



Refugee Council
of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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TIME FOR TAMWORTH COUNCIL TO REJECT FEAR, SAYS REFUGEE COUNCIL

The Refugee Council of Australia has called on Tamworth Regional Council to reject misinformation and fear and reconsider its decision to opt out of active involvement in resettling refugees.

The Refugee Council's chief executive officer Paul Power said Tamworth Council's decision this week to reject an offer to become more involved in refugee resettlement showed the Council's ignorance of the role former refugees have played in Australian life over many decades.

"The city of Tamworth is missing out on an excellent opportunity to develop as a richer and more outward-looking community because of the Council's decision to turn its back on refugee resettlement," Mr Power said.

"Rather than pander to those who are fearful of outsiders, the councillors have the opportunity to provide leadership within their own community," he said. "They can encourage residents to see the positive opportunities provided by Tamworth playing its part in resettling people who have their homes through war and persecution.

"Australians place great importance on the idea of giving a battler a fair go. There is no better illustration of the 'fair go' than giving people who have lost everything the chance to start again within your own community.

"Cities and towns of all sizes around Australia have been taking an active role in refugee resettlement for many years and have gained new people, new ideas and new energy as a result," Mr Power said.

"Since World War II, Australia has welcomed more than 675,000 refugee and humanitarian entrants. Well over one million Australians – more than five per cent of the national population – have experienced life as a refugee or have a parent or grandparent who has.

"Former refugees and their children have gone on to become leaders in many areas of Australian life, including business, education, sport and the arts. All they needed was a welcoming community and some support to help them through the challenges of adjusting to life in Australia."

Mr Power said it was unfortunate that misinformation about crime and health was being peddled to support Tamworth Council's decision.

"The reported public statements about crime about newly arrived refugees in Tamworth are not backed up by the information supplied by the NSW Police," he said. "Similarly, the attempt to scare people about health risks fails to acknowledge the stringent health testing conducted before refugees are given approval to enter Australia."

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world