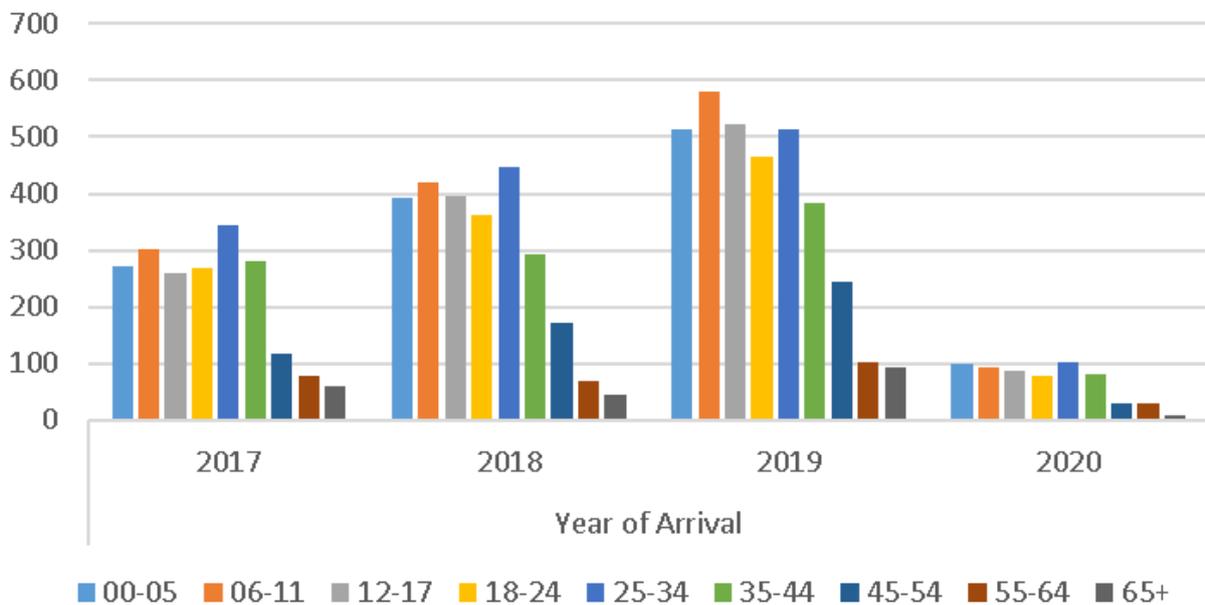
Data provided by Department of Home Affairs Humanitarian Arrivals:
Jan 2017 to Dec 2020.



94%

Humanitarian arrivals have Poor or Nil English Proficiency at time of arrival

Age Band



Over the 3 year reporting period,
almost equal gender distribution
(50.5% female arrivals)

50 / 50

Queensland Government Commitment

The Queensland Government has committed to achieving an inclusive, harmonious and united Queensland where people of all cultures, languages and faiths feel a strong sense of belonging and can achieve their goals. This commitment is articulated in Our story, our future: *Queensland's Multicultural Policy*.



Image: Hon Cameron Dick MP Minister for Health and Ambulance Services launches the 2017-2020 Policy and Action Plan in April 2017

The Queensland Government will support refugees and asylum seekers to reduce barriers and create opportunities for them to participate and contribute to our economic, social and cultural future.

The Queensland Government will work with our government and non-government partners to support refugees and asylum seekers to participate in all aspects of life.

No matter how people came here or where they came from, the Queensland Government will support all the people of Queensland to participate and feel they belong.

The 2017-2020 Policy and Action Plan aligns with, and actively supports, the refugee and asylum seeker commitments included in Queensland's Multicultural Policy.

The Network would like to commend the Queensland Government and Queensland Health for its ongoing commitment to this work including the commitment to develop a second policy and action plan to build on the success of the first plan and support the ongoing work that is required to improve health and wellbeing.

Report on the Action Plan



Image: Refugee Health Network Queensland meet with Steven Miles, Queensland's Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning when he was Queensland's Health Minister, 2018.

The 2017-2020 Action plan outlined seven priority areas for action:

1. Communicate and collaborate with colleagues
2. Establish the state-wide refugee health and wellbeing Network
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This final report has been compiled by the Refugee Health Network Qld Coordinator with input from the lead organisations and groups identified in the action plan. It covers the duration of the policy and reports on selected highlights to illustrate progress against key priority areas. This final report provides an overview which complements the Network's Annual reports that can be found online: www.refugeehealthnetworkqld.org.au/publications

Recommendations

The Evaluation report produced by QUT outlined several recommendations for the future including:

1. A REFUGEE HEALTH AND WELL BEING POLICY AND ACTION PLAN BEYOND 2020

The progress made by the Refugee Health and Wellbeing Policy and Action Plan 2017–2020 in improving the healthcare experience of people from refugee backgrounds needs to be sustained. A new Policy and Action Plan beyond 2020 is needed, and it should build on the processes, strategies and activities that have shown a positive impact as described in this evaluation report. Although the five principles of the 2017–2020 Policy and Action plan still apply, a new policy should have a stronger focus on the social and environmental determinants of health (including strategies to support the COVID-19 pandemic recovery of refugee communities), addressing the health and social needs of asylum seekers, building capacity of health services in regional areas, strengthening care coordination, continue improving the availability of interpreter services, and reducing barriers for people from refugee backgrounds with a disability to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

2. GREATER FOCUS ON THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINANTS OF REFUGEE HEALTH

Good progress has been made in addressing some of the downstream determinants of refugee health such as referral pathways and access to refugee-informed and culturally safe primary healthcare services. A stronger preventative approach should include some of the upstream and midstream determinants such as health literacy (including COVID-19 pandemic and mental health literacy) for refugee communities, promoting healthy behaviours, better access to health services in regional areas, and advocacy to address the impact of immigration policies on asylum seekers and refugees.

3. HEALTH AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Asylum seekers continue to be impacted by harmful immigration policies. Greater efforts are needed to enhance service coordination to address their health and social needs, including adequate referral pathways.

4. BUILDING CAPACITY OF SERVICES IN REGIONAL AREAS

Sustained efforts are required to enhance service access and the capacity of healthcare services in regional areas to provide refugee-informed and culturally-safe care to people from refugee backgrounds. These efforts may include increasing the number of refugee health nurses in regional areas. The refugee health nurse model of care has shown positive outcomes in improving access, quality of care and care coordination in healthcare settings (Au, Anandakumar, Preston, Ray, & Davis, 2019; McBride, Russo, & Block, 2016).

5. CARE COORDINATION

Sustained efforts are needed to enhance care coordination for patients from refugee backgrounds using a variety of models (Joshi et al., 2013) including refugee health nurses.

6. LANGUAGE SERVICES

The evaluation has found positive progress on addressing language barriers and providing adequate interpreting services in some healthcare settings. Successful strategies should be maintained, and greater efforts made in addressing the limited availability of interpreter services in a number of settings such as pharmacies and private pathology services among others.

7. REFUGEES WITH DISABILITY AND THE NDIS

Specific strategies are required to address the substantial barriers people from a refugee background with a disability face while trying to access the NDIS (Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, Refugee Council of Australia, & Settlement Council of Australia, 2019; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 2019).

8. TRAINING FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Continuous practice improvement and clinical excellence require refugee-informed and culturally-safe healthcare sector development. More creative ways of engaging with and delivering training to healthcare professionals and services using a variety of technologies should be considered. This could include developing a depository of resources that can be used across the different Hospital and Health Services (HHS).

Refugee Health and Wellbeing 2022-2025

The second refugee health and wellbeing policy and action plan is under development.

With support from QUT (AusHSI) and the Social Policy and Legislation Branch of the Qld Department of Health the Network has been working with members to develop the next policy and action plan. Based on the findings from the Evaluation report as well as input from local regions, working groups and community representatives and Government.

The second policy and action plan which is action for Queensland Health under the Multicultural Action Plan will build on the achievements from the first plan while remaining responsive to the ever-changing health environment that we find ourselves living through.



The Refugee Health Network Queensland is auspiced by the Mater and supported by the Queensland Government.



**Queensland
Government**



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