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Using the National Settlement Standards to achieve better health outcomes for migrants and refugees in rural and regional Australia

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Settlement Council of Australia

As more migrants and refugees settle in regional and rural locations, regional infrastructure and development are becoming increasingly important to discussions about Australia's migration program. Supporting settlement in regional areas is becoming increasingly important, as it is a focus of the Australian Government's migration policy.

Many new arrivals will need support to understand the Australian health systems, including their rights and entitlements and how to access health care. Providing information about maintaining their physical and mental health and wellbeing is essential to their ability to settle into their new lives in Australia.

New arrivals need to be able to access appropriate, affordable and quality health services. These services encompass meeting specific needs, such as dealing with torture, trauma and other conditions, through to being able to understand and use the general medical assistance and interventions that are available to all Australians. Local communities settling refugees and other new migrants need to take a place based approach, providing joined up and holistic services and support, for settlement to be successful.

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) developed nine key indicators for successful settlement. The National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards (NSSOS)¹ covering education and training, employment, health and wellbeing, housing, language services, transport, civic participation, family and social support, and justice:

- establish consistent best practice standards that reflect the work of settlement services
- support consistent, high quality services nationally
- provide a focus on how settlement services can understand and measure their effect on clients and their overall effectiveness
- facilitate a learning and knowledge base that contributes to continuous improvement.

¹ <http://scoa.org.au/policy-hub/scoa-publications/national-settlement-services-outcomes-standards/>

Standard 3, 'Health and Wellbeing' asks that 'clients are engaged through effective and responsive primary prevention and early intervention initiatives that encourage health and wellbeing'. The indicators of this standard are:

- new arrival communities have access to appropriate, affordable and quality health services and interventions
- support and education is provided to assist new arrival communities to navigate the Australian health systems and to understand their rights
- health and wellbeing risks that emerge leading up to and during the settlement process are assessed and responded to in collaboration with specialist services
- services include preventative measures aimed at promoting increased awareness about health and wellbeing during settlement and early responses to problems that arise
- responses to health and wellbeing issues are sensitive to the specific circumstances of clients such as familiarity with health interventions, culture, language, age, background, religion, experiences of trauma and cognitive capacity
- services are underpinned by an evidence base.

Presenter

Andrew Cummings is the Interim CEO of SCOA. He is also a freelance trainer, writer and consultant, who has worked in the community sector for over 30 years. His areas of specialism include working with refugee and migrant communities, and working with young people. Andrew was SCOA's first Executive Officer in 2009, and was also Interim CEO in 2015–16. His other previous roles include being Secretary-General of the European Confederation of Youth Clubs; Executive Director of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition; Executive Officer of the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network of NSW; and Acting National Coordinator of the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network. Andrew has written extensively on youth and settlement issues, with over 40 published works. These include text books, training manuals and resource kits published by a wide range of organisations in Australia, UK, Denmark, Belgium and Canada. Andrew has also developed numerous training programs on youth issues and settlement, delivering these to over 4,000 people.

Clarissa Adriel is an occupational therapist interested in intercultural practice. After 10 years working in the public health system concurrent with volunteer work with refugees, she is passionate about services that are accessible and equitable. Six years ago she joined Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania for a 'long service leave holiday' where she now coordinates client services in the settlement team.