

Bright Ideas



Refugee Council
of Australia

Local strategies to support
refugees and asylum seekers

24. NEW ROOTS PROJECT

*New Roots
Project mobile
App; New Roots
Ambassador Dr
Munjed Al
Muderis. Photo
Courtesy Callan
Lawrence, SSI.*



What?

The New Roots Project has been developed to support the health and wellbeing of men, aged 18-45, who have recently arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa, and to help them stay strong as they transition to a new country.

The New Roots Project is the first of its kind in Australia, as it uses an integrated, holistic model of health and wellbeing that considers and values masculinity in a culturally appropriate way. The New Roots project is implementing an integrated and holistic approach to address physical, social and emotional wellbeing in settlement through:

1. A mobile phone App in English, Arabic, Farsi and Tamil. The app provides information and tools to assist initial orientation in Australia and self-help strategies to improve health and wellbeing.
2. An Online Toolkit for settlement caseworkers.
3. Workshops for Arabic, Farsi and Tamil-speaking communities to increase awareness of the App and promote health and wellbeing in their communities.

The New Roots Project was developed for a 12 month pilot phase in NSW, which will be completed towards the end of 2016. The app will likely roll out nationally in late 2016.

Who?

The New Roots app is designed primarily for men, aged 18-45 from Arabic, English, Farsi and Tamil – speaking backgrounds, who have recently arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa. However, the app can be used by recent-arrivals of all ages, nationality and gender.

Why?

People from refugee backgrounds who are resettled in Australia experience very high levels of psychological distress, due to traumatic experiences in countries of origin, transit and destination. This project is focused on providing men with assistance in orientation as a complement to settlement casework and tips and tools for self-help strategies to maintain physical, social and emotional wellbeing as they adapt to a new country and culture and secure the necessities of life.

Men seek help and think about health and wellbeing in ways that are different to women. The app has been developed to value men's preferences to address their mental health and wellbeing in a holistic way. It includes a 'mood-mapping' tool for men to reflect on emotional health on a regular basis and [get suggestions for taking action](#) from self-help strategies through to professional psychological support.

The caseworker Online Toolkit and community workshops provide information and resources to build the capacity of people who work with, and who are close to, men settling in Australia, to promote their health and wellbeing. During the pilot phase only SSI caseworkers will be able to access the Online Toolkit training.

How?

- Development: Project development involved initial research and scoping, followed by consultations with Community Advisory Groups that were comprised of people from the Arabic, Farsi and Tamil speaking communities.
- Promotion: Online, the app is promoted through Apple and Google Play app stores. SSI has also promoted the app through mainstream, ethnic media and social media of refugee and settlement agencies using two high-profile project ambassadors.
- The New Roots Project has been developed by Settlement Services International in partnership with *beyondblue* and funded with donations from The Movember Foundation.

Successes

More than 1300 downloads of the app occurred in the first month after launch. The app has been very well received by the intended users and their communities

Challenges

- Translating challenges: Translating is especially difficult in the area of mental and emotional health where there is community stigma and where it can be more difficult to convey the correct meaning rather than a literal translation of the text.
- Language challenges: SSI has a strong track record in working with people from non-English speaking backgrounds. SSI calls upon its diverse staff, which speaks 98 different languages, to assist with translations and checking to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Advice for others

Developing an app like this is expensive and time-consuming, so it's critical that communities and users of the app are given ample opportunity to provide feedback throughout the development phase. It's also important to trial and evaluate apps so that we can assess the impact on refugees and build the evidence for what works (and doesn't work) to improve their health and wellbeing in this area.

More info

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There is more information, including videos, about the New Roots Project and app on the [SSI website, here](#). The app can be downloaded from the Apple and Google Play app stores, and links to the app can be found on the SSI website.

Bright Ideas

Bright Ideas highlights innovative programs, initiatives and projects developed to support refugees and asylum seekers. It provides a way to share ideas, success stories and good practice to improve service provision and assist organisations and communities in addressing key issues and challenges.

If you have an initiative you think could be profiled in *Bright Ideas*, please contact the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) on admin@refugeecouncil.org.au or call (02) 9211 9333. To download other *Bright Ideas*, go to: www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/bright-ideas/