



victorian refugee  
health network

# State-wide Meeting

October 2023



# Agenda

2:10  
PM

## Order of Agenda

- **National Policy Update:** Refugee Council Of Australia
- **Settlement Service Update:** AMES & Settlement Services International (SSI)
- **Multicultural Centre for Women's Health:** Mi Nguyen
- **Victoria Settlement Data:** VRHN Sector Development and Policy Advisor
- **Rural/Regional Consultation Group:** Kaye Graves (Chair)
- **PRIME Project Update:** Dr. Georgie Paxton

5  
mins

- **Questions and Discussion.**

3:55  
PM

- **Evaluation via SurveyMonkey**

4:00  
PM

- **Meeting Close**

# National Policy Update

26 October 2023

Rebecca Eckard  
Refugee Council of Australia

# Key issues and updates

**1. Resolution of Status visas**

**2. Offshore Processing**

**3. Protection visas and SRSS**

**4. Immigration detention**

**5. Humanitarian Program & Complementary  
Pathways**

# Resolution of Status (RoS) visa

- Department still working through RoS applications: 8,400 granted so far
- No systemic process of review for the 8,000 people denied protection
  - 1,900 people awaiting primary decision
- Funded free legal advice available to people applying for RoS through refugee community legal centres. No application charge.
- **Updates: New regulations in effect:** one to enable more people to smoothly transition to a RoS; another in relation to new identity criteria for RoS visas
- **Family reunion options** and campaign

# Solutions for refugees in offshore processing

- 3,127 people sent to Nauru and PNG from July 2013 to early 2014. 1,250 refugees resettled. More than 750 returned to country of origin, 15 have died and over 250 children born since 2013
- Just 1,180 people remain – 2 +11 in Nauru, 60 in PNG, 1,100 transferred to Australia for medical reasons
- Insufficient resettlement options currently available, with 500-600 places still required beyond USA, New Zealand, and Canadian options. **\*\*Family unity principle\*\***
- **Update:** Likelihood of 60 remaining men on PNG to be transferred to Australia, with 40+ engaged in New Zealand and Canadian resettlement; 16 men very unwell and need intensive treatment.

# Protection Visa and SRSS reform

- Most of the people seeking asylum have **no access to a financial safety net**, with at least 2,500 people who have no visa and cannot work
- People are waiting an average of **2.4 years** for an initial onshore protection decision, **3.6 years** for an administrative appeal and **5.1 years** for review by courts
- Direct financial assistance through Federal Government's Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) has been cut by 95%, from \$300mil in 2015-16 to \$15mil in 2022-23  
Budget for 2022-23 (\$36.9mil) underspent by \$22mil
- Responsibility for assistance **shifted to unfunded charities and state-funded services**
- **Sharp increase in presentations** of homelessness (including rough sleeping), food insecurity, inability to fill lifesaving prescriptions, and spiralling mental health (including increased suicidality)
- **Updates:** October 2023 announcement of **\$160mil package to increase decision makers** at initial, review and court stages and to **reinstate funded legal advice** for onshore protection applications
- **Minor improvements to SRSS** application process after consultative workshops but no significant extension of eligibility

# Reform of immigration detention

- As at 31 August 2023, **1,056 people** in locked detention (72 fewer than April 2023)
- Average time in detention **708 days** (was 735 days in April). Canada average now 21.9 days; USA average now 45 days
- The average was around 90 days in mid-2013. No independent body able to prevent detention or compel release.
- Significant number of **people with refugee protection needs in immigration detention** and experiencing deteriorating health
- **Updates:** Indications about **releases for people detained long-term** because of character cancellations (s501 and s116). Home Affairs continuing its “Alternatives to Detention” work.
- Upcoming **High Court case** challenge to *Al-Kateb* run by the Human Rights Law Centre and the Kaldor Centre. In connection with the case, Professor Guy Goodwin-Gill has prepared a **memo on international law and the rules governing the expulsion of non-citizens.**



# Expanding Australia's refugee program

- Increased Humanitarian Visa intake from 17,875 to 20,000 places per year
- Better use of non-discrimination criteria in Humanitarian Program planning
- Agreement to resettle Rohingya refugees
- Additional Complementary Pathway places via the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot (SRLAP)
- Ministerial and Departmental go ahead for additional Complementary Pathways Pilot (education)
- Australia is chairing the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) and the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) (meeting this week on the Global Refugee Forum)

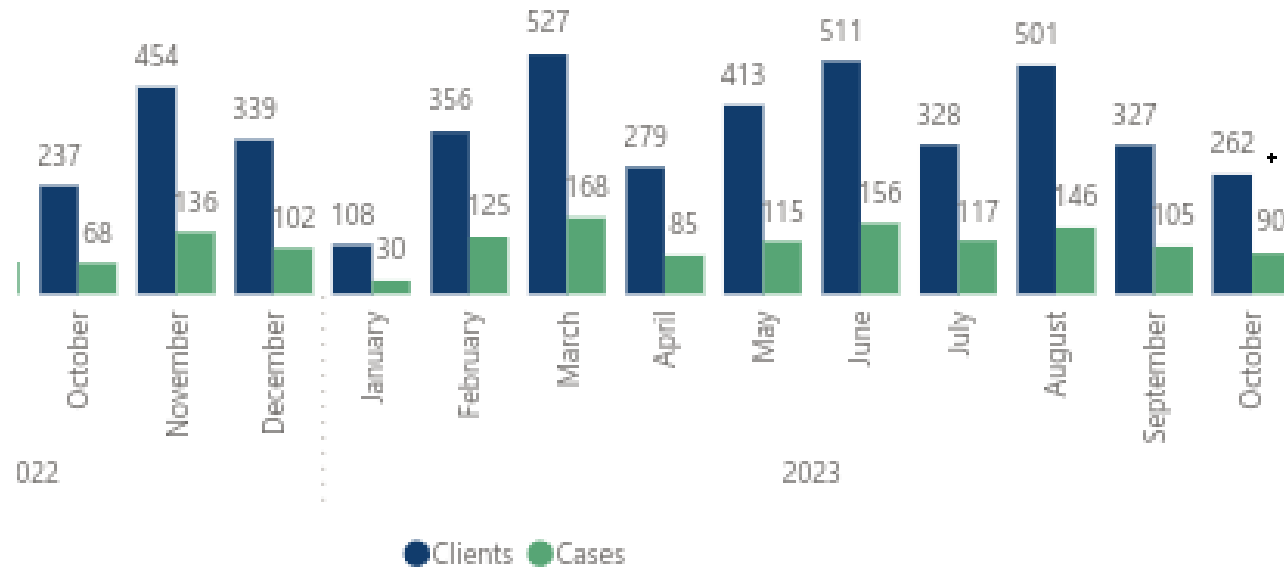
**Update:** Continued advocacy to progressively increase Refugee Program and further work with Government on Complementary Pathways (family, skilled, education). **Need to delink onshore** Protection Visas from the overseas visa grants.

# Questions?

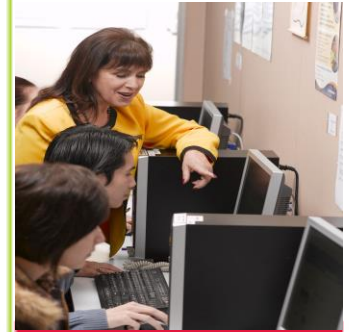
# Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP)



# HSP Updates



Location	Offshore numbers
Melbourne	940
Regional Victoria	492

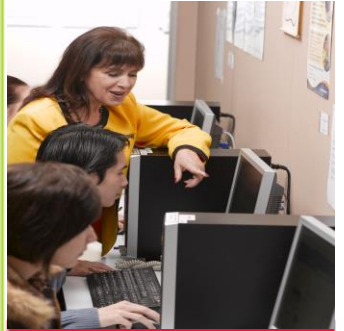


# Issues/Trends



- Increase to Humanitarian Settlement Program 2023/2024
- PRIME Project
- Disability
- Housing

# Questions/Comments



# Settlement Services International

SRSS Program

By Margaret Brickwood



# Settlement Services International

- SSI is a national non-government organisation, we commenced working with asylum seekers in 2012
- I have worked within the SRSS program with SSI since June 2013, and I have managed the SRSS Program in NSW and QLD for SSI for the past five years and currently manage the program nationally
- SSI has been providing SRSS services in Victoria across all regions since June 2023
- SSI has a national model of SRSS service delivery including a specialised national Intake Team who process all applications for SRSS



# SRSS Support for Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers may be eligible for SRSS services if they have applied for a protection visa and are living in the community on Bridging Visa's

Recently the Department of Home Affairs changed the evidence required to assess asylum seekers applications who may be eligible for SRSS

Asylum seekers who have previously exited SRSS or who may not have been eligible in the past may be able to be reassessed for SRSS Support

# SRSS Updates

Currently Service Providers are focused on releases from both held detention and residence determination – applying for support through Band 5 and 6 where required and where their transitional Band 4 support is expiring

The Department has been quite receptive to our applications for further support, most of which have been approved.

Service providers are also focused on if there is a need from organisations who may be able to apply for SRSS given the changes to the evidence required in applying for SRSS Services

# How to contact SSI for inquiries for SRSS Support

Any potential referrals may be sent to [srss.intake@ssi.org.au](mailto:srss.intake@ssi.org.au) or you may contact SSI on 1800 ASYLUM and one of our Intake Team will contact you to assess if asylum seekers are eligible – I will send a referral form around with the minutes.

Any inquiries regarding current recipients of SRSS services – I am happy for you to contact me on [mbrickwood@ssi.org.au](mailto:mbrickwood@ssi.org.au)

It would be great to link in with services in the regions who are providing support to asylum seekers and I am happy to arrange meetings with you, also please email me [mbrickwood@ssi.org.au](mailto:mbrickwood@ssi.org.au)

# QUESTIONS?



# Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

Victorian Refugee Health Network  
26 October 2023



# Acknowledgement of Country







## Who we are

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) is a national, community-based organisation led by and for migrant and refugee women.

## What we do

- Bilingual health education
- Multilingual health information resourcing
- Training
- Research and advocacy

# Our approach

**Intersectional**



**Evidence based**



**Led by migrant  
women**



**Collaborative**







1978



2018



Today

## Health education program

- Over 45 years experience
- Outreach across Victoria
- Peer-based, community led
- Multilingual and multicultural

# Multilingual information in over 20 languages

- Trained team of 30 Bilingual Health Educators
- We deliver over 70 health topics, including nutrition, gender equality, breast health, cervical cancer, lung cancer and mental health

*Some women discussed that they wouldn't even know if any women in their family had breast cancer because in their countries it is diagnosed at a stage when they can't be treated. Women didn't know the breast screen was free for 50 and over. - Participant*



Workforce of multilingual health educators





# PACE Leadership

- Strengthening migrant women leaders in our communities and workplaces since 2009
- Builds participants' capacity to participate, advocate, communicate and engage within their own spheres of influence

*[PACE] is where I have felt seen and heard for the first time in a long time.*

*This has changed my life. I used to be scared of going to do things on my own. Now I'm not afraid. My world is so much bigger now!*

# Our participants now take the lead as...

- Changemakers in the gender equality space
- Family violence practitioners
- Mental health advocates
- Playgroup facilitators
- Bilingual health educators
- Public speakers / motivational speakers
- Decision-makers within their family
- Community organisers
- Migrant women's health advocates



Participants, 2023

# Work in mental health

- Let's Talk Mental Health Project
- Migrant and Refugee Inclusive Disaster Recover and Response Project
- PACE Leadership
- Advocacy:
  - Literature reviews
  - Submission to the inquiry into support for older Victorians' mental health
  - Policy briefs



# Download the Building Bridges report





# Thank you

Contact Mi at [Mi@mcwh.com.au](mailto:Mi@mcwh.com.au)

Visit us at [www.mcwh.com.au](http://www.mcwh.com.au)



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Health



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# Victorian Refugee Health Network Update

Victorian Refugee Health Network





victorian refugee  
health network

# 2022–2027 Strategic Plan

The Victorian Refugee Health Network (VRHN) aims to ensure that all people from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds in Victoria have timely access to appropriate services and other resources required to build and maintain health and wellbeing.



# Our Strategic Priorities

Our strategic plan was developed with the support of a deliberative panel comprising people of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, frontline clinicians, and senior health service leaders. Through a deliberative engagement process the panel shaped recommendations of four strategic priorities.



1

## Appropriate and Accessible Systems and Services

Priority areas include:

- Disability
- Health Services
- Rural & Regional focus

2

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Priority areas include:

- Represent community needs in sector reforms
- Mental health & well-being projects

3

## Community and Partnerships

Priority areas include:

- Health & wellbeing partnerships
- Consult & engage community expertise

4

## Workforce Development and Best Practice

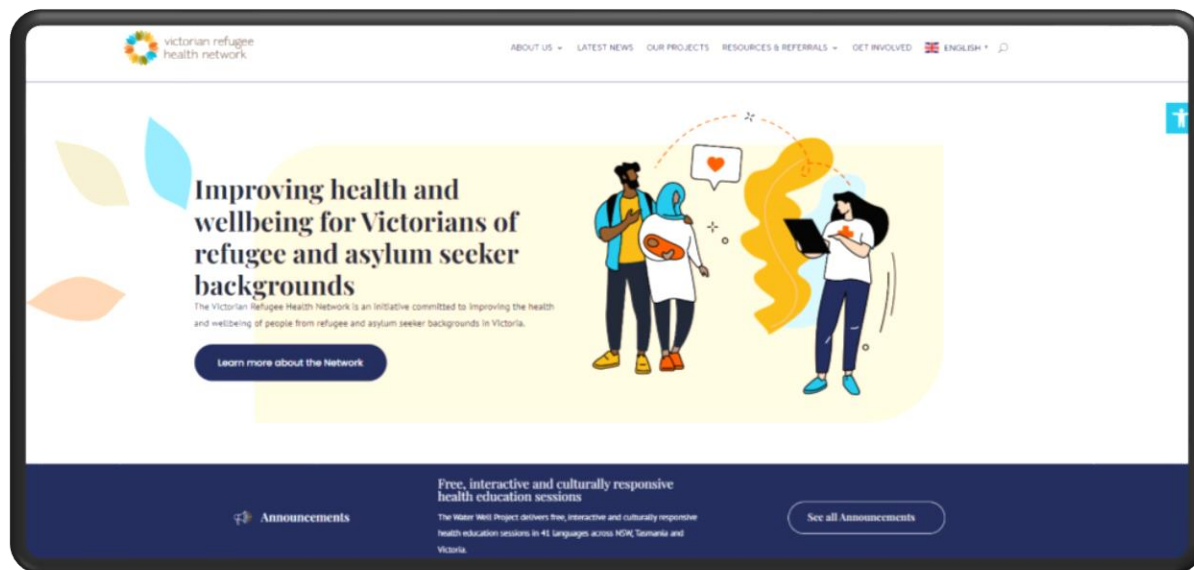
Priority areas include:

- Bicultural workforce & language services
- Specialist workforce development
- Cultural competency accreditation

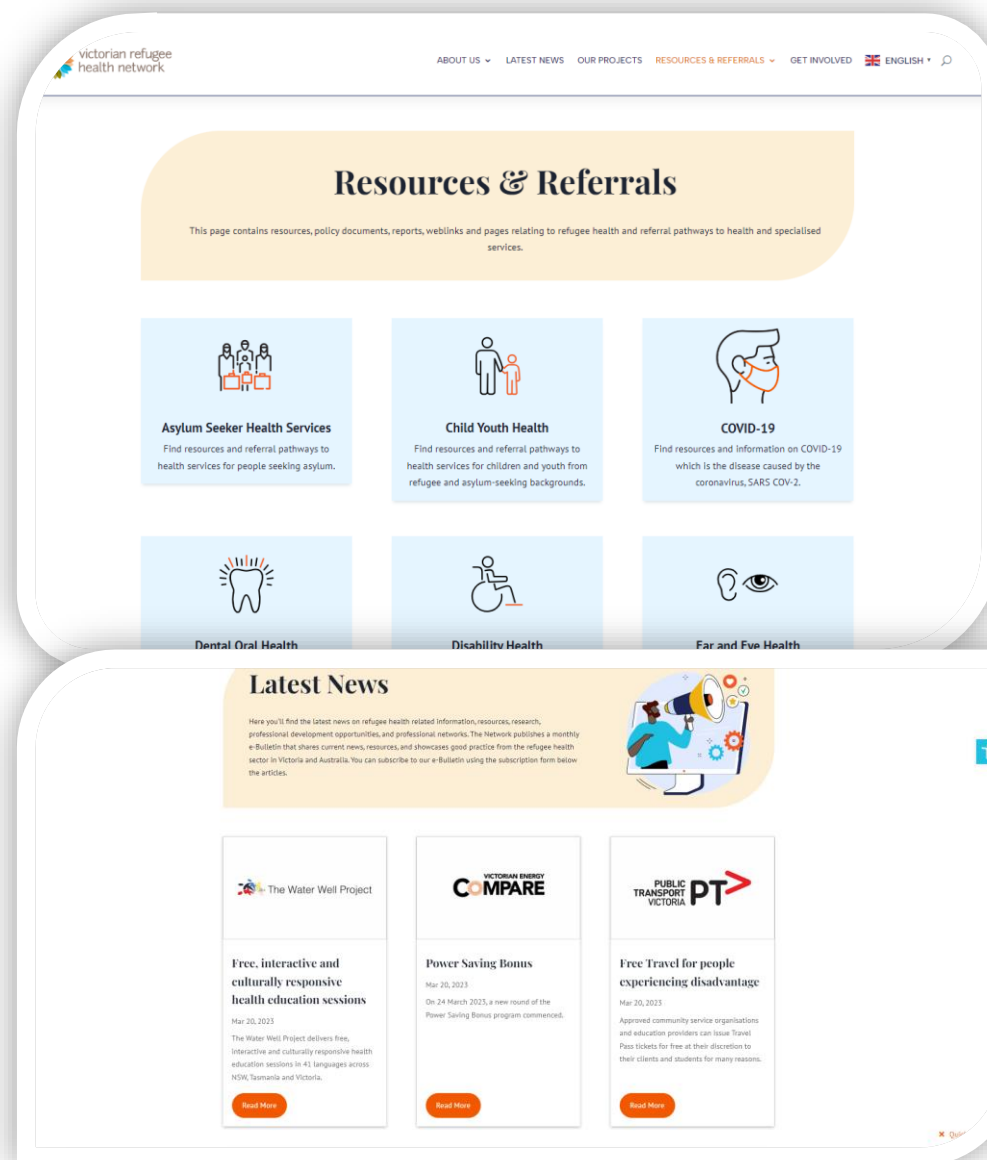


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# The Victorian Refugee Health Network- New Website!



<https://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/>

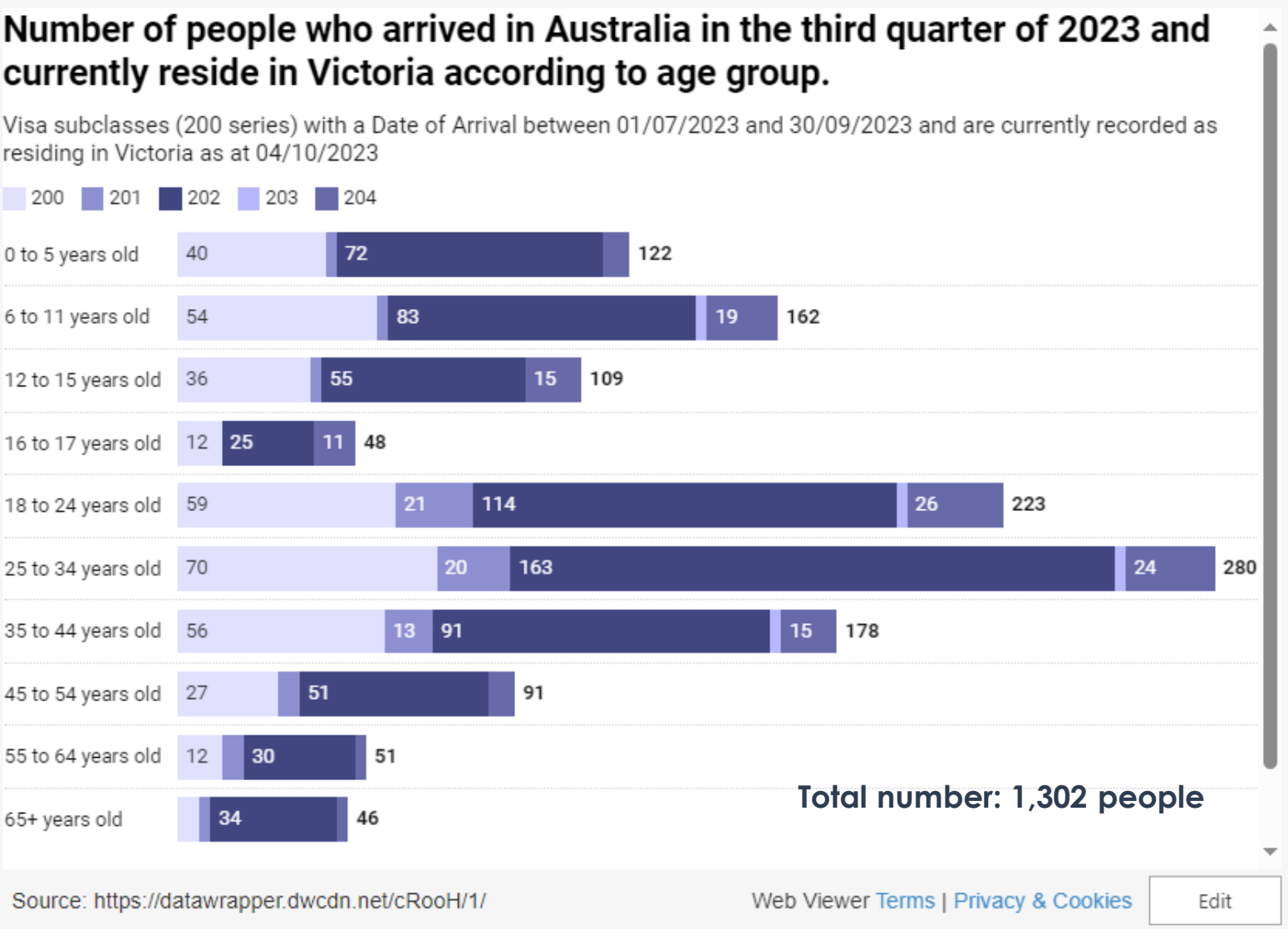


# Victorian Settlement Data

Victorian Refugee Health Network



# Settlement Data in Victoria



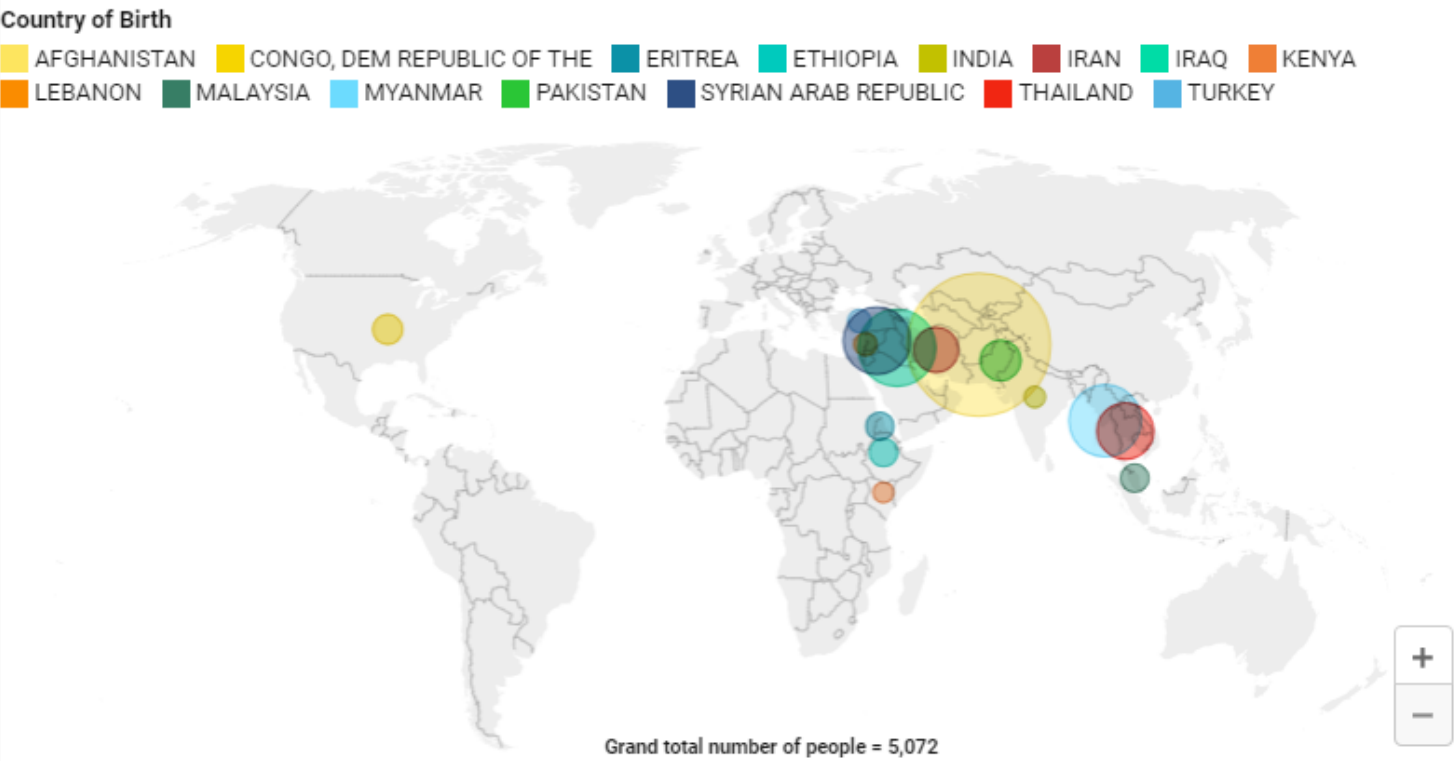
Visa Subclass	Details:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refugee Visa (200)</li><li>In Country Special Humanitarian (201)</li><li>Emergency Rescue (203)</li><li>Women at Risk (204)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Permanent Stay</li><li>✓ With these visas you can move to Australia if you are subject to persecution in your home county. These visas allow you and your family to live, work and study indefinitely in Australia</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Global Special Humanitarian visa (202)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Permanent Stay</li><li>✓ With this visa you can move to Australia if you face substantial discrimination or human rights abuses and have a proposer and stay in Australia with your immediate family.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Protection Visa (866)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Permanent Stay</li><li>✓ This visa is for people who arrived in Australia on a valid visa and want to seek asylum. It lets you stay in Australia permanently, if you engage Australia's protection obligations and meet all other requirements for the grant of the visa.</li></ul>

\* This data does not include those on Bridging visas or temporary protection visas (TPV, SHEV, 449, 786)

# Settlement Data in Victoria

## Country of Birth (Top 15) Humanitarian Settlers who reside in Victoria and arrived in the past year

People on Refugee Category Visas (200 series) with a Date of Arrival between 01/10/2022 and 30/09/2023 and are currently recorded as residing in Victoria as at 04/10/2023



Source: <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/CcZ6l/2/>

Web Viewer [Terms](#) | [Privacy & Cookies](#)

Edit

## Top 15 Country of Birth & Ethnicity

Country of Birth	Visa Subclass (200 series)	Ethnicity	Visa Subclass (200 series)
AFGHANISTAN	2,206	Hazara (Afghan)	1,232
IRAQ	608	Iraqi	501
MYANMAR	531	Karen (Burma)	451
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	457	Syrian	446
THAILAND	314	Afghan	435
IRAN	193	Tajik	378
PAKISTAN	155	Pashtun (Afghan)	293
CONGO, DEM REPUBLIC OF THE	78	Chin	241
ETHIOPIA	68	Unknown	115
MALAYSIA	68	Congo	106
ERITREA	66	Burmese	84
LEBANON	42	Karenni	77
TURKEY	41	Chaldean (Iraq)	74
INDIA	35	Punjabi	65
KENYA	32	Kurdish	56
Total Number of people	5,072 people	Total Number of people	5,072 people

\* This data does not include those on Bridging visas or temporary protection visas (TPV, SHEV, 449, 786).

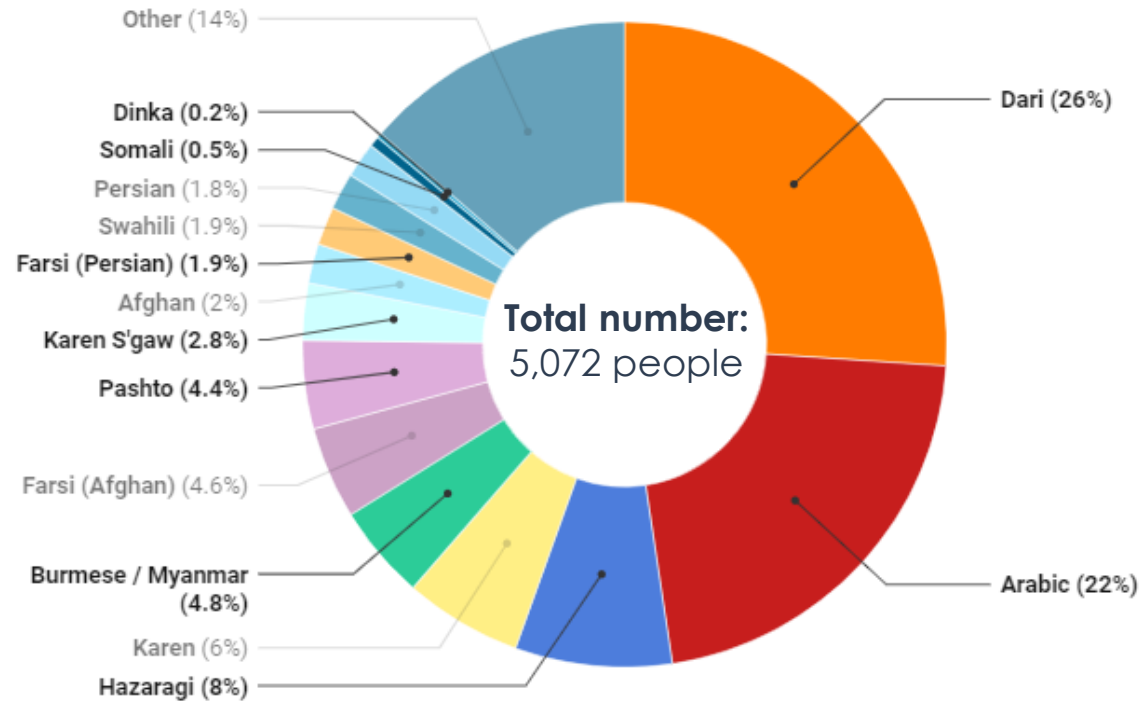
Link to interactive map: <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/CcZ6l/2/>



# Settlement Data in Victoria

## Main Language Spoken for those who arrived in the past year

People on Visa subclass (200 series) who arrived in Australia between 01/10/2022 and 30/09/2023 and are currently recorded as residing in Victoria as at 04/10/2023



\* These figures are approximations as any cells that have been suppressed (<5) were changed to a numerical value (3) to present data in this map.

Chart: Victorian Refugee Health Network • Source: Settlement Data Request- Department of Home Affairs • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Source: <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/IFsG1/5/>

Edit

## 2024 RMIT Interpreter Scholarship Program



### 2024 Interpreter Scholarship Program

The Interpreter Scholarship Program works to improve the supply, quality and use of language services in Victoria by offering scholarships to eligible students seeking to undertake the following courses, commencing in 2024:

- [Diploma of Interpreting](#)
- [Advanced Diploma of Interpreting](#); or
- [Introduction to Interpreting Skill Set](#)

Each year, the program includes a range of languages that have been identified as needing more certified interpreters. This year, scholarships are on offer to students seeking to undertake the courses in one of the following languages:

- **Advanced Diploma:** Arabic, Greek, Italian and Persian
- **Diploma:** Burmese, Dari, Dinka, Samoan, S'gaw Karen and Somali
- **Skill Set:** Albanian, Bangla, Chichewa, Hakha Chin, Hakka Chinese, Hazaraghi, Hmong, Kirundi, Kurdish Kurmanji, Lingala, Macedonian, Nuer, Pashto, Rohingya and Ukrainian

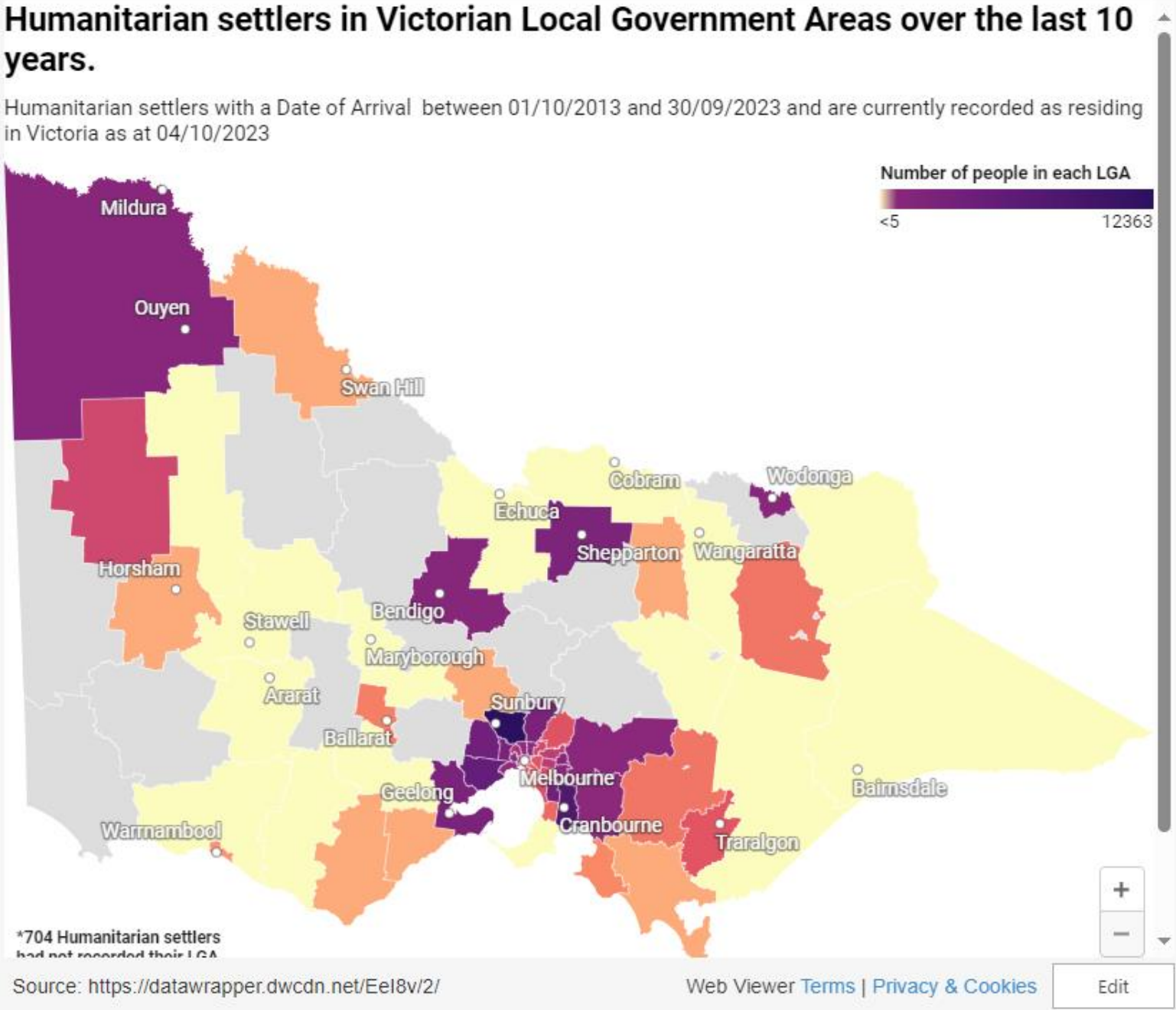


# Settlement Data in Victoria

Top 10 Settlement Areas who arrived in the past 10 years

Local Government Area (LGA)	Number of arrivals (Visa Subclass 200s series & 866)	Number of people on the Resolution of Status Visa (851)
Hume	12,077	160
Casey	5,413	199
Wyndham	4,340	131
Greater Dandenong	3,327	191
Melton	2,870	53
Brimbank	2,225	116
Whittlesea	2,203	318
Greater Geelong	1,372	133
Maroondah	1,344	22
Greater Bendigo	1,048	8

\* This data does not include those on Bridging visas or temporary protection visas (TPV, SHEV, 449, 786).

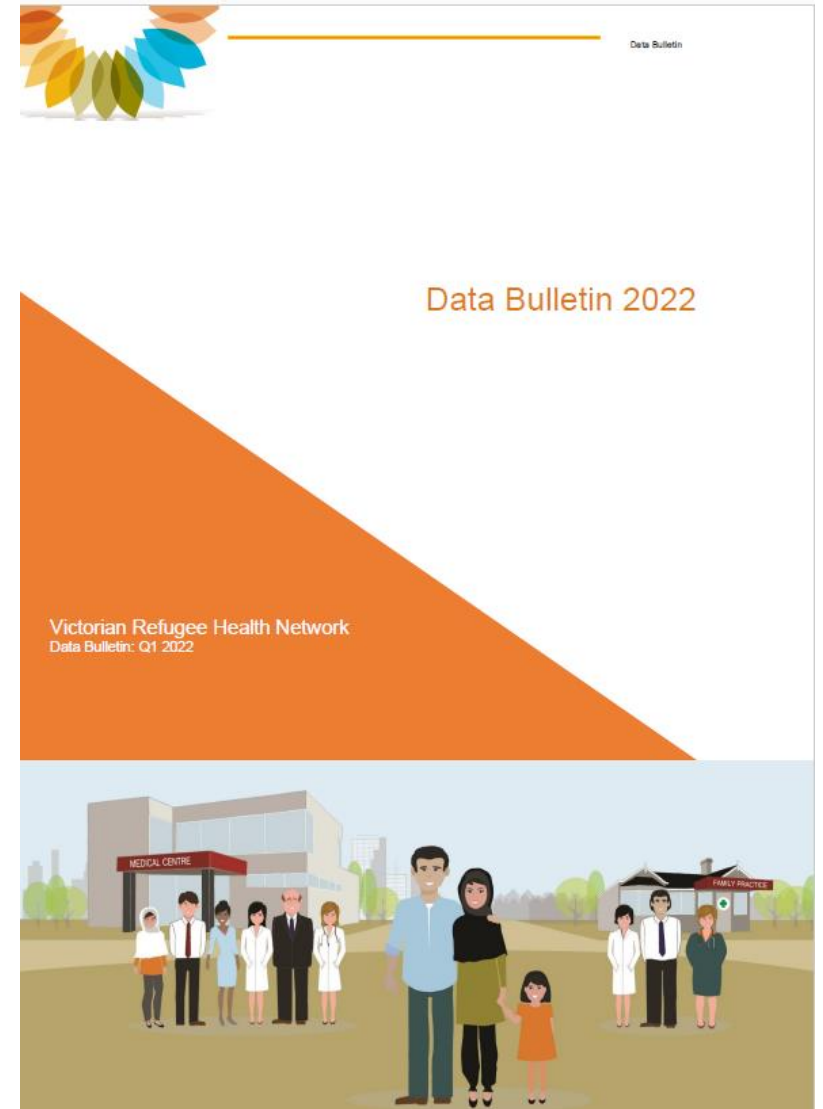


Link to interactive map: <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Eel8v/2/>

# VRHN Data Bulletin

Every quarter, the Victorian Refugee Health Network publishes a Data Bulletin that outlines Settlement data for Victoria and is available on our website here:

<https://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/get-involved/>





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## Rural/Regional Working Group

October 2023

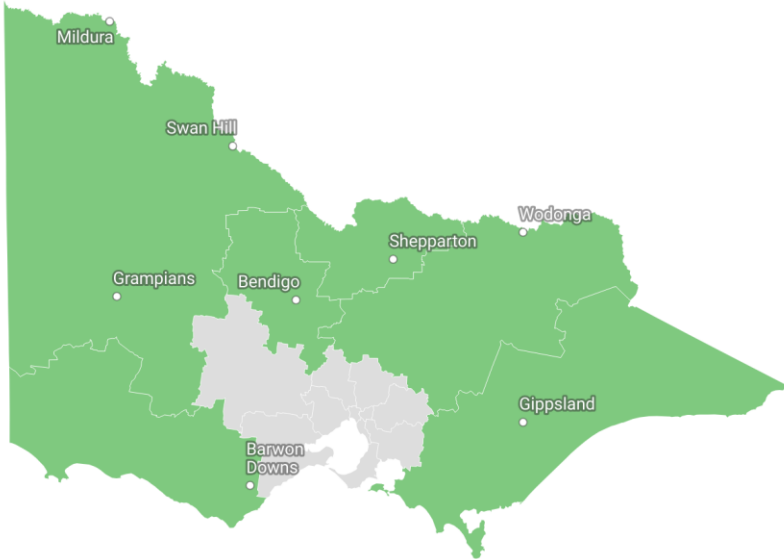
# Rural/Regional Working Group

## Overview:

With a high number of people settling in rural/regional areas, it is important to monitor, capture and have regular updates on health access issues for areas outside metropolitan areas. This year, the Network has established a Rural and Regional working group to ensure there is adequate representation in these Statewide Meetings on matters from across the State.

### Rural/Regional Working Group

Representation of group members.



Map: Victorian Refugee Health Network • Map data: ABS • Created with Datawrapper

## Top 3 areas of concern

### 1. Limited or no public dental services available in the regions

- Waitlist in Bendigo is currently around 10-11 months
- No dentist at the public dental clinic in Mildura
- Cost and travel time for interpreter is a barrier and creates delays to dental treatment.

### 2. Interpreters required for community members to attend support groups

- Services and programs do not have funding for interpreters if required/requested by participants. E.g. parenting support groups.
- This also includes mandated programs for example VicRoads training as a result of drink driving charges and/or a men's behaviour change program.

### 3. Critical health services not available for asylum seekers

- In cases where asylum seeker clients are requiring immediate health interventions there are a number of barriers to access these critical services.

# **The Program for Refugee Immunisation, Monitoring and Education (PRIME)**

Dr. Georgie Paxton



## PRIME: Program for Refugee Immunisation Monitoring and Education

### Evaluation

PRIME – Ongoing (2017-2022)

PRIME – Abridged catch-up pilot (2022)

PRIME – Covid (2022)

2017-2022

Authors: A/Prof Georgia Paxton OAM, Reham Elzeiny, Rachael James

On behalf of the PRIME teams: City of Whittlesea, City of Greater Dandenong, Asylum Seekers  
Resource Centre and Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub

**7 years**

**4 sites**

2 LGA

Whittlesea – working with Hume  
CGD – NPELS and expanded

2 asylum seeker healthcare agencies

ASRC

Cabrini

**Amazing teams**

Include bilingual, bicultural members

Embedded in local communities,

Local solutions, local networks, inc PHN

**Primary care support + LGA lifespan**

# PRIME – all sites

**16,366 people**

**90%** caseload LGA sites

**11% up to date**  
Records put on AIR

**93% consented**  
to receiving catch-up  
13,603 people referred

11,847 started  
9586 completed  
11,384 up to date + AIR  
**70% up to date**  
Not adjusted for time

**Coverage lifted to:**  
**92.7%** children  
**89.3%** adolescents  
**78.8%** adults  
Adjusted for time

# PRIME – all sites

**90%** caseload LGA sites

## **AIR records**

All offshore records put onto AIR  
Catch-up on AIR – 6m Centrelink

## **Primary care support 60%**

AIR  
Catch-up plans  
Prompts to attend

## **LGA lifespan catch-up 40%**

All ages

## **Errors**

Major issue  
22.5% all patients  
97.9% in primary care

## **Pipeline**

5300 in 18m from start of 2022  
Now 3000 per year



# North

## Routine care – 7 years

Caseload – 750 active

553 in primary care + 200 LGA – 6 sessions

Phone + SMS to clients

Letter with catch-up plan to client and GP

AIR records - **ask GP**, RHP if connected

Back-up - RCH drop in for children



### Baseline

N=2348

68.3% children

54.4% adolescents

5.4% adults

# Southeast

Caseload – 1610 active

964 GP, 200 LGA, 99 school, 21 CHC, 328 unallocated

Phone – already completed

Communication to GPs – already completed + scoping

Letter to client (no specific plan, existing all on AIR)

AIR records - **ask GP**, Monash Refugee Health if connected, Monash Imm

Back-up – Monash Immunisation drop in



### Baseline

N=699

11.9% children

5.0% adolescents

2.5% adults

# North

Caseload – 750 active

553 in primary care + 200 LGA – 6 sessions

Phone + SMS to clients

Letter with catch-up plan to client and GP

AIR records - ask GP, RHP if connected

Back-up - RCH drop in for children

## 7-year totals

### DPV health

Referred 356 to PRIME

different pw North: community/ AMES

<1% site for immunisation

### Community health 7 years

Total 177/16,366 = 1.1%

# Southeast

Caseload – 1610 active

964 GP, 200 LGA, 99 school, 21 CHC, 328 unallocated

Phone – already completed

Communication to GPs – already completed + scoping

Letter to client (no specific plan, existing all on AIR)

AIR records - **ask GP**, Monash Refugee Health if connected, Monash Immunisation

Back-up – Monash Immunisation drop in

### Monash/AMES

Referred 4258 people to PRIME

3% site for immunisation

# Offshore vaccines

## Full report

### Record results

Was the client's identity confirmed?	Yes
Vaccination requirements complete	Yes
Does the Client have a COVID vaccination certificate?	No

### Examiner Declaration

Examiner Declaration	Yes
Examiner Name	Dr Titus Kiprono RUTO
Declaration date	21 Nov 2022

### Pentavac or equivalent (using DTP)

Disease	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Hib, Hepatitis B
Vaccine	Pentavac or equivalent (using DTP)
History date 1	07-May-2021
History date 2	30-Jun-2021
History date 3	04-Aug-2021

### MMR

Disease	Measles, Mumps, Rubella
Vaccine	MMR
Panel date 1	10-Nov-2022
Batch 1	0161N017
Batch Expiry date 1	28-Feb-2024

### Measles-Rubella

Disease	Measles, Rubella
---------	------------------

# Impact

- Return to baseline immunisation in Victoria – expect 30% north and 6% south
- Differential access based on place of birth in Victoria
- Loss offshore vaccine information
- Loss prompts to attend primary care → flow on
- Charges for GP visits → additional barriers
- Loss Centrelink payments – \$30.66 per fortnight per child → impact housing
- Impact for caseworkers and RHP chasing information
- Language school unvaccinated
- Outbreak – when not if, and impact on settlement narratives

- [illegible]



Ask me about  
**FREE**   
vaccinations



# Evaluation survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NBYM7L8>

**Next Meeting to be confirmed for 2024.**

Subscribe to become a Network member to receive notifications of upcoming meetings [here](#).





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Thank you for  
attending the VRHN  
State-wide Meeting!

October 2023