



# *Knowledge Translation to Support Early Learning of Refugee Children and their Families*

## **Full Report**

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## Abstract

The research presented in this report is based on a three-year study that focussed on developing understandings and resources to support current and future community hubs and centres with the settlement and early learning of refugee children and their families. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, and workshops in metropolitan, regional and rural areas across New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, the *Knowledge Translation Framework* (KTF) was developed to capture the macro, meso and micro dimensions related to supporting family settlement, early learning and transition to school for refugee children. The framework underpinned the development of video pods, and an online database of current and desired web resources to enable knowledge sharing and collaboration, and to support professionals in their roles. The detailed findings of the study presented in this report discuss the ways hub and centre leaders shared knowledge amongst themselves, the opportunities and challenges they navigated with refugee family settlement, and the ways in which COVID-19 provided insights that changed practices by increasing networking opportunities using digital platforms.

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## Abbreviations

AEDC	Australian Early Development Centre
ARC	Australian Research Council
ANPS	Auburn North Public School
CER	Centre for Educational Research
CHA	Community Hubs Australia
CI	Chief Investigator
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
KTF	Knowledge Translation Framework
LAC	Local Area Collaborative
LGA	Local Government Area
MA	Multicultural Australia
NSW	New South Wales
QLD	Queensland
SaCCs	Schools as Community Centres
SERAP	State Education Research Applications Process
SLSO	School Learning Support Officer
SSI	Settlement Services International
VIC	Victoria
WSU	Western Sydney University

## 1 Executive Summary

This is a report of a three-year research project focussed on developing understandings and resources to support current and future community hubs and centres with the settlement and early learning of refugee students and their families. The project was born out of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project that identified the need to address the gaps and inequities in knowledge sharing for individuals working with refugee families in diverse contexts with diverse skills, in metropolitan, regional and rural areas. Three states participated – New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria – across public and Catholic education systems, and included Community Hubs Australia (CHA), Schools as Community Centres (SACC) and a privately funded centre not attached to a school. The goal was to identify knowledge, processes, and practices, as well as resources, on topics such as how to encourage participation of families least likely to become involved; to visualise what it is that workers are doing that is different, and why; to hear of other practices that they might be able to adapt; and to disseminate their work in order to make future hubs and centres successful. As such, this research aimed to empower those working in hubs and centres with resources and the knowledge needed to optimize refugee children’s early learning opportunities for the best start to school, with a wider goal to strengthen family integration in Australian communities. We use the term *integration* to mean a multi-directional process that informs both the practices and processes of institutions, as well as providing cultural orientation for families so that they get the best start in life (Klarenbeek, 2021; Spencer & Charsley, 2021).

Drawing on interviews with leaders from 21 hubs and centres over three years, schools and centres across New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, the research team developed a *Knowledge Translation Framework* (KTF). It captures the exceptional knowledge and practices of staff who support family settlement, early learning and transition to school for refugee children. The framework was translated into multimodal resources in the form of video pods, and an online database of current and desired web resources. Ongoing collaboration and cross-checking of materials occurred via video conferences and workshops for educators and community workers, to enable knowledge sharing and collaboration and to support professionals in their roles.

## 2 Key Findings

Participants reported a range of ways in which they shared knowledge among themselves. Significantly, COVID-19 changed their practices for the better by increasing networking opportunities using digital platforms. Independent centres had less institutional support for knowledge sharing but were active in seeking out networks, knowledge, and resources. Community Hubs Australia has a long-



established practice of networking at the local, state, and national level. Hub leaders meet regularly with a hub coordinator and the coordinator maintains strong communication channels with each leader. SaCCS facilitators had differing access to knowledge sharing opportunities. While some had active local networks, established during COVID-19, others felt more isolated. A new strategy is that professional development will be delivered regularly. Further, leaders supported newly arrived refugee families with young children to settle in Australia and to achieve positive educational outcomes for their children. Families were helped to understand the expectations for children's learning and transition to school by building relationships, establishing communication, networking, and, importantly, removing families' cultural and linguistic barriers, detailed later in this report.

Furthermore, we found interesting insights into the impact of COVID-19, and list what were seen as 'enablers' in an otherwise difficult period:

- New insights into families. When using zoom and similar platforms it was noted that fathers were commonly involved in play activities. This led to less stereotyped views on parenting.
- Parents as volunteers, interpreters, and cultural brokers. To increase participation on digital platforms, other parents were harnessed in spreading the word around and assisting in explaining how to use technology. Centre and hub interpreters worked with parent volunteers and other cultural brokers to enable participation to be maintained, and in several cases, increased.
- New communication strategies developed. As outlined in the communication section, a number of factors were taken into account during the isolation periods as well as an app for translating newsletters verbally. Use of chat apps depending on community were broadened from simple text messages by dominant carriers to those used by specific linguistic groups (eg. WeChat, Whatsapp, Viber)
- Greater family engagement in children's learning. As a lot of explanatory material was sent to homes or delivered digitally, parents were more engaged, in part due to being at home but also due to the explicit outlining of requirements for children's learning through play.
- Appreciation for outdoor/green places and spaces. These were used when social distancing was critical, once people were allowed to move about.
- Increased parental engagement in service utilisation. As people could not find out information themselves, services were proactive in making sure that information reached them via digital means.
- Upskilling of digital literacies. To enable most of the above required new use of technologies. These went beyond messaging to visual media, learning to use school apps for schoolwork for older children in families. Some families received laptops from settlement agencies but the access to these varied. One of our video pod contributors, Erum Zafar, speaks about a special program for

families and their children in the Settling Softly video pod: *Communicating to Connect*.

- Enhanced networking and knowledge sharing opportunities for hub and centre facilitators. Due to the urgency of the situation many novel and important opportunities emerged for networking among centre and hub staff at various levels. Some were across the state while others were quite localized in suburbs or Local Government Areas. This was particularly the case in Fairfield in New South Wales, Hume in Victoria, and Logan City in Queensland.

### 3 Outputs

The Knowledge Translation Framework (KTF) provided in this report covers the key findings that were found in support of ‘Settling Softly’, what we have called the series of video pods, which reflect the aims and the outcomes of the philosophies and practices in the centres and hubs when working with refugee families and their children. The framework focuses on the contextual knowledge required across a range of settings in metropolitan and regional areas, as well as processes and practices to scaffold working effectively with families, key organizations, local communities, and services.

The KTF and multimodal resources embed topics supporting children’s early learning, development and wellbeing via play and playgroups, for their school readiness and transition to school (ARACY 2015). The project conveys Ian Potter’s education objectives of ‘supporting innovative programs delivered to young children (ages 0-8)’ (Ian Potter Foundation, 2023) that aim to improve school readiness, as measured by the Australian Early Development Census (Australian Early Development Census, 2022). The multimodal video pods, presented by Costa Georgiadis of the ABCTV’s Gardening Australia program, bring to life the dynamic energy and achievements of the work done in hubs and centres to enable refugee families to ‘settle softly’. The video pods and web resources provide effective strategies for educators and service providers to tailor support for refugee children’s school readiness, and to promote literacy and numeracy, play and friendships, parental self-efficacy, and engagement in their children’s education. Learning outcomes are more likely to be achieved when educators and service providers work with families, as this recognises the diversity of families and children (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, 2022). These sustainable outcomes along with the systemic outcomes mentioned above align with the Ian Potter’s other education objective of ‘supporting the development of evidence and shared measurement tools for the early childhood sector’ (Ian Potter Foundation, 2023) as well as UN Sustainable goal 4 Quality education (United Nations Sustainable Development goals, n.d.).

## 4 Background

This research emerged from an Australian Research Council Project examining the settlement of Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan refugee families in NSW, Queensland and Victoria carried out by Professor Carol Reid and colleagues Professor Jock Collins (University of Technology, Sydney) and Associate Professor Dimitria Groutsis (University of Sydney). The ARC study identified the need for knowledge sharing among teachers, community workers, hub and centre leaders, and related personnel about refugee early learners and the development of social capital for families. In hubs that are government or system based, staff rarely have the chance to share knowledge beyond the local and had voiced their concerns and successes regarding their hub practices, experiences, and knowledge sharing, across rural, regional, and metropolitan areas. To address this gap, the project aimed to provide opportunities for knowledge sharing, and to identify key knowledge, practices and processes required for someone setting up a new centre or hub, especially in regional areas. Additionally, the project sought to support innovative programs delivered to young children (aged 0-8) to improve school readiness, as measured by the Australian Early Learning Development (AEDC) and foster parental engagement in their children's learning.

Hub and centre staff play a central role in the settlement of refugees and other families in the centres discussed in this report. With the rise of refugees across the globe due to a myriad of factors, there is an increasing need for research that focuses on practices and processes that facilitate settlement and integration, particularly in Australia. In the past decade alone, in between 2013 to 2017, the refugee population in OECD countries tripled, from 2 million to 5.9 million, as a result of invasions and humanitarian crises such as those in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and Central America (OECD, 2019). Amongst the OECD countries, Turkey, Germany, the United States, Canada, and Austria have been the main destination countries by the number of refugees (OECD, 2018, p. 23). In Australia, it is estimated that more than 880,000 refugees have been settled, and on a per capita basis, Australia has been one of the world's most generous countries in resettling refugees (Shergold, Benson & Piper, 2019). Due to the conflict in Syria and Iraq in 2014-2017, with a special intake of refugees from Syria and Iraq, the number of humanitarian visas granted was close to 22,000. The expected number of humanitarian visas for 2018-19 was 18,750, which surpassed the average yearly distribution of roughly 13,500 humanitarian visas that have usually been issued per year since the mid-1980s (ibid).

Settling refugees can be a challenging task for governments for several reasons. First, there is the need to provide housing and healthcare, which may put a strain on existing government resources (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018). Second, refugees may face language barriers which can create an obstacle in gaining employment (Kletečka-Pulker, Parrag, Droždek, & Wenzel, 2019). Third, refugees may have experienced traumatic events requiring mental health support which can further complicate

settlement (Hendrickx, Woodward, Fuhr, Sondorp & Roberts, 2020). Fourth, social and cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings, adding challenges both to settlement services and refugees (Embiricos, 2020). Thus, a complex array of issues arises during settlement, from addressing basic necessities to cultural differences. As such, a coordinated and well-funded intergovernmental and community sector organisation response and approach at the local, state, and commonwealth level, is required to ensure successful integration and settlement for refugees.

The trend in Australia's post war immigration program has generally been for most migrants and refugees to settle in major cities. However, there have been efforts by governments to resettle refugees in rural and regional areas as well. The publication of the 2003 *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants* by the Australian Government (DIMIA, 2003) renewed efforts to settle refugees in rural and regional areas of Australia. In recent times, the Australian government has made a priority to settle refugees in rural and regional areas. In 2019, the Australian federal government set a target to have 50 per cent of new refugees settle in regional Australia by 2022 (Ziersch & Due, 2021). The purposes for regional and rural settlement include promoting economic development and supporting regional communities, improving integration into Australian society to access education, employment, and social services in smaller communities, and boosting local economies (Ziersch, Miller, Baak & Mnawri, 2020). However, several challenges arise for refugees settling and integrating in regional and remote areas due to sometimes limited cultural diversity, job opportunities, and support services compared with the opportunities families have in metropolitan cities.

Research that has examined remote and rural refugee settlement is divided into five main areas. The first area examines access to services and support including healthcare, education, and employment (Wood, Charlwood, Zecchin, Hansen, Douglas & Pit, 2019; Robinson & Haintz, 2021). The second investigates integration and social cohesion (Correa-Velez, Spaaij, & Upham, 2013; Alam & Imran, 2015). The third focuses on economic outcomes including employment, income and the impact on local communities (Wood, Charlwood, Zecchin, Hansen, Douglas & Pit, 2019). The fourth examines health outcomes including access to healthcare and prevalence of mental health problems (Silove, Ventevogel & Rees, 2017; Au, Anandakumar, Preston, Ray & Davis, 2019; d'Abreu, Castro- Olivio & Ura, 2019; Baak, Miller, Ziersch, Due, Masocha & Ziaian, 2020; Smith, Hoang, Reynish, McLeod, Hannah, Auckland, Sleqa Younan & Mond, 2020). The fifth includes evaluation of policies and programs aimed at supporting refugee settlement in rural and regional areas (Galligan, Henry Waring, Boese & Phillips, 2014; ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015; Boese & Moran, 2021; Bateman, Knox & Benson, 2022).

In addition to research on settling refugees in rural and remote areas, refugee settlement and integration more broadly has been examined across several fields including education. Education is a key factor in refugee settlement in Australia for both adults

(Ramsay & Baker, 2019) and children (Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2020) for several reasons. Education has the potential to promote integration into society by providing refugees with the skills, knowledge and social networks needed to participate in the community and broader society (Matthews, 2021). It also improves opportunities, outcomes, and employment opportunities in the long term. Finally, it can increase confidence and build a sense of belonging (Guo, Maitra & Guo, 2019).

In Australia, community hubs and centres attached to schools play an important role in helping refugee families settle into Australia and ensure children have access to education, which is a key factor in integration into society. The main role of the hubs/centres is to provide comprehensive and coordinated support to help refugees and their families in adjusting to their new country, specifically in relation to education. Hubs and centres assist families with enrolling children in schools and provide support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. They also provide language classes for students and families, cultural support including guidance on cultural and social customs, and help to bridge the gap between the family and the schools (Community Hubs Australia, 2017). While they play a significant role in settling refugees into educational contexts, both for the students and the families, there is limited research on hubs and community centres in Australia.

To date, most of the research on refugee settlement in Australia in educational settings focuses on three areas: first, the challenges faced by refugees in schools and their overall school experiences; second, challenges and experiences of teachers working with refugee students; and third, teacher approaches and understanding of cultural diversity in relation to refugee student schooling (Watkins, 2016). In education, one of the main challenges that young refugee students face in settling into Australian schools is language barriers. Many of these students come from non-English speaking backgrounds and may have limited proficiency in the English language (Baak, Miller, Ziersch, Due, Masocha, Ziaian, 2019; Graham, Minhas & Paxton, 2016; Matthews, 2008; Naidoo, 2013, 2015). This can make it difficult for them to participate fully in classroom activities, understand instructions and homework, and communicate with their teachers and peers. As a result, many young refugee students struggle academically and may be at risk of falling behind their peers.

In addition to language barriers, young refugee students also face other challenges in settling into Australian schools. These include social and cultural isolation whereby refugees may have different cultural backgrounds and may not be familiar with the customs and expectations of the Australian education system (Mahoney & Siyambalapitiya, 2017; Marsh & Dieckilometreann, 2017; Wofford & Tibi, 2018). For example, a large-scale study (n= 994) conducted by Lau and colleagues, based on BLNA data, found that refugee students reported peer difficulties which impacted their adjustment to Australia (Lau, Silove, Edwards, Forbes, Bryant, McFarlane, Hadzi-Pavlovic, Steel, Nickerson, Van Hooff, Felmingham, Cowlshaw, Alkemade, Kartal & O'Donnell, 2018).

Furthermore, refugees may suffer from trauma and mental health challenges, which can make it challenging to focus in a classroom setting (Barrett & Berger, 2021; d'Abreu, Castro-Olivo & Ura, 2019; Graham, Minhas & Paxton, 2016). Refugee children may also have had limited educational background or disrupted access to education in their home countries, which can make it harder for them to catch up with their peers and succeed academically (Miller, 2009; Miller, Ziaian & Esterman, 2018; Naidoo, 2015; Wofford & Tibi, 2018). Some refugees spend many years in refugee camps prior to coming to Australia; others who claim asylum on their way to or onshore in Australia are subject to immigration detention. Significant psychological and emotional stress is often experienced by both children and adults alike (Fazel, Wolf, Chang, Larsson, Goodwin & Lichtenstein, 2015).

In addition to the experiences of refugee students highlighted above, studies have examined teachers' experiences working with refugee students. For example, studies have examined the teachers' preparations to meet the needs of refugee children in classrooms (Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Naidoo, 2010, 2012). They have shown how positive relationships with teachers increased students' feelings of safety at schools and Intensive English Language Centres (Due & Riggs, 2016). Emerging research by Barret and Berger (2021) focuses on how teachers experience working with refugees who have been exposed to trauma.

It is evident from this overview of research pertaining to refugees in Australian schools, that the focus is on students and teachers, in addition to the above-mentioned discussion on rural and regional settlement, which is a defining feature of refugee settlement in recent times in Australia. As mentioned, there is limited research that has investigated the community hub and centre staffs' role specifically in assisting refugees settling and integrating into schools and society. Existing literature on hubs examines the school-community partnership model, benefits and challenges of hubs (Teo, Mitchell, van der Kliej & Dabrowski, 2022). The present study, therefore, aimed to address this gap by focusing on hub and centre staff who play a crucial role in the settlement of refugee families, including their children's education, and, moreover, to extend the scope from metropolitan settlement to examine rural and regional areas in Australia, for stronger and more effective knowledge sharing and practice.

## 5 Methodology

A qualitative approach has been employed to investigate knowledge sharing among community centre facilitators, hub and centre leaders, and related personnel who work with refugee families across NSW, Queensland, and Victoria, and to translate this knowledge into a KTF, video pods and an online database of resources.

Interviews, focus groups, and workshops were conducted with participants across three stages, in Years 1, 2 and 3, in a multi directional analytical approach (Agee, 2008). Participants shared their experiences working with refugee family settlement in early learning contexts. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom. Initially, it was intended to conduct all interviews with participants on site, at the start of the research in 2019, to establish relations with the hubs and centres, and to gain a better understanding of the sites and the people who work there. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, this needed to be modified, and interviews, focus groups and workshops with all participants were conducted via Zoom.

The experiences of hubs and centre leaders have been disseminated through this report, using thematic analysis (Gray, 2014), at conferences and seminars, and through a series of vignettes compiled in video pods. The findings were developed by the research team based on topics of importance as highlighted in the interviews and focus groups, drawing on the KTF. On-site filming was conducted for hubs and centres in metropolitan Sydney in 2022, the third and final year of the project, while Zoom filming was employed for remote and regional areas across the three states. The following section presents a detailed overview of the methodology and processes of the project. It starts by explaining the ethical requirements, and continues by detailing locations and participants, to give an overview of the contexts in which the hubs and centres are situated.

## 5.1 Ethical Requirements

Ethics approval was first obtained from Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee (WSU HREC; see Appendix A). To conduct research in NSW hubs, which are attached to schools, ethics approval was required from the NSW State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP; see Appendix B). For Queensland, permission was obtained from individual schools, and in Victoria, the Department of Education and Training Victoria and individual schools provided consent.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and challenges, and other time constraints, a 6-month extension was required. As such, ethics approval extensions were obtained from WSU HREC (Appendix A) and NSW SERAP (Appendix C).

Community hubs and centres across NSW, Queensland and Victoria, in both rural and metropolitan contexts, have contributed significantly to refugee settlement and integration into Australian society. To determine suitable sites to share knowledge for this project, recommendations were sought through partner organisations about recruitment of hubs. Screening of hubs with high numbers of refugees occurred prior to consent via these organizations.

Different recruitment processes occurred across states due to varying approaches in the different educational systems and relationships between schools and hubs/centres. In Queensland, Access has a Community Hubs Australia (CHA) coordinator who works with a number of hubs and State and Catholic education systems, along with Multicultural Australia, Queensland. These stakeholders assisted with recruitment and extended the involvement of hubs beyond the required number, as they wished to provide better networking across metropolitan and regional sites. In Victoria after recommendations by CHA, hubs were approached by email through school principals (Appendix D) as all hubs are attached to schools there. Upon principal approval, the research team emailed the participant information sheet (Appendix E) to hub and centre leaders. In NSW, a Community Hub coordinator was formerly employed by Settlement Services International (SSI), who recommended research sites, and this was followed by an invitation to personnel in those sites to participate. Several hubs in NSW are attached to schools while others operate individually. For hubs connected to schools, the principal was approached in the same manner as in Victoria. The NSW Department of Education (NSWDOE) also has Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) that are not part of the Community Hubs Australia network, and Professor Reid already had this list supplied by NSWDOE from the current ARC Linkage project. These schools, if they had high numbers of refugees, were approached directly by the research team. Two sites were independently funded. One was attached to a school in regional Queensland and one in regional NSW was not attached to a school. The former was known from the previous ARC project and the latter heard about the project and asked to join.

The hub and centre leaders were approached by an email introduction which included participant information sheets (Appendix E) and questions. Hub and centre leaders distributed information and question sheets to others in their hubs and centres (Appendix F), employing a snowballing technique for recruitment (Gray, 2014). Consent forms were also sent with the participation information sheets; however, participants were notified that these would need to be signed in person to ensure they were explained and understood. The participants were provided with a 2- to 4-week period to consider participation.

Participants who consented to participate were notified that they could check the transcripts of their interviews and focus group contributions to ensure the accuracy of the information. Following the Year 1 interviews, the participants who had consented to participate in Years 2 and 3 were invited to the next stage.

For filming of the video pods in Year 3, hub and centre leaders across NSW, Queensland, and Victoria, who had indicated willingness to participate in the pods, were approached via email to confirm participation and availability. They were supplied with an information sheet (Appendix E) on the scope of the project and nature of involvement, including both time and commitment. For willing participants, extended consent was obtained via email (Appendices G and H). The consent form differed according to state. In Victoria, where all hubs are attached to schools, since



principal approval had been obtained in the earlier stages of the project, approval was only needed by hub leaders in year 3. This was also the case for Queensland, where approval for participation was only required by the hub or school in one case, rather than the governing bodies for state and Catholic education systems. Therefore, for Victoria and Queensland, consent (Appendix G) was obtained according to WSU HREC requirements. For NSW hub and centre leaders, consent (Appendix H) was obtained according to both SERAP and WSU HREC requirements. All consent included the approval to use audio-visual materials where participant identity may be revealed. The next section provides an overview of sites and participants involved in the research.

## 5.2 Locations & Participants

### 5.2.1 Community Hubs Australia, Schools as Community Centres and Independent Hubs

Community hubs have been providing important educational programs for young refugee children (aged 0-8) and assisting their families' settlement with social networks and knowledge about living well in Australia. A total of 21 community hubs and centres across NSW, Queensland and Victoria participated in the study. The hubs in the study were governed by Community Hubs Australia (CHA), or operated as Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) or independent hubs (see Table 1). CHA is a national organisation that operates with federal, state, and local government, business, philanthropic and not-for-profit organisations, and community organisations, to deliver grassroots programs to improve networks between individuals and communities (CHA, 2017). The Community Hub Program also supports culturally diverse families, and in particular mothers with young children, to bridge the gap between families and the wider community, connect women with schools, with each other, and with organisations that can provide health, education and support (ibid). Community Hubs Australia has a total of 105 hubs across 4 states within 25 Local Government Areas, and supported over 9740 families in 2021.

In 2013, CHA established the National Community Hubs Program (NCHP) 'to engage newly arrived communities at risk of limited access to education, health and social services, and opportunities for economic independence' (Deloitte Access Economics, 2021, p. ii). The NCHP aims to connect newly arrived families with their community, schools and existing health, education, and settlement service, and is underpinned by a place-based and person-centred method. Each community hub facilitates services that build social connections and social capital for individuals within newly arrived communities (ibid). A report by CHA, engaging Deloitte Access Economics, that

examined the social return on investment (SROI)<sup>1</sup> found that the services provided by CHA had a positive impact on the domains that were examined. These domains include English language, engagement, early childhood development and vocational pathways. The report indicates that the NCHP had an SROI of 2.2 in 2019 (ibid, p. iii). In other words, for every \$1 invested in the program, there were \$2.2 in social benefits realised in Australia. Across the four domains examined, for engagement, the report indicated that CHA has a significant impact on the quality of life of newly arrived migrant families by supporting them to feel engaged in their broader communities. For English language, hub participants felt more confident to engage in society due to improved English competency obtained at community hubs. In regard to early childhood development, CHA supported child development and improved school readiness of young children from migrant families; and CHA supported 280 people from migrant backgrounds to find paid employment in 2019 in relation to vocational support.

State	Hub/Centre Type	Location
New South Wales	Community Hubs Australia	Bankstown
		Wollongong (2)
		Fairfield
	Independent	Jesmond
		Bateau Bay
	School-funded hub	Coffs Harbour
	School as Community Centre	Auburn
		Dubbo
Fairfield		
Victoria	Community Hubs Australia	Coolaroo
		Shepparton
		Roxburgh Park
		Broadmeadows (2)
Queensland	Community Hubs Australia	Woodridge (2)
		Logan Central
		Redbank Plains
		Ipswich
	School-funded hub	Darling Heights

*Table 1 NSW, Queensland, and Victoria Research locations*

<sup>1</sup> A SROI evaluation ‘examines programs through a stakeholder and experience-focused lens to examine and monetise the program’s social value against its funding costs. In doing so, the SROI method provides a way to quantify and monetise their impacts in so far as their impacts can be materially measured. Alongside the qualitative and quantitative analysis which contributes to an SROI, a ratio of monetised benefits against program costs is provided, with a value greater than one indicating a positive return on investment’ (Deloitte Access Economics, 2021, p.8)

Several of the hubs in NSW were governed by Schools as Community Centres (SaCCs). Similarly to CHA, SaCC is an initiative in NSW that supports families in their local school community to enhance the early learning and wellbeing of children from birth to 8 years (NSWDOE, 2022). The Schools as Community Centres projects are hosted by NSW Public Schools and led by a local facilitator who coordinates and manages a range of community engagement initiatives and programs supporting families with young children. Each year across NSW, approximately 5000 families participate in SaCC activities, including: supported playgroups, early literacy activities, transition to school strategies, parenting programs, adult learning, and health and nutrition initiatives. In NSW, there are currently 47 SaCC projects within communities experiencing marked challenges of disadvantage (ibid). The SaCC facilitators work collaboratively to deliver evidence-based initiatives and programs that are inclusive and responsive to families and the school community and engage and sustain partnerships with stakeholders to support the capacity of the community to enhance early development outcomes for children birth to 8 years. In 2015, 82 per cent of the initiatives were delivered in partnership with other agencies as part of a child-focused, family-centred service model.

In addition to building bridges between parents, schools and communities, the primary focus of the SaCC program is to enhance the early development outcomes of children birth to 8 years through the holistic approach. The focus on the early development of children is based on well-established evidence that the first years of a child's life are crucial for setting the foundation for life-long health and learning outcomes.

The project focus therefore aligns with the work of centres and hubs in supporting the settlement of refugee families and the early learning of their children.

## 5.2.2 Community Profiles of Hubs and Centres

The following section provides an overview of the communities in which the research sites are located to give an insight into the context in which the hubs and community centres operated, in addition to the demographic information for these areas and how they differ intra and interstate. A snapshot according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics on population, population density, ancestry, place of birth of residents and languages spoken at home and religion have been provided below and organised by state.

### 5.2.2.1 Metropolitan

#### 5.2.2.1.1 Auburn (NSW)

The 2021 resident population for Auburn was approximately 110,122, with a population density of 3,429 persons per square kilometre. An analysis of the ancestry

responses of the population in Auburn in 2021 shows that the top five ancestries nominated were: Chinese (22,565 people or 20.6%), Lebanese (10,431 people or 9.5%), Australian (9,114 people or 8.3%), English (8,322 people or 7.6%) and Vietnamese (7,716 people or 7.0%). Approximately 56.8 per cent of the population was born overseas, compared with 29.3 per cent for New South Wales, and the largest non-English speaking country of birth in Auburn was China, where 28.0 per cent of the population, or 11,244 people, were born.

In Auburn, 70.9 per cent of people spoke a language other than English at home in 2021, and overall, 20.0 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 70.9 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 67.6 per cent and 26.6 per cent respectively for New South Wales. The primary language spoken at home in Auburn, other than English, was Arabic, with 13.3 per cent of the population, or 14,547 people speaking this language at home. Approximately, 69.6 per cent of the population nominated a religion, and 19.3 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 59.7 per cent and 33.0 per cent respectively for New South Wales. For Auburn's religious profile, the largest single religion was Islam, with 28.0 per cent of the population or 30,672 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.1.2 Bankstown (NSW)

Bankstown is located in the City of Canterbury Bankstown. The estimated resident population for 2021 was 372,322, with a population density of 3,375 persons per square kilometre. Analysis of the ancestry responses of the population in the City of Canterbury Bankstown in 2021 shows that the top five ancestries nominated were: Lebanese (52,287 people or 14.1%), Australian (51,641 people or 13.9%), Chinese (42,907 people or 11.6%), English (42,043 people or 11.3%) and Vietnamese (26,994 people or 7.3%).

In terms of the linguistic profile, overall, 33.8 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 59.1 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 57.3 per cent and 37.4 per cent respectively for Greater Sydney. The primary language spoken at home, other than English, in the City of Canterbury Bankstown, was Arabic, with 17.2 per cent of the population, or 63,655 people speaking this language at home. For religion, the largest single religion in the City of Canterbury Bankstown was Islam, with 23.6 per cent of the population or 87,423 adherents. Overall, 44.6 per cent of the population was born overseas, compared with 38.6 per cent for Greater Sydney, and the largest non-English speaking country of birth in the City of Canterbury Bankstown was Vietnam, where 5.9 per cent of the population, or 21,972 people, were born.

#### 5.2.2.1.3 Broadmeadows (Victoria)

The 2021 estimated resident population for Broadmeadows was 12,710, with a population density of 1,505 persons per square kilometre. Approximately 48.6 per

cent of people in Broadmeadows were born overseas, compared with 39.9 per cent in Hume City as a whole. The major differences between the countries of birth of the population in Broadmeadows and Hume City were: A *larger* percentage of people born in Nepal (4.5% compared to 1.0%), Lebanon (4.8% compared to 1.7%) and Pakistan (4.1% compared to 1.6%). In Broadmeadows, 61.0 per cent of people spoke a language other than English at home in 2021. The dominant language spoken at home in Broadmeadows, other than English, was Arabic, with 17.9 per cent of the population, or 2,239 people speaking this language. In 2021, the largest religious group was Islam (36.1% of all people), while 13.4 per cent of people had no religion.

#### 5.2.2.1.4 Coolaroo (Victoria)

The 2021 resident population for Coolaroo was approximately 3,237, with a population density of 1,054 persons per square kilometre. An analysis of the ancestry responses of the population in Coolaroo in 2021 shows that the top five ancestries nominated were: Australian (538 people or 16.9%), English (433 people or 13.6%), Turkish (379 people or 11.9%), Assyrian/Chaldean (288 people or 9.1%) and Lebanese (243 people or 7.6%). In 2021, 45.0 per cent of people in Coolaroo were born overseas, compared with 39.9 per cent in Hume City over all. 42.4 per cent of the overseas born population arrived before 2001, and 24 per cent arrived during or after 2016, compared with 34.7 per cent and 21.4 per cent respectively for Hume City.

Approximately 33.4 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 58.4 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 45.2 per cent and 48.8 per cent respectively for Hume City. The primary language spoken at home in Coolaroo, other than English, was Arabic, with 14.1 per cent of the population, or 451 people speaking this language. For religion, 75.9 per cent of the population nominated a religion, and 15.1 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 74.3 per cent and 19.2 per cent respectively for Hume City. The largest single religion in Coolaroo was Islam, with 32.6 per cent of the population or 1,039 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.1.5 Fairfield (NSW)

The 2021 estimated resident population for Fairfield was 18,478, with a population density of 4,193 persons per square kilometre. In Fairfield, the three largest ancestries in 2021 were Assyrian/Chaldean, Vietnamese and Chinese. In 2021, 65.6 per cent of people in Fairfield were born overseas, compared with 56.0 per cent in Fairfield City as a whole. The largest non-English speaking country of birth in Fairfield was Iraq, where 22.7 per cent of the population, or 4,181 people, were born. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of people born overseas increased by 470 or 4.0 per cent, 12,082 people who were living in Fairfield in 2021 were born overseas, and 30 per cent arrived in Australia within 5 years prior to 2021.

Overall, 15.9 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 75.6 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 23.4 per cent and 69.7 per cent respectively for Fairfield City. The primary language spoken at home in Fairfield, other than English, was Assyrian/Aramaic, with 21.2 per cent of the population, or 3,915 people speaking this language. Overall, 80.1 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 11.9 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 78.0 per cent and 14.7 per cent respectively for Fairfield City. The largest single religion in Fairfield was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 25.0 per cent of the population or 4,609 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.1.6 Logan (Queensland)

The 2021 resident population for Logan Central was approximately 6,314, with a population density of 2,187 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Logan Central in 2021 were English, Australian and Burmese peoples. Approximately 41.9 per cent of the population was born overseas, compared with 27.9 per cent for Logan City as a whole.

The largest non-English speaking country of birth in Logan Central was Burma (Myanmar), where 7.7 per cent of the population, or 478 people, were born.

Overall, 51.9 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 36.9 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 75.1 per cent and 18.1 per cent respectively for Logan City. The primary language spoken at home in Logan Central, other than English, was Karen, with 4.4 per cent of the population, or 272 people speaking this language. The largest religious group in Logan Central in 2021 was Western (Roman) Catholic (11.9% of all people), while 29.2 per cent of people had no religion and 11.3 per cent did not state their religion in the census.

#### 5.2.2.1.7 Marsden (Queensland)

The 2021 estimated resident population for Marsden was 16,007, with a population density of 2,400 persons per square kilometre. Analysis of the ancestry responses of the population in Marsden in 2021 shows that the top three ancestries nominated were:

English (3,963 people or 25.3%), Australian (3,654 people or 23.3%) and Samoan (1,185 people or 7.6%). In 2021, 36.1 per cent of people in Marsden were born overseas, compared with 27.9 per cent in Logan City as a whole. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of people born overseas increased by 1115 or 24.6 per cent. The largest changes in birthplace countries of the population in this area between 2016 and 2021 were for those born in: Afghanistan (+267 persons), Burma (Myanmar) (+259 persons) and Pakistan (+133 persons). Analysis of the proficiency in English language data of the population in Marsden in 2021 compared to Logan City shows that there was a lower proportion of people who spoke English only, and a higher proportion of people who spoke another language and English not well or not at all. Overall, 59.1 per cent of people spoke English only, and 6.9 per cent spoke another language and English not well or not at all.

In Marsden in 2021, the largest religious group was Western (Roman) Catholic (11.7% of all people), while 33.8 per cent of people had no religion and 9.9 per cent did not answer the question on religion. Overall, 55.6 per cent of the population nominated a religion, and 33.8 per cent said they had no religion. The largest single religion in Marsden was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 11.7 per cent of the population.

#### 5.2.2.1.8 Redbank (Queensland)

The 2021 resident population for Redbank Plains was approximately 24,922, with a population density of 1,275 persons per square kilometre. In 2021, 29.7 per cent of people in Redbank Plains were born overseas, compared with 21.7 per cent in City of Ipswich. The largest non-English speaking country of birth in Redbank Plains was Samoa, where 2.6 per cent of the population, or 640 people, were born. The major differences between the countries of birth of the population in Redbank Plains and City of Ipswich overall were: a larger percentage of people born in New Zealand (9.9% compared to 5.3%), a larger percentage of people born in Samoa (2.6% compared to 1.0%), and a smaller percentage of people born in United Kingdom (2.1% compared to 3.4%)

In Redbank Plains, 7,225 people were born overseas, and 17 per cent arrived in Australia within 5 years prior to 2021. Overall, 71.4 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 21.5 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 79.8 per cent and 14.1 per cent respectively for City of Ipswich. The dominant language spoken at home in Redbank Plains, other than English, was Samoan, with 5.2 per cent of the population, or 1,259 people speaking this language.

In terms of the religious profile of Redbank Plains, 50.1 per cent of the population nominated a religion, and 40.9 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 50.1 per cent and 41.7 per cent respectively for City of Ipswich. The major differences between the languages spoken at home for the population of Redbank Plains and City of Ipswich in 2021 were: a larger percentage speaking Samoan at home (5.2% compared to 1.9%), a larger percentage speaking Dinka at home (1.7% compared to 0.4%) and a larger percentage speaking Swahili at home (1.5% compared to 0.3%). The largest single religion in Redbank Plains was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 13.2 per cent of the population or 3,214 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.1.9 Roxburgh Park (Victoria)

The 2021 estimated resident population for Roxburgh Park was 24,427, with a population density of 3,553 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Roxburgh Park in 2021 were Assyrian/Chaldean, Turkish and Australian. The largest changes in the reported ancestries of the population in this area between 2016 and 2021 were: Iraqi (+414 persons), Arab not further described (+412 persons) and Australian (+339 persons). In 2021, 51.0 per cent of people in Roxburgh Park were born overseas,

compared with 39.9 per cent in Hume City as a whole. The largest non-English speaking country of birth in Roxburgh Park was Iraq, where 17.2 per cent of the population, or 4,150 people, were born. Overall, 24.2 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 69.7 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 45.2 per cent and 48.8 per cent respectively for Hume City. The dominant language spoken at home in Roxburgh Park, other than English, was Arabic, with 18.9 per cent of the population, or 4,570 people speaking this language at home. The major differences between the languages spoken at home for the population of Roxburgh Park and Hume City in 2021 were: A larger percentage at home speaking Assyrian/Aramaic (18.5% compared to 6.6%), Arabic (18.9% compared to 9.3%) and Turkish (10.8% compared to 6.1%).

#### 5.2.2.1.10 Woodridge (Queensland)

The 2021 resident population for Woodridge was approximately 13,222, with a population density of 2,832 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Woodridge in 2021 were English, Australian and Australian Aboriginal. An analysis of the country of birth of the population in Woodridge in 2021 compared to Logan City shows that there was a larger proportion of people born overseas, where 38.2 per cent of the population were born overseas, compared with 27.9 per cent for Logan City as a whole.

The largest non-English speaking country of birth in Woodridge was Burma (Myanmar), where 3.9 per cent of the population, or 504 people, were born. Overall, 54.2 per cent of the population spoke English only, and 33.5 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 75.1 per cent and 18.1 per cent respectively for Logan City. The primary language spoken at home in Woodridge, other than English, was Samoan, with 3.0 per cent of the population, or 383 people speaking this language.

In terms of Woodridge's religious profile, 57.2 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 29.3 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 50.9 per cent and 40.6 per cent respectively for Logan City. The largest single religion in Woodridge was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 12.2 per cent of the population or 1,588 adherents.

### 5.2.2.2 Regional

#### 5.2.2.2.1 Bateau Bay (NSW)

The 2021 resident population for Bateau Bay was approximately 12,611, with a population density of 1,740 persons per square kilometre. An analysis of the ancestry responses of the population in Bateau Bay in 2021 shows that the top five ancestries nominated were: English (5,366 people or 42.9%), Australian (5,287 people or 42.3%), Irish (1,686 people or 13.5%), Scottish (1,307 people or 10.4%), and Australian Aboriginal (587 people or 4.7%). Overall, 11.7 per cent of the population was born



overseas, compared with 16.1 per cent for Central Coast Council area. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of people born overseas increased by 103 or 7.5 per cent.

In terms of the linguistic profile in Bateau Bay, 90.3 per cent of people spoke English only, and 0.5 per cent spoke another language and English not well or not at all, compared with 87.7 per cent and 0.9 per cent respectively for Central Coast Council area. The main language spoken at home in Bateau Bay, other than English, was Italian, with 0.3 per cent of the population, or 41 people speaking this language. For religion, 54.1 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 38.3 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 53.6 per cent and 39.7 per cent respectively for Central Coast Council area. The largest single religion in Bateau Bay was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 24.1 per cent of the population or 3,017 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.2.2 Coffs Harbor (NSW)

The 2021 resident population for Coffs Harbour was approximately 78,734, with a population density of 67.03 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Coffs Harbour in 2021 were English, Australian and Irish. In 2021, 15.6 per cent of people in Coffs Harbour were born overseas, compared with 29.3 per cent in New South Wales. Approximately 12,260 people who were living in Coffs Harbour in 2021 were born overseas, and 22 per cent arrived in Australia within 5 years prior to 2021

In Coffs Harbour in 2021, 1,494 people who spoke a language other than English at home reported difficulty speaking English, and 9.1 per cent of people spoke a language other than English at home. Overall, 84.8 per cent of the population spoke English only and 9.1 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 67.6 per cent and 26.6 per cent respectively for New South Wales. The dominant language spoken at home in Coffs Harbour, other than English, was Punjabi, with 2.3 per cent of the population, or 1,808 people speaking this language. For religion, 47.7 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 41.8 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 59.7 per cent and 33.0 per cent respectively for New South Wales. The largest single religion in Coffs Harbour was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 17.1 per cent of the population or 13,482 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.2.3 Darling Heights (Queensland)

The 2021 resident population for Darling Heights was approximately 5,246, with a population density of 862.6 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Darling Heights in 2021 were Australian, English and Irish. In 2021, 29.2 per cent of people in Darling Heights were born overseas, compared with 13.9 per cent in the Toowoomba region, and the largest non-English speaking country of birth in Darling Heights was India, where 6.8 per cent of the population, or 352 people, were born.

Overall, 69.5 per cent of the population spoke English only and 25.8 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 85.5 per cent and 9.0 per cent respectively for Toowoomba. The primary language spoken at home in Darling Heights, other than English, was Nepali, with 3.3 per cent of the population, or 169 people speaking this language. In regards to Darling Heights's religious profile, overall, 62.6 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 30.7 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 60.9 per cent and 31.9 per cent respectively for Toowoomba, with the largest single religion in Darling Heights being Western (Roman) Catholic with 17.9 per cent of the population or 923 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.2.4 Hume (Victoria)

The 2021 resident population for Hume City was approximately 246,850, with a population density of 490.2 persons per square kilometre. In 2021, 39.9 per cent of people in Hume City were born overseas, compared with 35.7 per cent in Greater Melbourne, and the largest non-English speaking country of birth in Hume City was India, where 6.7 per cent of the population, or 16,441 people, were born.

In regard to Hume's linguistic profile, 45.2 per cent of the population spoke English only and 48.8 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 61.1 per cent and 34.1 per cent respectively for Greater Melbourne. The primary language spoken at home in Hume City, other than English, was Arabic, with 9.3 per cent of the population, or 22,658 people speaking this language. Overall, 74.3 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 19.2 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 56.4 per cent and 37.2 per cent respectively for Greater Melbourne. The largest single religion in Hume City was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 24.9 per cent of the population or 60,713 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.2.5 Jesmond (NSW)

The 2021 resident population for the City of Newcastle was approximately 169,317, with a population density of 906.1 persons per square kilometre. Analysis of the ancestry responses of the population in City of Newcastle in 2021 shows that the top five ancestries nominated were: English (68,773 people or 40.7%), Australian (63,864 people or 37.8%), Irish (21,080 people or 12.5%), Scottish (19,659 people or 11.6%), and Australian Aboriginal (7,167 people or 4.2%).

Overall, 84.8 per cent of the population spoke English only and 10.5 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 86.8 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively for Regional NSW. The primary language spoken at home in City of Newcastle, other than English, was Mandarin, with 1.0 per cent of the population, or 1,673 people speaking this language. An analysis of the country of birth of the population in City of Newcastle in 2021 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a larger proportion of people born overseas. Overall, 14.8 per cent of the population was born overseas, compared with 12.2 per cent for Regional NSW. The largest non-English speaking country of birth in City of Newcastle was India, where 1.0 per cent of the population, or 1,747

people, were born. Overall, 48.5 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 45.2 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 54.1 per cent and 37.6 per cent respectively for Regional NSW. For religion, the largest single religion in City of Newcastle was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 18.8 per cent of the population or 31,764 adherents.

#### 5.2.2.2.6 Shepparton (Victoria)

The 2021 resident population for the City of Greater Shepparton was approximately 68,522, with a population density of 28.30 persons per square kilometre. In 2021, 17.4 per cent of people in the City of Greater Shepparton were born overseas, compared with 12.4 per cent in Regional Victoria. Overall, 74.7 per cent of the population spoke English only and 17.6 per cent spoke a non-English language, compared with 86.4 per cent and 7.1 per cent respectively for Regional Victoria. The dominant language spoken at home in City of Greater Shepparton, other than English, was Punjabi, with 2.3 per cent of the population, or 1,549 people speaking this language. Approximately, 56.3 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 34.7 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 46.5 per cent and 45.2 per cent respectively for Regional Victoria, with the largest single religion in City of Greater Shepparton being Western (Roman) Catholic, with 22.2 per cent of the population or 15,165 people adherents.

#### 5.2.2.2.7 Toowoomba (Queensland)

The Toowoomba Estimated Resident Population for 2021 was 175,316, with a population density of 13.51 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Toowoomba in were English, Australian and Irish. In 2021, 13.9 per cent of people in Toowoomba were born overseas, compared with 18.4 per cent in Regional Queensland. The major differences between the countries of birth of the population in Toowoomba and Regional Queensland were: a larger percentage of people born in Iraq (1.3% compared to 0.1%), New Zealand (1.4% compared to 3.7%) and the United Kingdom (2.2% compared to 4.3%). In Toowoomba, 9.0 per cent of people spoke a language other than English at home. In 2021, a larger percentage reported speaking Kurdish at home (1.1% compared to 0.1%). Analysis of the religious affiliation of the population of Toowoomba in 2021 compared to Regional Queensland shows that there was a higher proportion of people who professed a religion and a lower proportion who stated they had no religion. The largest single religion in Toowoomba was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 20.0 per cent of the population or 34,597 adherents.

### 5.2.2.3 Rural

#### 5.2.2.3.1 Dubbo (NSW)

The 2021 Estimated Resident Population for Dubbo was 84,261, with a population density of 4.50 persons per square kilometre. The three largest ancestries in Dubbo in

2021 were Australian, English, and Australian Aboriginal. Analysis of the country of birth of the population in Dubbo in 2021 compared to New South Wales shows that there was a smaller proportion of people born overseas. Overall, 8.8 per cent of the population was born overseas, compared with 29.3 per cent for New South Wales. In Dubbo, 6.0 per cent of people spoke a language other than English at home in 2021. The major differences between the languages spoken at home for the population of Dubbo and New South Wales in 2021 were: a smaller percentage speaking Mandarin (0.2% compared to 3.4%), Arabic (0.1% compared to 2.8%) and Cantonese (0.2% compared to 1.8%). Analysis of the religious affiliation of the population of Dubbo in 2021 compared to New South Wales shows that there was a lower proportion of people who professed a religion as well as a lower proportion who stated they had no religion. Overall, 58.1 per cent of the population nominated a religion and 28.9 per cent said they had no religion, compared with 59.7 per cent and 33.0 per cent respectively for New South Wales. The largest single religion in Dubbo was Western (Roman) Catholic, with 24.9 per cent of the population as adherents.

### 5.2.3 Participants and Interviews

The participants of this research were community centre and hub leaders/facilitators, community workers and other personnel employed in settlement organizations and departments of education who provided services to refugee families and early learning opportunities for children in regional and metropolitan areas across the three states involved in the study. In New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, participants came from a variety of professional backgrounds including a local SaCC facilitator, Assistant principal, community liaison officers, community hub and centre leaders, a multicultural community development worker, school business manager, principal, teacher, hub staff member & coordinator, community engagement educator and coordinator, parent engagement officer, wellbeing/occupational therapist, early child coordinator, government official, hub mothers, a school chaplain, health scientist and a nurse. In total, there were 62 participants but 32 participants were leaders and facilitators in hubs and centres. Their experience ranged from 42 years in their respective field to one year. A total of 19 hubs or centres participated in the study: 3 were NSWDOE SaCCs, and 16 were hubs, one of these being private and two independent hubs (Table 1). Although it was initially planned for a smaller number of participants, there was significant interest in the project which resulted in attendance and participation exceeding initial expectations.

Year 1: In the first year of the research, 32 participants from 21 hubs and centres across three states participated in one 30-45-minute individual interview. The researchers gathered information that was relevant to the project, including the processes and practices that were used with settling refugee families and children, and how participants shared knowledge. Additionally, 30 individuals from several organisations also provided background knowledge and information.

Year 2: In the second year, after a thematic analysis of the first year’s data, 15 leaders/facilitators participated in one of four state-based workshops through virtual means to develop the KTF. This was followed by a tri-state workshop for final feedback on the framework and resources data base.

Year 3: In the final year of the project, virtual workshops concentrated on knowledge sharing. These were conducted with participants who had agreed to contribute to the video pod interviews (see Table 2). The topics were selected on the basis of the major themes developed and the particular strengths of participants. A representation of each state, regional, rural and metropolitan area was sought. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, travel to Victoria and Queensland to film interviews was not possible. Therefore, face-to-face interviews were conducted at only two sites, in NSW: Auburn North Public School and Fairfield Public School. The Victoria and Queensland interviews, as well as those in regional NSW centres, were conducted via Zoom.

State	Location	Participants
NSW	Auburn North	Mark Harris
		Hafsa Ashfaq
	Fairfield	Kristina Pukeroa
	Newcastle	Sister Diana Santleben
		Wanda McInnes- Fogg
Bateau Bay	Natalia Meliendrez	
Victoria	Roxburgh Park	Nayana Bhandari
		John Stafford
	Hume	Silvia Amici
	Broadmeadows	Erum Zafar
	Shepparton	Liz Arcus
Queensland	Woodridge	Silja McIvor
	Marsden	Penny Dearlove
	Darling Heights	Ricky Adams
	Woodridge	Michelle Smith

*Table 2 Third Year Locations and Participants*

For Victoria and Queensland, hub leaders were contacted via email between May-August 2022, and approval was obtained to conduct the third, video pod, interview via Zoom. For NSW, the Western Sydney University (WSU) team organised on-site interviews and recording at the SaCCs. This occurred through approval and consent from school principals where the centres were located. For Jesmond which is a regional area, Zara’s House, which is an independent hub, was approached directly by the research team. This was also the case for Mosaic Cultural Connections in regional NSW at Bateau Bay.

### 5.3 Interviews and Focus groups

Interviews were employed as a qualitative approach and underpin this research. Scholars indicate that qualitative research intends to generate knowledge that draws on human experience (Sandelowski, 2004), which was suitable for this project as it examined experiences and knowledge sharing amongst hub and centre leaders across Australia. Interviews work in harmony with qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest that most qualitative research is based on interviews, as this tool allows the research to reach areas of knowledge that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes. Both semi-structured interviews and focus groups were integral to gathering knowledge from established service organizations and settlement workers/educators on how they supported children's early learning and settlement of families from refugee backgrounds. A semi-structured format was selected because as Gray (2014, p. 382) indicates, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe for more detailed responses where the respondent is asked to clarify what they have said. Additionally, semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to be able to elicit further discussion between the researchers and the participants. This was central to this research, where contextual information differed from one location to another, in addition to the diversity of hub and centre leaders and their experiences working with different populations (see Appendix I).

### 5.4 Considerations and Challenges

There were several considerations that were taken into account during the various methodological and ethical processes of the research. First, to ensure the participants understood the requirements for their participation in the project, extended consent was explained and sought from the participants verbally and in written format. This was obtained and written consent documents signed in the presence of the research team at the first interview. Second, as one of the project aims was to feature the work conducted in tri-state hubs, the self-filming and interviews took place within the hubs to capture the participants natural setting (Gray, 2014). Third, there were ethical requirements, as outlined by the different organisations, with filming children. To ensure these guidelines were adhered to, the faces of the children filmed in this study were not revealed unless parents agreed. Fourth, to reduce potential bias in the thematic analysis of the interviews, critical discussions and cross-checking of themes and content derived from the interviews occurred through a collaborative process between the academic team and interviewees involved in the project.

Several challenges arose across different research phases. First, in the second year of the project, due to COVID-19 restrictions, communication with stakeholders and

participant interviews were conducted in a virtual format. This change proved to be successful and well-received. In many ways COVID-19 produced innovations in communication modalities and revealed new knowledge to the workers in hubs and centres regarding the families they were working with, and thus has reshaped their thinking on how things might be done in the future. Being part of this project has helped them reflect on this period. Second, the research team did not have physical access to sites, yet the virtual mode provided an opportunity to expand the network and to gain a broader and more in-depth understanding of the contexts. The researchers were also able to broaden networks, which included a wider range of participants from Principals to hub/centre coordinators, volunteers and community and school funded educators. The diverse range of programs included an independent centre funded by a regional primary school, community-funded Zara's House in Newcastle and the Intercultural playground program, Newcastle, supported by Northern Settlement Services and Playgrounds Australia. The inclusion of a greater diversity of centres and people in the discussions and interviews created richer responses in the development of the KTF.

Second, during the organisation of the filming of the video pods, one participating school and hub that were engaged in the project since the first year and had intended to contribute to the filming of 3 vignettes withdrew from the study on the day of the zoom interviews. The school cited in-school work pressures experienced by staff due to COVID-19 absences. As such, the vignettes to be completed by this school were allocated to other participants that had already been filmed who had provided an insight into the vignette topic. Despite the challenges that arose in the study, it is evident that the COVID-19 related challenges had beneficial outcomes for the study by expanding the participant scope and thus provided richer and more diverse contributions.

## 5.5 Thematic Analysis

Interviews and workshops were analysed using thematic analysis. In qualitative research, thematic analysis is widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). It is a systematic method that is employed for identifying, analysing, organising, and describing information from a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is an approach that is used to highlight similarities and differences, provide insights and rich account of data (ibid). This approach was suitable for the project due to the various locations in which the hubs were present, and the contextual dynamics that shaped the practices and processes of centres and hubs, in addition to the metropolitan, regional and rural contexts in which they operated. The process of employing thematic analysis in the project was systematic. First, 21 individual semi-structured interviews conducted during the first year of the project were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The interview transcripts were read in depth and manually coded line-by-line to identify trends and patterns in the data. Codes relating to knowledge sharing, settlement, early learning, and transition to school

were recorded in an Excel sheet. They were broadly categorised into practices and processes and contexts. From this process several sub-themes were developed, which are outlined in the KTF (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Knowledge Translation Framework

At the beginning of the study, a small-scale survey (Appendix J) was also employed to collect information on leaders' confidence and their need for resources and professional development. A link was sent to each person, and they completed the survey on their devices or computer. The survey was hosted on a Qualtrics site. This survey was also intended to be used to evaluate leaders' confidence and reflections, following their participation in the project in Year 3. However, the data from the initial survey were not analysed further due to insufficient or incomplete responses.

A final workshop was held to view all vignettes with half the number of participants. At this workshop they were asked to respond to a Zoom poll after each vignette. The categories on which the participants were asked to provide their feedback included: *I learned something new*, *I think the information is useful for new centres and hubs*, *the important information has been provided*, and *some key knowledge is missing*. The data suggests that respondents found the information useful and important. The majority learned something new. The video pod *Communicating to connect* had the most positive responses.

The verbal feedback from participants revealed that all attending participants were satisfied with the video pods and agreed that they reflected on the significant work that was conducted in hubs to assist with refugee settlement. However, comments were



provided to improve the content of the hubs. For example, in the video pod *Communicating to connect*, Silvia from Hume commented after viewing the pod that critical knowledge was not evident in the clip. She mentioned:

I was just thinking that in our hubs, bilingual workers are critical workers, and there was no mention of that. There was mentioning that there are different cultures and different people speaking different languages but I think it should be emphasised that having bilingual workers have a bigger impact... I think no one talked about the people speaking the different languages in the hubs.

Natalia also commented: ‘I think it is about communication, someone should say something about interpreters’.

The feedback provided by the participants was collated by the research team and sent to the Digital Team to adjust the video pods where possible, based on the filmed content available and other factors, including what it was possible to change in the final stages after filming was complete.

The participants also commented that the video pods should show connections to the KTF, based on which they were developed. As such, this report shows how each video pod relates to the different dimensions of the framework for participants to utilise and has been colour coded with clear instructions for each pod to be used in professional development meetings and other areas.

## 6 Development of the Knowledge Translation Framework and Video Pods

In this study, we aimed to translate the knowledge derived from leaders, working with refugee families and children in selected community hubs and centres, into a framework. This framework is intended to be used as a tool to guide both new and experienced leaders in their practices and to reflect on their practices to optimally support refugee families’ settlement, children’s early learning, and transition to school.

This framework was developed through an iterative process. In the first step, we organised the support that 32 leaders provided to families, into three broad domains: settlement, early learning, and transition to school. In the second step, we categorised the leaders’ core practices and processes, utilised to support families and children, into 10 sub-themes, namely: family connections, soft entry, cultural orientation, communication, relationship building, parent engagement, collaboration, networking, advocacy, and evaluation. In the last step, we organised the contextual knowledge of leaders, knowledge that guided their efforts in achieving the outcomes of settlement, early learning, and transition to school, into 12 sub-themes, namely: location, systems,

foci, family mobility, welfare, wellbeing, places, spaces, resources, digital literacies, inter-cultural competence, and professional development.

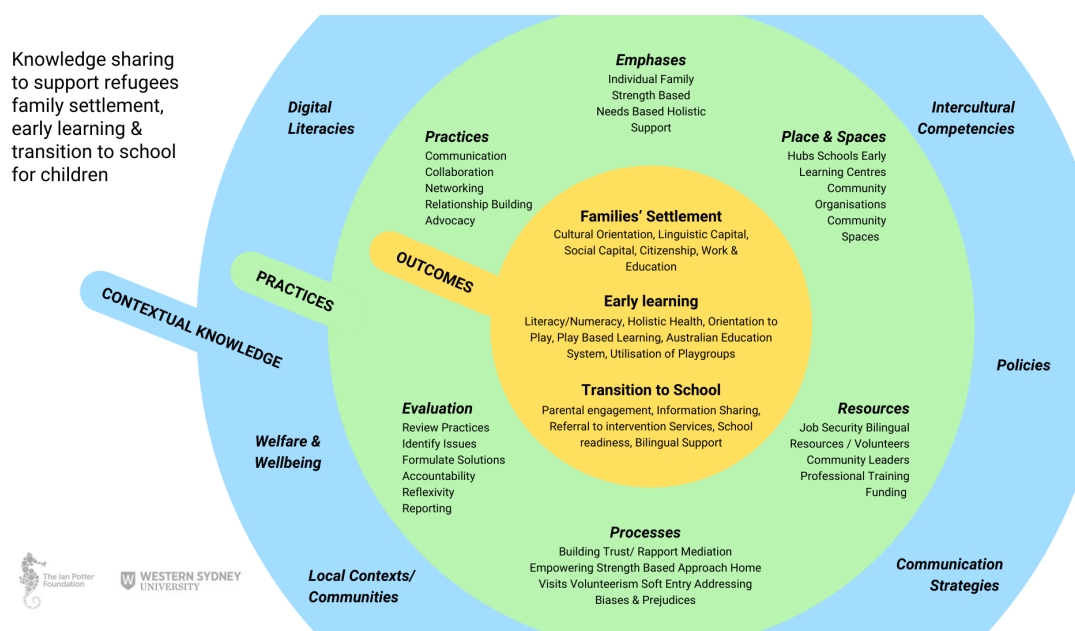


Figure 2 Knowledge Translation Framework- Detailed

Leaders were involved in all phases of the framework development to encourage them to reflect on and to rethink their current practices and generate new ideas leading to future innovation. We gathered leaders' feedback on the framework by conducting five workshops (4 state-wide workshops of 1 hour's duration, and one tri-state workshop of 2 hours' duration) on the framework's relevance, themes, visual presentation and layout. The draft framework, revised with the feedback from leaders in each state, was presented to all leaders in a tri-state workshop (of 2 hours duration) across NSW, Queensland and Victoria, to seek additional feedback and finalise the framework. Thus, the framework was finalised using feedback from all workshops. Following this process, only the layout was changed. To make the framework visually clear, the three domains with all subthemes were presented in three tiers, representing their interrelatedness (see Figure 2). The participatory, dialogic approach utilised in this study gave an opportunity for leaders to share their insights, analyse and contribute to development of the framework. This approach demonstrates the value of considering leaders' knowledge across different contexts in the development of innovative pedagogies and tools (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7).

Based on the gaps in resources identified from both interviews and workshops, the research team in partnership with the digital team developed a series of video pods that were designed to provide visually engaging and informative insights into the research findings, and the dimensions of the KTF. The purpose of these video pods was to disseminate the findings of the study to other stakeholders, as well as current and future centre and hub facilitators. This video pod dissemination approach, in tandem with a

report/policy recommendation approach, was adopted to ensure that knowledge sharing amongst stake holders could be improved and amplified, whereby on the one hand, an individual's learning is increased from a combination of words and pictures, rather than either alone (Mayer, Fiorella & Stull, 2014), and on the other hand, these approaches combine the work of professionals across a large number of geographical boundaries including Victoria, Queensland and NSW, reaching a wide audience (Florence & Betrus, 2020).

## 6.1 Creating the *Settling Softly* Video Pods



A series of vignettes for educators and community workers were developed with the support of the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Academic, at Western Sydney University, and their media-creating team led by Sam Dessen, Senior XR Creative Developer. The 21 vignettes became part of 7 video pods developed along key themes, to address

knowledge sharing topics of importance developed through the collaborative process outlined.

These videos have an explicit learning goal, or an intent to facilitate conceptual or procedural knowledge (Fyfield, Henderson & Phillips, 2022). To achieve this, as per instructional video guidelines, the video pods are brief, the duration of each being set to 3 minutes, with the use of audio and visual elements that convey appropriate parts of an explanation, and the use of conversational and an enthusiastic style to enhance engagement (Brame, 2016). The pods combined elements of text, images, and audio, and are readily accessible to a wide range of stakeholders and audiences.

Moreover, the *Settling Softly* video pods featured the hub and centre facilitators and community workers in a conversational format, to enhance engagement (Guo, Kim & Rubin, 2014, p. 42-3). In addition to participants, an enthusiastic and well-known media personality, Costa Georgiadis from ABC TV's *Gardening Australia*, was employed to introduce, connect and summarize the videos, based on the team's text.



*Figure 3 Filming at Auburn North Public School: Mark Harris and Hafsa Ashfaq*  
 Left to right: Mark Harris (ANPS), Hafsa Ashfaq (ANPS), Sam Dessen (WSU), Blessings Matsvururu (WSU)



*Figure 4 Filming at Auburn North Public School: Hafsa Ashfaq*  
 Sam Dessen (WSU; left) and Hafsa Ashfaq (ANPS)

The Settling Softly video pods showcase both the research results, and the significant work being conducted in hubs and centres across NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Each 3-minute video pod consists of 3 vignettes and addresses one topic. These topics were developed in ongoing consultation by the chief investigators with participants, through the KTF. The video pods include: (1) Relationships Matter, (2) Communicating to Connect, (3) 'Out There' Making it work, (4) Tips for Starting School, (5) Playgroups and Learning (6) Creative Responses to Settling (7) Productive Responses to Diverse Parenting. Each video pod consists of an interview along with images and videos that were self-filmed/photographed by the participants, except two that were based in Sydney, which the digital team recorded. These are freely available on the project website and YouTube for wide dissemination and use. The video pods can be viewed in one sitting or multiple sessions, viewed alongside the detailed KTF, and can be stopped and started accordingly. Additionally, there are explanatory worksheets that provide key takeaway concepts for each video pod featured on the research site.

Prior to filming and following the consent and approval process, the next step was to construct interview questions for the participants (Appendix I). Each participant was selected based on their expertise in a given topic, developed through Zoom workshops, the initial survey and thematic analysis of the first year's interviews. The interview questions for video pods were scripted in a collaborative process by the chief investigators and consolidated by the digital team prior to filming. These questions were sent to each participant prior to the filmed interviews.

It was initially anticipated in the earlier phases of the study that filming of interviews and the activities of the hubs would occur on-site across the three states. This did occur in metropolitan Sydney (see Figures 3 and 4), however, due to challenges that arose with COVID-19, Zoom interviews and self-filming were adopted as a means of capturing the information about the work conducted in the centres and hubs. Self-filming support was provided (see Appendix K), and the digital team held three half-hour workshops that provided an overview on self-filming, in addition to the written guide (Appendix L). The workshops were voluntary. The participants completed *Digital Release forms* (see appendices M and N) that covered incidental involvement of people who were not originally targeted for filming.

Following the creation of the video pods, participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the content of the pods, drawing on the multi-directional reflective approach applied to the study by both the research team and interviewees. The details of this process are discussed below.

## 7 Research Findings

This section presents the findings of the research, drawing on the data from interviews, consultations, and workshops. These findings are underpinned by the KTF, which was developed in an ongoing reflective process with the participants. The findings are presented under the heading ‘Current knowledge sharing practices and needs’ and broken into sections regarding support to families in their settlement, children’s early learning and transition to school.

To navigate the KTF in these findings of the research, an icon at the left of the page shows links to the appropriate section of the framework: The highlighted text aligned with the icon has been colour coded according to the three areas of the framework: **Contextual Knowledge**, **Practices** and **Outcomes**.



### 7.1 Current knowledge sharing practices and gaps

#### 7.1.1 Settlement

Participants reported a range of ways in which they shared knowledge among themselves. Significantly, COVID-19 changed these practices for the better. CHA has a long-established practice of networking at the local, state and national level. Hub leaders meet regularly with a hub coordinator and the coordinator maintains strong communication channels with each leader. In our study we spoke with two hub coordinators, one in Victoria in the Hume Council area and one in Queensland in Access at Logan. They provide links to specialized knowledge and staff as well as an ear to needs. Leaders in CHA felt well supported although the imposition of what was funded meant that, at times, they felt the local needs were being overlooked. To some extent knowledge sharing is localized and self-contained within the CHA network, thus this project enabled sharing outside of this network and across state boundaries. While CHA has a national conference, this is not annual, and COVID-19 disrupted this normal process. During COVID-19 CHA provided additional resources to the hubs and, in Hume in particular, there were emergency responses on the ground to manage a very difficult situation when the pandemic became particularly embedded in the area.

Although the use of technological platforms had numerous benefits, by enhancing communication and connection between the hubs and the families, with refugee families **developing trust** is a key dimension that needs to be established prior to engagement of families with hubs and centres, and *social distancing* made this challenging. During COVID-19 lockdowns, hub and centre leaders and facilitators discussed the challenges to establish trust with families given that the main form of communication was through technological platforms. Silvia, the CHA coordinator for Hume Council commented that:



So obviously you can send out as much information as you want through social media, but not everyone is on social media. You can keep putting posters or trying to use this messaging. It doesn't really work, especially with refugee communities, where you really need to build on trust and the message really needs to come from people that they do trust. I was in Hume... we were one of the first hotspots, and unfortunately the communication that came from XXXX came very late in terms of translating materials and efficient ways of communicating. So the hub leaders did the job for a few days before we got anything from the government ... you need to be efficient and you need to be really acting straight away on these emerging issues.

Perhaps the most isolated were a few centres in rural and regional areas that either set themselves up or were not provided with ongoing professional support or development. This was particularly the case for one centre in Queensland, and three in NSW, of which two were not attached to institutional networks. Zara's House, an independent centre set up by a group of committed individuals, led by Sister Diana Santleben, gained knowledge by actively pursuing it. Visits to Sydney to gather resources, talking with the local services and schools, gaining support from the local university and drawing on as much expertise as possible through local networks were measures central to their survival and ongoing support. They also carried out fund raising activities. One rural centre facilitator in NSW felt very isolated until COVID-19 enabled networking via digital methods. Indeed, COVID-19 produced new networks among SaCCs in NSW, and the local networks continue. Furthermore, the digital networks opened up an awareness of the needs of isolated centres, and professional support continues to grow. The one centre in regional Queensland that had been set up by a school was connected to a myriad of local organizations where knowledge was brought into the centre and shared with staff and families. Much of the knowledge gaining and sharing occurs due to the initiatives of the centre and hub staff.

One of the gaps we noted is that rarely are these highly competent and engaging people called on to share their knowledge with other institutions, even the schools they may be attached to. While their knowledge is highly regarded there doesn't seem to be an opportunity for them to share this knowledge, except occasionally at the national conference in CHA. Local councils, education departments, attached schools, and allied health and welfare services – all of these could benefit from the knowledge of the hub leaders and centre facilitators. This would enable a contextualised understanding of refugee families' needs and provide a more integrated support structure.

#### *7.1.1.1 Support to families in their settlement*

The participants in this project outlined a diverse range of processes and practices that support families who come to Australia as refugees. A high level of contextual knowledge is required and sometimes this is available and at other times there is little.

When provided it comes from institutional providers such as CHA, education departments or settlement agencies, such as AMES in Victoria, Multicultural Australia in Queensland and SSI in NSW and Queensland.

The provision of settlement support includes housing, welfare (including domestic violence), work pathways, health advice, connections to a range of community services and networks, English language learning and a space to relax and have a rest. As one of our participants noted (Michelle, St Pauls), many have no extended family and life is full-on 24/7 so just coming and resting while their child plays is an important part of what the hub does.

However, before any of these activities and opportunities can be offered, good communication needs to be established. One of the first ways in which they do this is through communication.

### *7.1.1.2 Communication*

A key issue that emerged from the interviews was the importance of communication between the hubs, schools, and families in the process of settlement. Communication is central to establishing and maintaining inclusive relationships for refugee families and their children, and plays a significant role in integration. The hubs and centres considered a range of linguistic considerations and worked to facilitate communication between the school and the multicultural community. The following section explores the ways that the digital literacies that are available to the centres, schools, and parents, have been built upon as a communicative strategy for families. This is followed by discussion around the use of bilingual staff, who were central to engaging families in the hubs.

In recent times, there has been a significant decrease in face-to-face communication and an increase in digital communication between people. This shift is largely due to the widespread adoption of smartphones and other devices, the proliferation of communication platforms, and the ramification of isolation and social distancing with the rise of COVID-19. Taking the [contextual knowledge](#) on technological shifts into account, hubs and centres adapted their strategies and shifted to the use of digital media to communicate with families. Leaders addressed this issue by using technological devices such as mobile phones, and platforms such as email and WhatsApp calls, which were employed to develop genuine and authentic relationships with the parents and to connect the families to the school. Silvia from Hume commented:

What we are learning is that we really need to engage communities in different levels with different strategies. .... If they were coming to the schools, we were engaging them. Now we are learning that some of them might not have the time to be ... for an activity at the school, but they might be enjoying staying engaged through a





WhatsApp group where they can just send a message and stay connected to the other families when they have time, or they might be more willing to do an English class when they kids are at school or in other time frames when normally wouldn't run any official class.



Nayana and John from Good Samaritan Catholic school in Victoria commented that the school and hub families are different and prefer different forms of **communication**. They catered to this by employing a range of platforms or media to engage the families. Nayana commented that:

I'll talk about in a brief manner that we communicate with our families by every possible means which involves social media, WhatsApp, email, phone call, text messages. Every mode of communication. Also Skoolbag which is an app for school. So, we try to be in touch with them because one thing doesn't suit every person. So, we try to again make our actions according to what suits the family. (Nayana, & John Catholic school PS HUB, Melbourne)

Centre staff from Fairfield Primary School in NSW and other school personnel also employed technological platforms to facilitate communication and connectedness. Taking the **digital and linguistic abilities** of the families into account, they developed an app that contains a QR code to translate information the school needs to communicate with parents. This app translated several languages such as Arabic and Vietnamese, and parents had the option to listen to an audio version of the information to cater to parents who have literacy challenges in their native language. The app was underpinned by a strength-based approach that drew on the **linguistic capital** of the parents as they navigate settlement and adjust to living in Australia. Kristina from Fairfield in the first- and third-year interviews mentioned respectively:



So obviously we tried to do the paper-based information, which was then translated in multiple languages. We then found out that some parents can't read, so that wasn't helpful to them. And then our school introduced QR codes. So every single note that goes out to families, at the bottom of the note, they can use their phone. .... So they can read it if they want to, but all they have to do is scan their QR code off their phone and they actually get to listen to it.

The facilitators also mentioned the importance of employing a range of strategies to communicate as the parents came from disadvantaged backgrounds and had literacy challenges and difficulty reading in their home and host languages. Natalia emphasised that:

... we would like to focus into the parenting topics, we believe, and we think that this will empower the families to be able to know how

to move forward, but also help parents to use the program and to focus on the knowledge of the resources and the language and the culture's beliefs, but also to adapt all these resources within the countries. So, we start talking about which platform it could be the best to deliver these resources. ...So, once we develop these resources and if we're going to use these across different areas, the population might be different, and we need them in different languages. Some area has been identified as being more important for Arabic speakers or Syrian, but then Pakistanis, Indians also might need them, even if they speak English.



Knowledge  
Translation  
Framework

In developing the technological platforms, it was evident from Natalia's comment that **contextual knowledge** plays a significant role in determining the types of digital media that are available to the hub and the families, where different minority groups within the same setting have varying levels of **digital literacy**. Employing relevant digital **communicative strategies** to each group within the school needed to take into account the family abilities, **linguistic capital** and **cultural orientations**. This was also underpinned by a strength-based approach whereby hub staff adapted to existing knowledge of the community and built on it, rather than introduced new technology to the families, which has the potential to create communicative challenges.

Furthermore, the participant responses demonstrated that communication was not a one-way process between centre facilitators and parents. It was multi-directional, including between parents, using technology, and assisted families with different literacies, languages, dialects and linguistic identity. For example, Natalia from Bateau Bay in NSW commented that communication between parents is recognised as being important for sharing culture and navigating their new lives in Australia. Natalia indicated that:

Every family brings with them a lot of the traditions, beliefs, memories, stories that enrich acquisitions... when they feel ready, we allow parents to take time to read a book or to share a story about the cultural background that they come from. We use different social media platforms... then we make sure our communication, our information gets to our community members in the community... They're getting what they need coming to our groups.



Knowledge  
Translation  
Framework

Natalia emphasised how a **strength-based approach** for communication in the **community space** has allowed the families to develop the **linguistic, cultural, and social** capital through sharing knowledge and experience.

It is evident from the responses that technology has been a powerful tool in the settlement of refugee families in their new communities. The different platforms have

provided the ability to overcome language barriers, access a range of resources, connect with families and overall, facilitate integration.

However, while digital communication can bridge the language barrier and provide access to resources in times when face-to-face communication is not possible, in-person interactions between the centres and families are also essential in building relationships developing trust and understandings, extending networks and social opportunities. **Bilingual staff** were employed across the hubs and centres in NSW, Victoria, and Queensland, and played a central role in facilitating communication between the hubs and centres and the school community, if required. Kristina from Fairfield commented: ‘so, other platforms of communication with our families, I think, would have to be to our amazing bilingual staff within our community’.

Bilingual staff are essential for effective communication with families. They work to ensure that families have a clear understanding of school and community related issues and also work as cultural brokers to help bridge cultural differences, especially for families who may have different expectations for their children’s education. Additionally, employing bilingual staff can promote the building of trust and rapport as they provide a sense of cultural competence and inclusivity to make families feel welcome and comfortable in the school and broader community.

In addition to staff playing a crucial role in bridging the gap between the community and the school, community programs and spaces are also important. In regional Victoria at the Community Hub of St George's Road Primary School and Shepperton English Language Centre, a community garden played a central role in facilitating communication and **relationship building** between the hub and migrant and refugee parents, and also parent to parent. Liz, Community Hub leader, who featured in the Settling Softly video pod ‘Out There Making it Work’ indicated that:



One of our most popular programmes is the gardening and nature play [...] growing cultural edible plants. So we're learning lots about each other [...] but walking into that garden I see the eyes light up, the shoulders go down and relax into the space [...] familiarity within that be the African ladies might notice the linga linga or the Iraqi ladies notice the Rashad [...] what we do is we grow and share that produce and then we have cooking and the ladies will take turns [...] the families will take turns teaching from their culture.



The community garden operated as a **social opportunity** and a shared **community space** to help families build relationships and trust with the school and each other, extend their social networks, and develop a sense of belonging, while drawing on familiar aspects of culture or parents’ cultural capital.

In relation to the strength-based approach and the building of linguistic and cultural capital of the refugee families, Natalia also discussed the importance of the centre facilitator role, working as a bridge between the school and the community, assisting parents with building their strengths. Natalia, who featured in the Settling Softly video pod ‘Playgroups and early learning’, highlights how the refugee families have several skills, and through communication with the school and networking, opportunities have allowed the parents to build on their existing skills to enhance integration within society. She mentioned that:

So, I think build the communication with the families and the service providers and the school, but also work in collaboration, to build that networking and build those relationships for the families, to really develop those skills, because those families have the skills, but they're not sure where to go. So, we are the ones who really have to focus on their advocacy to support them and provide that journey and that support while that is happening, in the transition over months, to be able also to go back to the community and pass those skills to others.

It is evident that the effective communicative strategies within the hubs and centres, both in-person and digitally, have provided the families with the ability to connect with other families, community organisations, and service providers, who can provide support and information to help families navigate living in Australia and assist with settlement and integration. For families who may be isolated in their new community, these opportunities can also provide a sense of belonging.

### *7.1.1.3 Wellbeing and Welfare*



The **wellbeing** of refugee families is of central importance, and during COVID-19 this was a significant concern due to the additional challenges that the pandemic brought to already difficult situations in settling in a new country, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The implementation of social distancing measures could increase isolation and impact mental health, language barriers could impede access to telephone or online services, and those who were disadvantaged may not have had access to reliable internet or telephone services.

As with the communicative adaptations made above in the shift to digital platforms, hubs needed to address issues of wellbeing and welfare in innovative ways to support the families during the pandemic. In relation to making connections to community services such as counselling and wellbeing programs for families, this was supported by the hubs through online platforms. Linda (pseudonym) from regional Victoria discussed that:

the trauma counsellors and refugee health nurses through Primary Care Connect have been delivering online for us again, since around

about May, wellbeing sessions and on zoom, so that's weekly for one hour, usually even up to one and a half hours. So, that's been a really great way to connect families in and a wonderful soft entry, just like our couch would have been where they might have delivered programmes physically in the hub, to connect to those counsellors, to connect to the different services.

While the hubs and centres across the three states have employed a variety of effective strategies to enhance communication between the hubs and families, to assist with settlement, establishing trust while social distancing is challenging and impacts communication relating to parents' and families' welfare and wellbeing. While these challenges were prevalent across the metropolitan, regional and rural areas, there were challenges that came to the fore when the participants discussed settlement of refugees in regional and rural areas. These are discussed below.

#### *7.1.1.4 Regional Challenges and Responses*

In Australia, the government has been settling refugees and migrants away from metropolitan centres in regional and rural areas as an overall strategy for managing and integrating refugees into society. While this increases the cultural and ethnic diversity of these areas, remote and regional cities have lower population densities (as discussed in the Methodology section, above) and may have limited job opportunities and services. As with living in metropolitan areas, there were challenges that arose during the settlement of refugees in regional and remote areas, and hubs and centres addressed these challenges in varying ways.

In Jesmond, a regional community of NSW, the centre staff at Zara's House indicated the importance of assessing the needs of the community prior to being able to respond to the settlement needs of refugee families. Several factors that play a role in facilitating refugees to settle in regional areas were highlighted in the interviews. One was the importance of the location of the community centre to ease access, increase the availability of volunteers to help the community, and support childminding or childcare of refugees and migrants. Wanda, a member of the leadership team at Zara's House commented that:

There are four things that I think are really important to consider is location, assessment of needs, availability of volunteers [...] And childminding [...]. Not everybody can drive. You need a place where the location is central to where the majority of your people are living [...] someone who's first coming from a war-torn country and who's faced unbelievable trauma is going to have very, very specific needs [...] So you have to assess the needs of that community if you're in a regional area”.

It is evident that the programs developed at Zara’s House were based on a needs assessment established through community engagement, to gather information, in addition to mapping the available resources in the community, to connect families to the services they needed for settlement. While the programs that were developed responded to cohorts of refugees in the Newcastle area, other contexts produced different needs and responses.



The responses in regional Victoria were different to that of Zara House in regional NSW. Networking with [community partnerships](#) was central to one regional Victorian hub in an area that had a long history of settling refugees. Liz is part of the Community Hubs Australia network and her Community Hub at St George's Road Primary School and Shepparton English Language Centre, she commented: ‘I've had really strong connections with different networks, different groups, different organisations, different communities, community leaders’.

The importance of networking and communication, as discussed above, was also emphasised by Ricky Adams, Community Liaison officer from Darling Heights State School in Toowoomba, Queensland, specifically because they are in a regional area, so refugees rely significantly on the community centre. She indicated that:

... and being a regional centre, it's very, very important for us to offer a wide range because people can't go to other places to access these things [...] It's great that they can come to the school, they can get loads of knowledge, they can make friends, they can connect with their kids' school [...] and that just sort of spreads out and reaches out into the community.

It is evident from the responses above that networking through hubs and centres in regional and remote areas is crucial in supporting refugee families. They play an important role in providing support to promote well-being and operate as a central point of information for refugee families to connect them to the services and support they need. Hubs and centres also can provide targeted responses, services such as trauma informed support, and coordinate services by different agencies, organisations, and service providers.

#### *7.1.1.5 English language classes*

Despite English classes being offered to all refugee families as part of the Federal Government’s settlement policy (Australian Department of Home Affairs, 2022), the classes do not always fit the needs of parents, particularly mothers. For example, English language classes are formally offered at times that interfere with picking up children from school, and are often not ‘fit for purpose’ meaning they do not have a communicative competence focus but rather a work ready focus. Centres and hubs focus on talking about cooking and making recipes, learning about schooling and early childhood practices in Australia, and some centres even help with practising for

citizenship tests. It all depends on the needs of each group. Many tend to use volunteers for this purpose while others, such as CHA hubs have a budget to employ people. For families who were unable to attend due to constraints with transport, the experience during COVID-19 of conducting all programs and communication online made it easier for families to participate in hub programs and enhanced their engagement. For example, Silvia from Hume discussed this by saying:

opportunity to learn and see that some of the needs can be met in different ways that were never explored before. So one of the discoveries was that some of the participants have been more willing to engage online than face-to-face, and that was due, perhaps, to the fact that they were before struggling with travelling, they didn't have the money or the time or the space to reach out on the hubs. So doing maybe their English class or the playgroups online was easier for some of them. Other communities suffer because they might be illiterate in English or their own language, so if there's anything related to IT skills it was just too much and overwhelming. So, they pretty much disconnected.

In conclusion, settlement is a process built on trust, mutual respect and the provision of services and support. There was a shift from the low use of technologies to enhanced use of technologies to connect and communicate with families during the pandemic, when people were locked into their homes. New ways of **building trust and maintaining relationships** were developed to empower families, particularly mothers, with digital literacy skills. While the practices and processes changed within hubs to support refugee and migrant families, on a professional level for hub and centre leaders, professional isolation increased **networking, collaboration** and **capacity building**, reflecting a positive professional outcome from social restrictions arising from the pandemic. The following section explores the findings relating to Early Learning and Transition to School.



### 7.1.2 Early Learning

Children's early learning provides a pathway to their smooth transition to school, which is an important educational objective and developmental outcome, as measured by the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) in Australia (Australian Government, n.d.). Newly arrived refugee families with young children need additional support in building their children's early learning, development, and health (De Gioia, 2017). Leaders of this study supported children's early learning through play in hubs and playgroups, promoting children's participation in community and outdoor activities and also by involving parents in children's learning and building their capacities.

### 7.1.2.1 Play to learn

Children were provided with many play activities in hubs and playgroups to build their literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, and development needed for their formal learning in schools. Leaders organised play for children of all ages from birth through to toddlerhood (2 years of age) and pre-school years (3-5 years of age). They provided both free and structured play to promote children’s holistic learning and development, collaborating with a range of stakeholders in their local communities: Kristina, from Fairfield in New South Wales commented:

I'll get services to come in. I've had the Western Sydney Wanderers and cricket thunder [...] the Smith Family, to provide Let's Read and Let's Count”.

The various play activities provided to children included singing, music, reading, and movement for children. Leaders regarded play, particularly in supported playgroups, as highly valuable in building children’s early learning, development, and health. Their philosophy and practices concur with research showing that play in playgroups is beneficial to promote children’s early learning, especially for those from minority and immigrant backgrounds, whose parents tend to miss out on the early learning support provided in early childhood settings, faced with many barriers, including affordability issues (e.g., Lamb, 2020, cited in Sanagavarapu, 2022).



While some leaders organised playgroups in hubs by **liaising** with outside organisations, others utilised local community playgroups or structured playgroups run by schools, with the help of a trained early childhood facilitator. Further, a large of part playgroup activities also involved promoting refugee children’s English language skills. While helping children to learn English, leaders also emphasised the need to maintain their home language. As an example, one leader from NSW organised playgroups both in English and Dari for Dari-speaking children with the help of bilingual playground assistants, to preserve children’s heritage language.



Also, leaders capitalised on the affordances that several other physical **places and spaces** provided for children’s learning, such as playgrounds, outdoors, local parks, community events and activities (e.g., cooking and gardening). For example, leaders took families and children to events such as ‘Harmony Day’ and ‘Literacy Week’ and immersed them in various activities, such as book reading, to build their early language and literacy skills. Some leaders also signed up families and children to a place called ‘Imaginary Library’ through which children received a story book to their homes every month, depending on their ages. As outlined in research, community activities help to enhance early learning skills of language, literacy, and numeracy and contribute to the school readiness of children from immigrant and minority backgrounds (Lee, Kim, & Yudron, 2022).



Moreover, leaders drew on their cultural knowledge and demonstrated **cultural sensitivity** in delivering early learning activities. For instance, one leader organised





playgroups centred on the theme of ‘Cultures around the world’ to provide culturally relevant play-based learning. As attested by that leader, this focus on multiculturalism helped to build **connections** and **trust** with parents. It also helped to enhance families’ knowledge of the importance of play, which in turn enhanced their participation in playgroups.

#### 7.1.2.1.1 Parental engagement and capacity building

In the present study, leaders’ philosophical understandings of children’s early learning also included building parents’ capacities and their engagement in children’s learning. Parental participation or engagement in children’s activities helps to support children’s early learning (Gross, Bettencourt, Taylor, Francis, Bower & Singleton 2020). However, refugee parents from diverse cultural backgrounds may not understand and value the importance of parents’ involvement in children’s learning due to limited knowledge of the local or cultural educational practices and systems in their host countries. These together with their limited English language can hinder parents’ engagement in children’s learning. Amanda, a hub leader from Queensland stated:

Parents don’t have major roles in helping their child to learn. But here it is a little bit different. I feel in Australia parents have a big role in helping their kids in learning and so if I don’t know that then I don’t know the system and my child would be missing something that the teacher would not give them.

Acknowledging the many challenges that parents face and to promote their engagement in children’s learning, leaders empowered families with information and knowledge on how to support children’s learning. They organised many workshops collaboratively, with other support organisations, on relevant topics such as child development, early childhood education, and play-based learning. Further, leaders provided translated information on play and early learning, using technology such as Google translator and expertise of bilingual assistants. Moreover, they also developed bilingual **resources** on topics such as phonics, literacy, and language development, to guide parents on how they can support their children’s literacy learning and homework. Importantly, leaders tried to reach out to families individually to build their trust and relationships and not deliver information as professionals, which reflects their **soft entry** approaches to supporting families and children. Some leaders also put special effort into engaging fathers in children’s learning through tailored programmes such as ‘Kids and Dads’.



When COVID-19 disrupted leaders’ established supportive practices in hubs, responding to those challenges, innovatively, they moved early learning programmes to virtual platforms. They delivered play and playgroups using **digital technologies** such as Zoom. Also, leaders prepared and delivered weekly learning packs to families’ homes, working collaboratively with schools. Elena from Wollongong commented:



we came with the idea – we do home packs. So, every fortnight we prepare packs together and their families would come to school and collect it and they do it together with their children at home.



While **upskilling** themselves **digitally**, leaders also supported families to adapt to online learning with the help of parent volunteers and by lending digital devices. Some leaders commented on the benefits of Zoom online play and playgroups to connect with families, who previously had difficulties in participating in hub activities due to transport and other personal difficulties. Leaders reported increased involvement of families in Zoom playgroups during COVID-19 and their full engagement in children's learning without any distractions. Contrasting with these benefits, leaders highlighted the problem that virtual learning also limited some families' involvement in their children's learning due to lack of digital literacies and/or their access to devices such as computers. Leaders need to consider such digital divide and inequity problems when planning their online learning activities for children.

Overall, collaboration with families and other support organisations enabled leaders to implement and conduct various early learning programs. Thus, family engagement was a notable feature of the processes that leaders utilised to promote children's early learning, along with play.

**Needs and gaps:** Access to bilingual educators, bilingual books and other **resources** were noted to be an issue in leaders' efforts to support children's learning and engagement of families in children's learning. Additionally, leaders identified that physical **spaces** in hubs were not large enough to organise play activities with large groups. They felt that the small spaces available in hubs were not conducive to promote parent-child interactions indoors and that it would be hard to provide play outdoors in all weather conditions. A minority mentioned gaps in relation to accommodating children's trauma, **wellbeing, and families' mobility**, in children's learning and transition to school programmes, due to their limited knowledge on these topics, and highlighted the need for **professional development** in those areas. It should be noted that settlement agencies have a number of trauma counselling partnerships and there is much work being done in this space to assist families.



### 7.1.3 Transition to School

Newly arrived refugee families with young children endure many life challenges during their transitional journeys, notable of which is their children's transition to school (Sanagavarapu, 2022). Transition to school requires both children and families to adjust to a new school's routines and the academic or learning and behavioural expectations in schools (Garbera, Foster, Little, Cohen-Vogela, Bratsch-Hinesc & Burchina, 2023). However, refugee families face difficulties in understanding and negotiating diversity in approaches to children's learning and

expectations for their transition to school. They benefit from additional support in facilitating a smooth start to school (Lewig, Arney, & Salveron, 2010; New, Guilfoyle & Harman, 2015).

School based transition programs promote a smooth start to school (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). They include providing information to families on school transition, visits to schools, short orientation, and long transition activities (Garbera et al., 2023). Those activities enable families, children, and schools to build connections and relationships, and to establish communication prior to children's entry into schools. As stated by Garbera et al. (2023, p.426):

goals of transition practices include connecting families and children to their kindergarten classrooms and providing children with the support they need to successfully adapt to the demands of the kindergarten classroom.

Leaders participating in the present study supported children and families in their transition to school, adopting various practices and processes, which aligned with the practices outlined in the published literature.

#### *7.1.3.1 Early start and well-defined steps to transition*

Leaders spoke about the importance of assisting families in getting children ready for school as soon as possible – soon after they start attending hubs – and not leave it until they are about to begin school. They organised and delivered the transition to school programmes in well-defined stages, focusing on children's early learning from a very young age. Closer to the years children were about to start school, they reached out to families with school aged children individually so that they did not miss out on the transition to school support provided. Leaders **communicated** with and promoted important information on transition to school and orientation programmes, with the help of bilingual School Learning Support Officers (SLSO) and videos on transition to school, and advertised these through posters in hubs and playgroups. Further, they attempted to build rapport and connections with families and schools to promote parents' participation in school-based transition and orientation to school programmes.



#### *7.1.3.2 School readiness*

Although there is no consensus on what children's readiness for school entails, it is conceptualised holistically covering children's physical, academic, and socio-emotional domains (Pan, Trang, Love & Templin, 2019). Further, school readiness is also conceptualised in terms of both parents being ready to support their children, and schools also being ready to receive and cater to the individual needs of children and families from diverse backgrounds (Christensen, Taylor, Hancock & Zubrick, 2020).

Embracing the concept of holistic readiness, leaders attempted to support children's, families' and schools' readiness to adopt various practices and processes.

Children received hands-on experience on how to operate in a school. As an example, one leader took children to the local school canteen and 'asked their mothers to give them 50 cents or 10 cents to buy a little jelly' to teach numeracy skills as part of their readiness for school. Additionally, children were prepared for school by having their health assessed, and by planning for early intervention support, prior to their starting school. This is evident in one a comment by Ricky from Queensland, who mentioned:

... and the other fantastic thing for us, it (playgroup) allows us to pick problems up early – children – and that has happened on multiple occasions, that we have noted that a child is actually not responding, ... have you had your child...their eyes tested, so we are actually picking up on things. But the parents that come from, you know, if they have been living in a refugee camp and their children have special needs, it's not recognised in those prior places, so having these groups is such a fabulous opportunity for us to pick and have early intervention, and we support the parents.



Further, both children and families were helped, as they participated in playgroups, to understand school routines, the importance of hand washing, hygiene, health, nutrition and healthy lunches. Playgroups, moreover, helped to build [social connections](#) for mothers, who were isolated due to several personal and cultural reasons, including lack of community acceptance.

Participation in playgroups was seen as a key part of the transition to school, in which refugee children first: 'go to playgroup in the hub and from there, they move through transition to prep [formal school]' (Wendy, Hub coordinator, Victoria).

Leaders regarded play in playgroups as highly valuable, not only to promote children's numeracy, literacy, and socio-emotional skills, but also to promote their readiness and transition to school. For example, Ricky from Darling Heights commented:

playgroup to us is a very important factor and the other thing it does is it readies the kids because we find a lot of our children, especially say,..., they are not ready for school.

Parent education was embedded into playgroups in preparation for their child's transition to school. Lina, hub facilitator from Dubbo commented:

we educate the parents in what's going to be expected of these children when they get to school so that they can be doing some practice with them at home, helping these parents to feel more confidence and comfortable to ask questions

of the school if they don't understand anything that's going on. (Hub facilitator, NSW)

As attested in research, playgroups are valuable sites for educating parents (McLean, Edwards, Evangelou, Skouteris, Harrison, Hemphill, Sullivan & Lambert, 2015). Further, leaders supported parents' transition to school by embedding English language into it as captured in this quote by Greta:

my focus is how to help adults through English around navigating their child's educational journey. I guess. I might teach them what kinds of questions to ask teachers or how to ask a teacher a question or how to fill in an enrolment form.

Additionally, schools were helped to understand families' and children's individual, cultural and linguistic support needs by inviting them to talk to families in hubs and playgroups and taking families and children to school visits. While traditionally the focus in school readiness has been on children's academic and socio-emotional readiness, during COVID-19 leaders realised the need to promote both children's and families' familiarity with IT devices and the IT environment more broadly. Responding to this need, they introduced iPad-based learning tasks to assist children's transition to the school environment. In one hub, a leader developed an IT preparation course for the hub children with the help of a parent volunteer.

### 7.1.3.3 Clarifying the expectations



Both children and families were helped with the transition to school by receiving clarification about expectations for schooling and education in Australia. In *liaison* with various external organisations and schools, leaders organised workshops to provide information on behavioural and learning expectations in schools, play-based learning, and expectations for parents' engagement in children's learning in Australia. They also organised invited talks from Departments of Education and other organisations that were running transition to school programmes in their local areas. For example, the narrative below by Natalia from regional NSW captures leaders' practices relating to building families' knowledge of transition to school:

the lady comes to the school and talks about the transition to school - she has a booklet. She tells us about mufti day – what a lunch box is and what we can put in the lunchbox, you know – a lot of other topics and ideas. We also help the mothers to go to the Open Day at the local school.

Further, leaders provided a transition pack with brochures put together by the community hubs and the kindergarten teachers explaining transition to school. They also sent videos about transitions to families, such as “A day in the life of kindergarten”, made at the school by the hub educators.

#### 7.1.3.4 Relationships, connections, and collaborations matter



Most importantly, leaders attempted to build families' and children's **connections and relationships** with schools to ease their transition to school from hubs or playgroups to schools. This involved taking families and children to school visits, prior to children beginning school and inviting schools and school children to present information and also to build relationships and connections between families, children, and schools so that children become familiar and get to know their educators.

#### 7.1.3.5 Transition to School Programs

In each state, families were provided with specialised and accredited transition to school programs for refugee children, such as “Beginning School Well” (NSWDOE), which run for four to six weeks. Leaders guided and engaged families in the transition to school program organised by schools in Term 3 of the previous academic year, before children started school. For example, Alicia, a hub leader from Queensland commented:

in this school we have a kindy program, and it is accredited so it's got all that is needed. So the teachers do the transition to the school but I am also involved to support parents that have limited communication and that have cultural barriers in how they can help their kid to get involved with the kindy program.



Leaders also offered language and practical help in filling out enrolment forms that were in English, getting a school bus pass, buying a uniform, and so on. They also arranged and **advocated** for translation and interpreting services in meetings with school principals. Additionally, they **liaised** with early intervention support services to have health and developmental checks organised for children.

**Needs and gaps:** Leaders reported families' lack of access to bilingual and translated information on transition and school readiness and digital devices such as computers. Further, leaders mentioned that parents do not always read letters sent home or the emails from schools and other organisations. To address these barriers, they suggested delivering information to families about transition in an audio-visual format. One leader found that a video she developed on transition to school in different languages made it more accessible, sparked families' interest, and encouraged them to know more about the transition to school. Further, leaders identified the need for more bilingual assistants to work on all programs, including transition to school. They felt that the current translation services available for parents during the transition to school are not adequate and that there is a critical need for interpreters, especially for some minority community languages, to assist with the transition to school.

In conclusion, the findings of this research report highlight the important role of knowledge translation for hub and centre leaders in supporting refugee families in their settlement, early learning, and transition to school. The use of technological platforms

has been found to have numerous benefits for enhancing communication and connection between hubs and families. However, with refugee families, developing trust is a key dimension that needs to be established prior to engagement. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns made this challenging, as the main form of communication was through technological platforms, through which it can be difficult to establish trust. Leaders have identified gaps and needs, including a lack of access to bilingual and translated information and digital devices, as well as the need for more bilingual assistants and interpreters to assist with the transition to school. Across regions and systems, there are similarities in the need for soft entry to provide a settlement experience that reduces the complexities and stresses for families. However, responses differ based on local context. COVID-19 has had an impact on hub processes and practices, with a renewed emphasis on embodied and digital communication, the potential of outdoors activity, and enhanced knowledge sharing. It is critical to share knowledge at the professional level between hubs and centres and experts, in areas of settlement, early learning and transition to school. The experiences of hub and centre staff are diverse, which helps to meet the settlement needs of refugee families and establish rich knowledge sharing.

## 8 Dissemination of Research

The findings of this research have been disseminated across several platforms including via a series of video pods, at conferences, at meetings and through annual reports.

### 8.1 Video Pods - *Settling Softly*

The KTF developed alongside the centre and hub leaders, to guide practice, was translated into multimodal resources based on several topics of importance as discussed by the participants and the research team. The aspiring practices and processes conducted by hub and centre leaders were featured in seven video pods, each consisting of three vignettes. These video pods have several purposes. First, they provide an overview of the work conducted in hubs and centres based on seven topics of importance, as outlined by hub and centre leaders. Second, they operate as a resource for hub and centre leaders across NSW, Victoria, and Queensland to understand the practices encountered in hubs, and how challenges and opportunities are addressed across different locations across three states. Third, they can be employed as a professional development resource for hub and centre leaders and other stake holders. Fourth, the content of the pods can be used by professionals in the field, government ministries, and agencies, to understand the requirements for establishing a new hub in any of the states. Fifth they can be used in courses such as education, allied health, and other fields. The topics and titles of the pods follow. They are available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/knowledge-translation/settling-softly>.

### 8.1.1 Relationships Matter



Schools and community centres both work to support children and their families in different ways, however, the relationship between these two groups is not always easy. This video examines what three different schools and their community centres have done to address the challenges encountered with **building relationships, trust, and rapport mediation.**

### 8.1.2 Communicating to Connect



Good communication is key to building and maintaining **inclusive relationships** between refugee families, schools and community centres. This video pod explored how accommodating languages other than English, harnessing **digital literacies** and building on the unique strengths and experiences of parents from diverse cultural backgrounds can foster **communication** between the hubs and parents, and parents among parents.

### 8.1.3 ‘Out There’ Making it work



The government has settled more refugees and migrants outside metropolitan centres in regional and rural areas in recent times. This video explores some of the issues refugee families encounter living in these areas, how the challenges have been responded to by hubs, and what practices and processes have been employed to help refugees thrive in regional areas in relation to **networking and collaboration.**

### 8.1.4 Tips for Starting School



Refugee families face many challenges with their children’s **transition to school** because of language differences, and a lack of understanding about Australian cultural and educational expectations. Drawing on the expertise of hub and centre leaders in this area, this video provides tips for starting school, and is oriented towards hubs and families.

### 8.1.5 Playgroups and Learning



Playgroups and **play-based learning** have a very important role in supporting kids' health and development and their **transition to school**, and give their parents opportunities to make new friends and build social relationships. Some refugee parents may be unable or unwilling to access playgroups. They may not understand the value of play-based learning, or they may just feel like they don't belong. Sometimes even practical reasons, like a lack of transport, prevent them from participating. This video provides an overview of these challenges.



### 8.1.6 Creative Responses to Settling

Refugees seek safety as a result of upheaval brought by war, famine, genocide, and, increasingly, climate change. This video pod explores responses to the arrival of large numbers of refugees in a short space of time, challenges that have occurred, and ways that these have been addressed creatively in hubs and centres.

### 8.1.7 Productive Responses to Diverse Parenting



Knowledge  
Translation  
Model

Welcoming refugees requires an understanding and an appreciation of the **diversity of cultural practices** associated with family life. Learning to appreciate and understand different ways of parenting is important when welcoming refugees. Cultural differences can provide opportunities for learning about a new place, people, and change. This video pod explores these themes.

## 8.2 Web or Online Resources

While resources are constantly changing, the team felt it useful to document what resources were available and where the gaps were, to share among participants. Access to resources varied considerably, in part due to distance but also in terms of organizations in which participants were embedded. The database is available on the project website <https://sites.google.com/view/knowledge-translation/home>.

The areas upon which participants focused, in terms of resources, were different to processes and practices contained in the framework and video pods. These are the areas where a lack of resources was the main focus of participants. They included parenting, health, cultural orientation, children transitioning to school, children, communication, challenges, gaps and suggestions, and COVID-19. The categories were also divided into mothers/carers and fathers/carers. The Excel sheets are available in metropolitan, regional and rural areas and it is clear that different issues and resources frame what is there. The contents are not exhaustive but indicate what is used and what participants would like to be more readily available. It is a resource that can be copied and built on at the local level.

## 8.3 Conferences, symposia, and meetings

Reid, C & Sanagavarapu, P. (2020). Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families. In *Vision Unlimited: Educational Research @ Western Sydney University 2020*, Centre for Educational Research, Western Sydney University. Accessed from: <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cer/about>

This overview provided a snapshot of the progress of the study and its final stages, for researchers, WSU students and other stakeholders.

Reid, C., Sanagavarapu, P & Lobytsyna, M. (2021, November 28 to December 2). *The Knowledge sharing to support refugee family settlement, early learning and transition to school* [Paper presentation]. Australian Association for Research in Education, Melbourne.

Sanagavarapu, P. & Reid, C. (2022, November). *Supporting refugee families and children in socially disconnected times – Lessons from COVID-19 for leaders in community hubs and centres* [Paper presentation]. TeEACH Symposium ‘Connectedness for Children and Families’, Western Sydney University.

Reid, C & Sanagavarapu, P. (2022, December). *Knowledge sharing to support refugee family settlement, early learning and transition to school* [Paper presentation]. Queensland Statewide Local Area Collaborative (LAC) meeting.

Local Area Collaboratives include professional networks across key humanitarian settlement regions in Queensland - Brisbane, Cairns, Logan (including Ipswich and Gold Coast), Toowoomba, and Townsville. LACs are networks of key government, non-government and settlement stakeholders, established to facilitate improved settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants in Queensland. This meeting included stakeholders from across all regional networks.

Sanagavarapu, P. (2022). Refugee children: Supporting families in transitions. In R. Grace., J. Bowes., & C. Woodrow (Eds.), *Children, Families and communities* (6th edition ed., pp. 78-94). Oxford University Press. Accessed from: <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/reader/books/9780190337414>

## 9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research presented in this report has provided valuable insights into the role of knowledge sharing amongst centre and hub leaders, and how this knowledge can assist in the settlement of refugee families and the early learning of their children, in NSW, Queensland and Victoria. The Knowledge Transition Framework developed by the academic team and the hub and centre leaders encompasses the key findings that are presented through video pods entitled ‘Settling Softly’. These pods reflect the aims and outcomes of the philosophies and practices in the centres and hubs when working with refugee families and their children. The study was timely as it provides new insights into the impact of COVID-19 on hub and centre practices and processes. Hub and centre leaders developed new insights into families, and developed less stereotyped views on parenting, and parents were engaged in schooling as volunteers, interpreters and cultural brokers. The study also provided an insight into new communication strategies that have been developed, such as the app for translating news verbally and the use of chat apps unique to each community. Furthermore, there was greater engagement in children’s learning, and an appreciation for outdoor and green places

and spaces, as well as enhanced networking and knowledge sharing opportunities for hub and centre facilitators. Finally, there was increased parental engagement in service utilization across the hubs.

## 9.1 Implications for research

Based on the findings of the study and the new insights that have been provided about knowledge sharing by hub and centre leaders working with refugee families in early learning contexts, there are several implications for future research:

First, the study highlighted the importance of technology and language literacy during COVID-19, and the creative methods the hubs and centres employed to communicate with families. Further research could examine technology use for knowledge sharing with different migrant and/or refugee populations, and how this works differently across dynamic hubs and centres in Australia.

Second, and in relation to the first implication on technology, the availability of information in diverse languages promoted inclusivity and ensured that knowledge could be shared with families. This could be further examined in research to understand the barriers faced in accessing information and the preferred platforms different communities utilise.

Third, building on the insights the research has provided on the importance of green spaces for refugee settlement, future research can focus more on the practical aspects of implementing such programs and their effectiveness in promoting resettlement and community building. Furthermore, research can examine whether green spaces afford any improvement on the physical and mental well-being of refugee families, as this study has highlighted how they break cultural barriers. To extend the research, further studies can also examine the sustainability of green space and community gardening programs, including aspects such as long-term viability, impact on the environment, and ongoing maintenance.

Fourth, the study could be built-upon to examine stakeholder involvement in knowledge sharing. This includes the complex connections between hub and centre leaders, community organisations, and government agencies, and their roles in supporting refugee settlement. It could also examine how knowledge is something that hub and centre leaders have to share and how their contribution could be facilitated more broadly.

Overall, the research can be built upon to inform the development of effective and efficient models for knowledge sharing amongst hub and centre leaders and promote the exchange of best practices and processes to improve the quality of refugee settlement programs.

## 10 References

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# 11 Appendices

## 11.1 Appendix A: WSU HREC Approval letter



### HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

19 November 2019  
Professor Carol Reid  
Centre for Educational Research

Dear Carol,

Project Title: "Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families"

**HREC Approval Number: H0587**  
**Risk Rating: Low 1 - LNR**

I am pleased to advise the above research project meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).

Ethical approval for this project has been granted by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).

Approval of this project is valid from 19 November 2019 until 19 November 2022.

This protocol covers the following researchers:

**Carol Reid, Rachel Bentley, Holly Kaye-Smith, Prathyusha Sanagavarapu**

#### Summary of Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
2. A final report will be due at the expiration of the approval period.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to being implemented. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Research Ethics Committee via the Human Ethics Officer as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority.
6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.
7. Approval is only valid while you hold a position or are enrolled at Western Sydney University. You will need to transfer your project or seek fresh ethics approval from your new institution if you leave Western Sydney University.

#### 8. Project specific conditions:

There are no specific conditions applicable.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to [humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au) as this email address is closely monitored.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Deane".

Professor Elizabeth Deane  
Presiding Member,  
Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee

Western Sydney University  
ABN 53 014 069 881 CRICOS Provider No. 00917K  
Locked Bag 1797 Penrith NSW 2751 Australia  
[westernsydney.edu.au](http://westernsydney.edu.au)

## 11.2 Appendix B: NSW SERAP Approval letter



SERAP 2019543



I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.

This approval will remain valid until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	
Carol Reid	
Prathyusha Sanagavarapu	

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

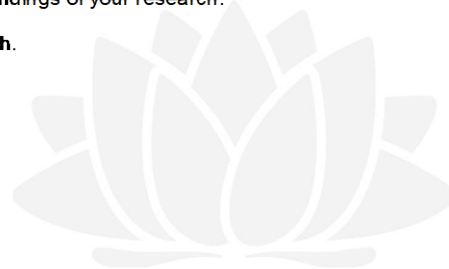
When your study is completed please email your report to: [serap@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:serap@det.nsw.edu.au). You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'R. J. Stevens'.

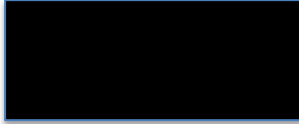
STRATEGIC ANALYSIS UNIT | CESE  
NSW Department of Education  
Level 9, 105 Phillip Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001  
Telephone: 7814 2547 – Email: [det.serap@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:det.serap@det.nsw.edu.au)



## 11.3 Appendix C: NSW SERAP Extension letter

**| NSW Department of Education**

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DOC22/662061  
SERAP 2019543

Dear Professor Reid

I refer to your application for extension/variation to the research project being conducted in NSW government schools entitled *Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families*. I am pleased to inform you that your application for extension/variation has been approved.

This extension/variation approval will remain valid until 28 February 2023.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	
Prathyusha Sanagavarapu	
Carl Reid	
Blessings Zvikomborero Matsveru	
Sam Dessen	

When your study is completed please upload your report to SERAP online  
<http://serap.det.nsw.edu.au>

Yours sincerely

Brianna McCourt  
Principal Policy Analyst Research  
Strategic Analysis and Research  
Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation  
15 August 2022

**education.nsw.gov.au**  
Strategic Analysis And Research  
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NSW Department Of Education  
105 Phillip Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001  
Email [det.sera@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:det.sera@det.nsw.edu.au)



## 11.4 Appendix D: Principal Letter



### **Letter to Principal seeking permission for community hub participation in New Research Grant on "Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families"**

Dear Principal,

Professor Carol Reid and Dr Prathyusha Sanagavarapu at the Centre for Educational Research, Western Sydney University, have been awarded a three-year research grant on knowledge translation to support early learning for newcomers and their families. It is funded by the Ian Potter Foundation and Western Sydney University. We are working with industry partners Multicultural Australia Limited (Queensland) and Settlement Services International (NSW), who are also contributing to the research and have in principal agreement with Community Hubs Australia to approach their hubs as long as school principals agree.

This project aims to address the gaps and inequities in knowledge sharing among stakeholders working with refugee children and their families in community hubs. Specifically, it aims to gather established providers' knowledge of refugee children's early learning and family settlement, synthesise it into a framework, and translate the knowledge into practice via the development of multimodal resources for educators and community workers working in hubs.

In order to do this, we would like to interview hub personnel. The project only involves adults, not children. The latter interviews will take place outside school premises if hub workers prefer or in the hub at a convenient time. The knowledge of these individuals is critical to our understanding of the circumstances facing humanitarian immigrant young people and their families in Australia, and the support programmes that they receive in settling into the local communities. Many hubs have not had the opportunity to share knowledge and good practices will also assist new centres, particularly those that will be developed in new areas of settlement such as regions of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, where this study is focussed.

Participants will be provided with further information about the project, they will sign a consent form (attached), then take part in a semi-structured interview that will take 30-45 minutes. Interviews will be recorded if they agree, or notes taken, and, later, transcribed. Participants can go off record at any time. Names of all participants will remain confidential and will not be used in any publication nor will the hub name or school. In the second year there will be virtual meetings across states and in the third year a select group will produce multimodal resources for wider distribution. You and others are under no obligation to participate in this research. If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason. Interviews are to be scheduled across 2020, virtual meetings in 2021 and the development of multimodal resources in 2022.

If you would like to know more about the research or would like your school hub to participate, please feel free to contact Professor Carol Reid, Centre for Educational Research, Western Sydney University, at [C.Reid@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:C.Reid@westernsydney.edu.au), or Dr Prathyusha Sanagavarapu [p.sanagavarapu@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:p.sanagavarapu@westernsydney.edu.au) and we can call you at a suitable time.

**NOTE:**

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 2478 [Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au](mailto:Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au)), and quote UTS HREC reference number xxxx. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

## 11.5 Appendix E: NSW, Queensland & Vic Participant Information Sheet- Hub Personnel



### Participant Information Sheet – Hub Personnel

**Project Title:** Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families

**Project Summary:** You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Professor Carl Reid and Dr Prathyusha Sanagavarapu from the Centre for Educational Research, Western Sydney University. This research is developing a framework for knowledge sharing among stakeholders working with refugee children and their families in community/school hubs. It aims to gather established providers' knowledge of refugee children's early learning and family settlement, collaborate on synthesizing the knowledge it into a framework, and translate the knowledge into practice via the development of multimodal resources for educators and community workers.

**How is the study being paid for?** The project is funded by the Ian Potter Foundation and Western Sydney University.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to participate in an interview or focus group in the first year of the study, whichever you feel more comfortable with and depending on how many people participate in your hub. Settlement workers/educators' knowledge on how they support children's early learning and settlement of families from refugee backgrounds will be the topic of discussion. In the second year, if you wish, you may be invited to participate in virtual meetings with other hub workers in your state and other states to collaborate on sharing knowledge and developing a framework to be used by others. In the final year, some of you may be asked to participate in the development of resources such as videos and online materials.

**How much of my time will I need to give?**

An initial interview will take between 30-40 minutes in year one. In year two virtual meetings will be one hour in length x 2 (one state level and one tri-state) and in year three those selected will participate in the production of multi-modal resources (one day).

**What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?**

There are a number of benefits for the sector that will result from this study. First, the participants will be able to share knowledge through connecting with hubs in their state and interstate. This will be across different systems and different community and school hubs, operated by different organizations. Second, new hubs, particularly in regional areas, will benefit from the knowledge you have in developing their own. Finally, if you are involved in the final year making multi-modal resources you will have one day of paid release time from your normal duties where another person can be employed to take your place.

**Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?**

It is not envisaged that risk or discomfort will occur as the focus is on successful practices. However, in the context of working with refugee families and children some stories could be stressful. If this occurs the interview or activity will be discontinued. You can also contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, which is a confidential telephone support service available 24/7 from a landline, payphone or mobile.

## 11.6 Appendix F: Knowledge Translation Project Flyer

This grant will enable the addressing of gaps and inquiries in knowledge sharing among stakeholders working with refugee children and their families

It will empower those working in hubs and centres with resources and the knowledge needed to optimise refugee children's early learning opportunities for the best start to school.

It will strengthen the families' integration in Australian communities.

### Objectives

Specifically, the funds will be utilised to gather established service providers' knowledge of refugee integration from the east coast, synthesise it into a framework and translate the knowledge into practice via the development of multimodal resources for educators and community workers.

### Why?

Early settlement is very difficult for families and they lack knowledge of local cultural mores and practices, have difficulty with language and want the best for the children. People interviewed identified a desire to share and access knowledge and resources including how to encourage participation of families least likely to become involved; to visualise what it is they are doing that is different, and why; to hear of other practices that they might be able to adapt; and to disseminate their work in order to make future hubs and centres successful.

Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families



Western Sydney University

Funded by Ian Potter Foundation and Western Sydney University with supporting organizations Multicultural Australia, Settlement Services Int, ACCESS and Community Hubs Australia

## 11.7 Appendix G: Queensland & Vic Third Year consent form

### Consent Form – Hub Personnel

**Project Title: Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families**

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University. The ethics reference number is: H13587

**I hereby consent to participate in the above named research project.**

**I acknowledge that:**

- I have read the participant information sheet (or where appropriate, have had it read to me) and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s
- The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

**I consent to:**

- Participating in an online/virtual interview*
- Having my information audio recorded*
- Participating in audio-visual materials where my identity may be revealed*
- Having my photo taken*

**I consent for my data and information provided to be used in this project and other related projects for an extended period of time.**

**I consent for providing my electronic signature or showing the signed consent form at the beginning of the interview if other alternatives are not available.**

**I understand information gained during the study may be published and stored for other research use. The information may potentially reveal my identity if I agree to participate in the final stage of the project.**

**I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s, and any organisations involved, now or in the future.**

**Signed:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Email address:**

**What if I have a complaint?**

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 or email [humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au).

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.



## 11.8 Appendix H: WSU third year consent form

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### Consent Form

**Project Title: Knowledge translation to support early learning of refugee children and families**

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University. The ethics reference number is: H13587.

**I hereby consent to participate in the above named research project.**

**I acknowledge that:**

- I have read the participant information sheet (or where appropriate, have had it read to me) and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s
- The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

**I consent to:**

- Participating in an individual interview or focus group of 30-45 minutes in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the project*
- Participating in 3x 2-hour meetings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the project (2 video conferences and 1 face-to-face)*
- Participating in a day program and a virtual (video) meeting for co-production of multi-modal resources in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the project*
- Having my information audio recorded*
- Participating in audio-visual materials where my identity may be revealed*
- Having my photo taken*
- Having my data and information used in this project and other related projects for an extended period of time, as per the "Extended consent" section of the "Explanation of extended use" form*

**I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s, and any organisations involved, now or in the future.**

**Signed:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Email address:**

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## 11.9 Appendix I: Third Year Individual Interview Questions for video pods

### **Interviewee: Mark Harris**

Area of Focus: *Valuing each other's work*

Interview Questions:

- Can you briefly tell us a little about your school and the role of the community centre attached to it?
- How long have you had this community centre in your school and what have you learned over time that makes good relationships between what you do and what the centre does?
- What does the school do with the centre that makes it easier for refugee families to feel they belong to the whole school?
- How does the school show the centre it values its work?
- What organizational strategies do you employ to make the relationship productive?
- How do you communicate what each other is doing, and your respective needs?
- Some practices in community centres mirror what happens in classrooms. Is there a link between pedagogical strategies with parents and children in the centre to that in the school?
- Any other comments related to the school/centre relationship?

### **Interviewee: John Stafford**

Area of Focus: *Life Transitions and Family central*

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us your position and a bit about the school?
- How long have you had a community centre here and how have you integrated the centre into the organizational structure of the school?
- The family has been placed at the centre of your school. Indeed, the naming of the school and the ways in which relations with families is framed, is quite innovative. Tell us a bit about this structure and the ways it supports refugee families.
- One of the things you have talked about previously is 'life transitions'. What do you mean by this and how is the centre involved in these transitions? What does this mean for refugees?
- Is there a link between what the centre does on a daily basis and what the school does in terms of curriculum areas or social activities?

- How does this structure support the maintenance of good relationships for staff, refugee families and their children?

**Interviewee: Michelle Smith**

Area of Focus: Hub and centre relations

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your community centre, how long you have been there and how long it has been linked with St Pauls?
- What communities attend your centre?
- When you think about these diverse families what are some of the concerns they express about settling in a new country, particularly in relation to themselves and their children?
- At one point the school had a very large increase in refugee students from Syria and Iraq. Some cultural differences emerged in relation to gender and playground use. How did you work with the school and families to resolve some of these concerns?
- What other ways have you worked with the school to make refugee settlement smoother for families?
- What other ways do the centre and school solve problems together in relation to family settlement?

**Interviewee: Kristina Pukeroa**

Area of Focus: Apps, communicative processes that work, trust, school/centre communication about family needs

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your community centre, how long you have been here and the the refugee population in your centre?
- We are interested in what you think are the key elements in communicating well with refugee parents. You mentioned that the school and centre communicated needs of families via referrals. How did this work in practice?
- What factors do you consider might be different to other newcomers, if any? You mentioned trust when we first spoke, for example.
- When we spoke with you earlier you mentioned an innovative app that was used, which recognised that parents may not be literate in their own language. Tell us something about this app, when you realised it was needed, how it was sourced and why it is successful.
- There are other things that you do in your centre to support communication skills of parents and their children. Tell us something about these and what is unique about your approach?

- What about communication that acknowledges cultural differences?

Interviewee: Erum Zafar

Area of Focus: Need to empower parents with IT skills (why and how?)

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you became involved in working with the early learning centre in Hume?
- When we spoke with you last, you outlined an innovative program for parents aimed at increasing their IT skills. First, tell us why you thought this was necessary. For example, the areas that might require them to have IT skills, such as to support their children, or themselves in navigating life.
- Tell us a little bit about the IT program in terms of the specific skills it develops and how you came to develop these.
- Did you notice particular IT needs during COVID?
- What were the outcomes of the program?
- What further IT skills do refugee parents desire for themselves or their families?

**Interviewee: Natalia Meliendrez**

Area of Focus: Communicating to Connect

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you became involved in working with the community centre?
- What are the demographics of your centre and the local area?
- One of the areas of strength that you told us about relates to how you see the cultural knowledge of parents as a resource. Can you tell us about that?
- Parents telling stories to each other as a form of communication seems important in your centre. Why do you do this? Is this about the capacity to empathise given similar circumstances?
- What does this form of communication have to do with settling well?
- What are some of the activities or programs you have developed to provide space for sharing of stories among parents?

**Interviewees: Sister Diana and Wanda**

Area of Focus: Regional Challenges and Responses

#### Interview Questions:

- Can you briefly tell us your position and your school demographics?
- At the time we first spoke you didn't have a centre or hub attached to the school so how did you manage family relationships? Has this changed?
- When we spoke with you, you talked about isolation from resources such as bilingual workers, readers and even a centre for early childhood to help ease the transition to school. What did you seek to find out and what professional activities did you initiate that worked in your context?
- What knowledge was most important for the settlement of refugee families and how did you get it?
- What emerged from this knowledge in terms of programs, centres, people and processes?
  
- Networking is central to how you support staff and families. How is this done in practical terms?
- Do you have any other comments regarding refugee settlement and being in a regional area?

#### **Interviewee: Liz Arcus**

Area of Focus: Regional Challenges and Responses

#### Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little about your centre and how long you have been here?
- What is it like working with refugee families while being a distance from resources that are freely available, such as in Melbourne? Think about this professionally, for you, but also other resources.
- How did you overcome the tyranny of distance? For example, your coordinator, the Lighthouse centre, virtual regional groups.
- When we talked to you at the start of the project you showed me the literacy centre, which you worked with closely. How does this centre help you overcome isolation and also, how does it help refugee families?
- Are there any other partnerships that worked for you in supporting refugee families?
- What are the most important factors for successful refugee settlement in a regional area and how does a hub contribute to that?

#### **Interviewee: Ricky Adams**

Area of Focus: Regional Challenges and Responses

#### Interview Questions:

- Tell us about the school and the centre.
- What does the centre do for refugees that is different or similar to unforced migrants?
- The activities in the centre couldn't exist without lots of external partnerships. Tell us about some of these and what they do.
- How did you go about sourcing these and what does it take to keep them going?
- If you were to start again, what would you give priority to in terms of refugee communities?

**Interviewee: Nayana Bhandari**

Area of Focus: Transition to School

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your role, community centre, how long you have been here?
- What is the refugee population you work with in your centre?
- We are interested in what you think are the key cultural and linguistic challenges that newly arrived refugee families and children face initially when getting children ready for school?
- What issues that families and children face additionally at the time of starting school?
- How do you help families in adjusting to the local cultural norms and expectations for children's learning and education?
- How do you help schools in understanding diverse families' cultural norms and expectations for children's learning and education.
- Anything else you would like to add?

**Interviewee: Ricky Adams**

Area of Focus: Transition to School

Interview Questions:

- What is the refugee population you work with in your centre?
- We are interested in how you support refugee families and children in overcoming the cultural and linguistic barriers relating to school readiness and their eventual transition to school.
- Could you elaborate on how you provide bilingual support, for example, help families understand about what is involved in school readiness and the transition to school programs in their home languages?
- How do SLSOs or the TIS service support families in the transition to school?

- What bilingual or cultural resources are available for community centres or educational settings in helping families for children's transition to school?

**Interviewee: Sister Diana and Wanda**

Area of Focus: Transition to School

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your role, community centre, how long you have been here?
- What is the refugee population you work with in your centre?
- We are interested in the initiatives and programs targeted for refugee families and children to support their successful transition to school. Could you elaborate on the initiatives and programs utilised in your local centre or school?
- If the programs are run by school, how do you support schools in running the transition activities? How long do those programs run for?
- How are families involved in the running of the transition to school programs and what role do they play in the children's transition to school?
- What factors contribute to the successful implementation of the transition programs and what barriers do you face in this respect or gaps you see?
- From your experience, what are the three key factors that contribute to refugee children's and families' successful transition to school?
- Any final comments?

**Interviewee: Hafsa Ashfaq**

Area of focus: Playgroups

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your role, community centre, how long you have been here?
- What is the refugee population you work with in your centre?
- We are interested in knowing how you help newly arrived refugee parents or mothers attending your centre to understand the benefits of play for both children and mothers and facilitate their access to playgroups.
- We were impressed with the way playgroups were run in your centre and well attended by many mothers. Tell us about how you organise or run the playgroups. I.e., who runs them, how many times a week and how many children/mothers attend each week and share your ideas and tips for planning?

- What encourages mothers to attend playgroups? Provide us with some insight into how you helped mothers who were not attending playgroups, for example, to understand the benefits of play for children's learning, development and health as well as the benefits of playgroups for both children and mothers?
- How do you build children's learning and prepare them for school through your playgroup activities?

**Interviewee: Natalia Meliendrez**

Area of focus: Playgroups

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little bit about your role, community centre, how long you have been here?
- What is the refugee population you work with in your centre?
- We were impressed with the way you have encouraged diverse mothers' participation in the playgroups and how you incorporated cultural diversity into your playgroup activities.
- Tell us about your brilliant practices relating to connecting mothers with each other to address their isolation and encouraging their engagement in playgroups.
- share what you did to address cultural sensitivities and linguistic issues in building connections for mothers in the playgroup and in facilitating the engagement of diverse families/mothers through your play group activities.

**Interviewee: Silja McIvor**

Area of focus: Playgroups

Interview Questions:

- you tell us a little bit about your role, community centre, how long you have been here?
- What is the refugee population you work with in your centre?
- It helps mothers to understand the benefits of play in action through examples. Provide some examples for how you support a) children's early learning, b) child development and health through play group activities.
- Also, Share Some tips on how to organise multicultural play groups addressing the cultural and linguistic needs of families.
- Lastly, how do you support children's transition to school through playgroup activities? provide some specific examples to benefit others.

**Interviewees: Sister Diana and Wanda**



Area of focus: Settling new cohorts

Interview Questions:

- You have a unique centre here. Describe for us in three sentences what is unique about your centre.
- How is your centre funded?
- You have been deeply involved in supporting the settlement of Afghan women. Firstly, those that came as wives of interpreters and now the most recent arrivals. You have insights into cultural matters that pertain to this group of women. Would you like to share some of those?
- One of the things you have talked about is how settling is multi-layered and requires working with mothers so that their very young children benefit. This is one of your key concerns. Why is that? What do you do?
- What resources do you gather around you to achieve your aims?
- You mentioned that one of the outcomes of a collaboration has been a series of books focussed on key areas that support refugee family settlement, specifically for Afghan families. Can you tell us about this please?
- What are the most important factors to consider when starting a centre in a regional area?
- Would you like to add anything else regarding creative responses to refugee settlement?

**Interviewee: Silvia Amici**

Area of Focus: Settling large cohorts

Interview Questions:

- Could you please tell us what your role is in Hume?
- In your role as coordinator what do you see as the main support required for leaders in centres and hubs?
- We are interested in the family settlement of large cohorts. During the period of arrival of large numbers of refugees from Syria and Iraq, what were the key areas requiring a quick response in order to settle families well?
- What relationships were developed with hubs and schools during this period?
- What cultural knowledge was required by your team and how was this sourced?
- How did the hubs manage family settlement during COVID? Your area was among the first where numbers grew rapidly. What were the main challenges and how were they responded to?

- You mentioned some very good learnings during the lockdown in relation to alternative forms of communication, how to do playgroups differently, the safety of home for parents to engage more in play.
- Does technology enable a greater reach when there are large numbers of refugee families?
- What are the key take away points about settling large cohorts of refugees? Think about if a new centre was being set up. What might they need to consider first and why?

**Interviewee: Kristina Pukeroa**

Area of Focus: Settling new cohorts

Interview Questions:

- Please tell us a little about your centre and the demographics.
- We know that you have also dealt with large numbers of refugees arriving in a short space of time. Tell us about how that was managed working with partners in Fairfield. You called these interagency connections.
- Due to many agencies in Fairfield, you mentioned that families may have become confused and forgotten when such high numbers of refugees arrived in a short space of time. How did the centre support families through the maze of agencies?
- One of the key aspects you mention about your centre, is that it is a form of ‘soft entry’ for refugee families. What is soft entry?
- You mentioned the Parents Next initiative. What was this and how did it support you to work with refugee families and their children?
- Was there an issue of overcrowding at any stage and if so, how did you manage competing demands? You gave one example of having more staff and parallel indoor/outdoor activities in warmer weather. Another was NAVITAS demands versus playgroups.
- A lot has been done regarding supporting refugee families to navigate services and pathways. Trust and relationships seem to be the underlying principles. Please comment.
- Prior to COVID, you said lots of programs were focussed on refugees, then COVID came. They were still in need so how did you respond to so many that were clearly still wanting connection?

**Interviewees: Sister Diana and Wanda**

Area of Focus: Settling new cohorts

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a bit about what you do here and the demographics of the parents?
- One of the wonderful aspects of welcoming newcomers is coming to understand different approaches to parenting, different expectations of schooling and different patterns of everyday life, such as eating, sleeping and family relationships. Tell us something about the diversity of parents and experiences in your school.
- Could you tell us a little about how the wider community in your school and centre communicate with each other about diverse parenting? You have First Nations, African and other Arabic speaking families beside Ezidi. Is this an area for professional discussions and development? Or sitting down with parents talking to each other?
- How does diverse parenting shape early childhood education, transition or playgroups?
- You have instituted the ‘McGregor model’ into reading. Can you talk about that and how it accounts for diverse parenting? For example, many parents aren’t literate in their own language.
- Is there anything else you would like to add about responding to diverse parenting

**Interviewee: Michelle Smith**

Area of Focus: Diversity parenting

Interview Questions:

- Can you please tell us a little about the diversity of families you have in your hub?
- What kind of staffing considerations do you need to think about for such a diverse community? How have you sourced these people?
- How do you manage language needs – both first language and learning English? Are there factors that need to be taken into consideration such as English classes, TAFE commitments, jobs, Centrelink’s requirements?
- You mentioned that sometimes the concerns of parents are too hard to solve for one person and that you sit down with them and talk it through. Google it. Make phone calls. Can you explain this and perhaps provide an example? This seems to be a way to be culturally responsive as it targets different concerns of different families. It isn’t a recipe based on cultural stereotypes.
- One of your insights into refugee parents is that you noted how exhausted the mothers seemed when they came into playgroups. You mentioned a lack of family support and connection left behind. Can you comment on that?

- You noted that some of the lecture style approaches to refugees when they first arrive just isn't suitable. How do you manage the information overload?
- Would you like to add anything else about diverse parenting that we haven't covered today?

**Interviewee: Penny Dearlove**

Area of Focus: Diverse parenting

Interview Questions:

- Can you tell us a little about your centre and the demographics?
- We are interested in diverse parenting and the productive outcomes and responses to this diversity. How does this diversity of parenting styles translate into change? That is, what does it mean for your practice in terms of language, programs, settlement of refugees who are newcomers, often under stressful situations?
- You have a lot of volunteers helping you, such as students. How do you manage their knowledge and understandings related to diverse parenting? That is, in a way that values the diversity and builds a bridge to new understandings in the students but for the families, of their new country.
- When you familiarise parents with the school, what elements surprise them? How do you respond to these differences?
- Sometimes young children can be naughty, whether it is because of developmental reasons or different parenting expectations. Can you talk about that and what you have done?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

## 11.10 Appendix J: Mobile Phone surveys for refugee families

1. What resources are available? Tick a box for all that apply.

Videos, policies, networking, information sheets, programs, web-based materials, blogs, podcasts, journal articles

2. How many refugee parents use your services on a weekly basis? <10; 10-20; >20

3. How confident are you in dealing with families and children of refugee background? likert scale (need parameters here)

4. What are your strengths when working with refugee families (Scale – highly skilled, moderately skilled, developing):

a) In getting them to attend English classes

b) Helping their children get ready for school in terms of:

i social and emotional readiness

ii health and well-being, physical independence

iii academic readiness in any language.

5. What are the three main things you find challenging in working with refugee families?

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6. What are the three main opportunities you see in working with refugee families?

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7. What support do you need in supporting families and children from refugee backgrounds?

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# SELF-FILMING GUIDE

August 2022



Knowledge Translation to Support Early Learning of Refugee Children and Families

## 11.12 Appendix L: Survey for early childhood educators in Toowoomba

### Survey for early childhood educators in Toowoomba

#### Demographic information

Gender

Role

Length of service

Employment type

Languages spoken other than English

#### Information about your work

1. List three main activities you undertake in your role in relation to supporting families and children from a refugee background

a.

b.

c.

2. How many refugee parents use your services on a weekly basis? \*

<10 less than ten

10 - 20

>20 more than 20

Other:

[Control]

3. How confident are you in your work with families and children of refugee background? \*

Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Very confident

4. What are your strengths when working with families and children from a refugee background? Tick all that apply.

Highly skilled

Moderately skilled

Developing

Raise awareness of our services and programs among families

Supporting families to engage with early childhood care and education services

Getting parents to come to English classes

Interpreting local cultural practices for families

Developing social networks for families

Supporting health and well-being of families

Supporting health and well-being of children

Assisting parents in preparing their children to be socially and emotionally ready for school

Assisting parents with developing their children's literacy and numeracy skills

Assisting families in enrolling children in prior-to-school

Assisting families in transitioning children to school  
 Assisting parents to enrol their children in primary school  
 Networking with other partners and stakeholders to optimise positive outcomes for families and children.

5. How do you network, communicate and share information and ideas on supporting families and children from a refugee background with your partners or stakeholders?

6. List three of your best practices in relation to supporting refugee families and children.

- a.
- b.
- c.

7. List three main things you find challenging in relation to supporting refugee families and children.

- a.
- b.
- c.

6. What training or support do you need to address the three challenges you mentioned above?

- a.
- b.
- c.

8. Which of the following resources are available for you to support your work with families and children from a refugee background? Tick all that apply. \*

Resources	Tick	
Videos or clips		
Networking		
Policies		
Information sheets		
Programmes		
Web-based materials		
Blogs		
Podcasts		
Journal articles		
Professional magazines		
Other		

9. Is there anything else you want to say in relation to your work in supporting refugee families and children?



## 11.13 Appendix M: Minor Release form

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### Minor Release Form

I [PRINT NAME]..... confirm that I am the parent/legal guardian of the minor listed below. I hereby give my permission for Western Sydney University to use my minor's photograph, photographic image or video footage in official University business, including: educational content and promotional material hosted on the University Learning Management System, Internal Video Repository Platform (Panopto) and University Website, for the purpose of knowledge sharing and/or promoting the **Knowledge Translation to Support Early Learning of Refugees Children and Families Project**.

It is agreed that the use of this photographic material or video footage shall in no way be used in any other forum other than for official University business related to the **Knowledge Translation to Support Early Learning of Refugees Children and Families Project**.

I understand that at the conclusion of filming, it is within my right to request any specific content or vision be omitted from the final media product, and will communicate my request to the Western Sydney University Creative Content team within 48 hours of recording.

I hereby waive any right that I may have to inspect or approve the finished product and the advertising copy or other matter that may be used in connection with the material or footage or the use to which it may be applied. I hereby release the University from any infringement or violation of personal and or property rights of any sort whatsoever based upon the use of the photographic material or video footage.

Date .....

Parent/legal guardian signature.....

Name (minor) .....

Phone.....

Creative Content Team | Learning Futures | Enquiries: [s.dessen@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:s.dessen@westernsydney.edu.au)

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## 11.14 Appendix N: Adult Release Form

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
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### Adult Release Form

I, [PRINT NAME]....., do hereby give my permission for Western Sydney University, to use this photographic material or video footage in official University business, including: educational content and promotional material hosted on the University Learning Management System, Internal Video Repository Platform (Panopto) and University Website, for the purpose of knowledge sharing and/or promoting the **Knowledge Translation to Support Early Learning of Refugees Children and Families Project**.

It is agreed that the use of this photographic material or video footage shall in no way be used in any other forum other than for official University business related to the **Knowledge Translation to Support Early Learning of Refugees Children and Families Project**.

I understand that at the conclusion of filming, it is within my right to request any specific content or vision be omitted from the final media product, and will communicate my request to the Western Sydney University Creative Content team within 48 hours of recording.

I hereby waive any right that I may have to inspect or approve the finished product and the advertising copy or other matter that may be used in connection with the material or footage or the use to which it may be applied. I hereby release the University from any infringement or violation of personal and or property rights of any sort whatsoever based upon the use of the photographic material or video footage.

Date.....

Signature.....

Short description of what I am wearing today.....

Phone.....

Creative Content Team | Learning Futures | Enquiries: [s.dessen@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:s.dessen@westernsydney.edu.au)

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