



# Refugee Council of Australia

## **OPTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SAFE HAVEN ENTERPRISE VISA (SHEV)**

June 2015

### **What is the SHEV?**

While many details of the SHEV are still being negotiated between the states/territories and the Commonwealth, the SHEV will be a five-year visa issued to people found to be owed protection. If the person (or a member of the family) on the SHEV is engaged in employment and does not receive any social security benefits or is enrolled in full-time study (or a combination of the two) for a period of 42 months during the five years, then that person will be eligible to apply for certain other onshore visas (both temporary and permanent but *not* a permanent Protection visa). The person must still meet all eligibility requirements for the next temporary or permanent visa.

### **What will the SHEV mean to local areas?**

NSW has indicated that it will be opting in to the SHEV for certain regional areas other than Newcastle and Wollongong. The other states and territories are still in negotiations with the Commonwealth. There are **valid concerns from states/territories about the lack of resources** available to both state/territory governments and local government areas for the provision of services and support for SHEV holders, as people with Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and SHEVs are not eligible for settlement support services through Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) or Settlement Grants.

It is necessary for the Commonwealth to provide adequate resources, support and coordination for states/territories to be able to opt-in to the SHEV scheme. These supports are all required; however, even if a local area is not supported by the Commonwealth or state/territory, recognised refugees may still move to these regional areas in pursuit of work or study. Indeed, people from refugee backgrounds are often highly motivated to work and study and there are numerous examples of refugee and humanitarian entrants taking the initiative to move to regional areas which have these opportunities available. If an area is not designated for the purposes of the SHEV, then it will **disadvantage the refugees that are there**, as they will be issued a TPV instead of a SHEV, which lasts for only three years and does not provide a pathway to permanent residency. Refugees on TPVs will have freedom of movement and may move to these regional areas if there are work or study opportunities, so local councils or states/territories opting out of the SHEV will hurt refugees while also seeing people settle in the area without coordinated support.

### **What opportunities does the SHEV present?**

There are many employers, community groups (like Rural Australians for Refugees) and faith-based organisations that have indicated that there is both **work and support in regional Australia**. Unfortunately, if a local council or state/territory decision-maker is not aware of these opportunities, then they may opt-out of the SHEV scheme. If a state/territory were to opt-in, there are great opportunities for local groups to provide support and outreach to refugees on SHEVs that arrive in the local area. There are also ways for local groups to coordinate efforts with local industries, services and communities to be able to welcome and support people moving into their area.

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In relation to the conditions and residency requirements of the SHEV, **there is an opportunity to expand the options for where people live and the employment that they undertake.** Designated industries are not part of the current SHEV scheme; however, there is an opportunity for local councils, industry groups and state governments to advocate to the Commonwealth for this option. Given the growing labour shortages in certain industries (e.g. hospitality), there is a unique opportunity for the SHEV to include not only regional geographic locations but also to expand to include designated industries. The inclusion of designated industries for the provision of a SHEV would mean that both metropolitan and regional areas where labour shortages in key industries exist could provide opportunities for refugees eager to work and contribute. Refugees would also have access to the communities and support structures that are already in place in many metropolitan areas. The burden of developing support services in regional locations where there has been minimal refugee settlement would be lessened through the expansion of designated locations.

### **Examples of strength found in refugee settlement in regional areas**

When well-coordinated and resourced, there are great examples of **the positive impact of refugee settlement in regional and rural areas.** A recent example is the settlement of Karen people in Nhill, Victoria. The settlement of Karen people in Nhill, initiated at the local level in 2010 and with support from AMES Australia, has benefited the local economy, society and community. The economic impact of the increased labour supply, in terms of Gross Regional Product – as modelled by Deloitte Access Economics – is estimated to be \$41.5 million. The Karen settlement has also redressed population decline for the township, revitalised local services, and attracted increased government funding and increased social capital across both the host and refugee communities. In the words of the Hindmarsh Shire Council CEO, “The social impact of the Karen settlement is extraordinary. Nhill, a very conservative community, has embraced and opened their minds and hearts to the Karen. This has made Nhill a better place to live.”

A report on the impact of the Karen people in Nhill is available at

<https://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Research/19933%20AMES%20Nhill%20Report%20LR.pdf>.

Another example of **positive settlement and cooperation among regional local councils, volunteer groups, employers and refugee community members** is that of Rockhampton, Queensland. The local settlement agency, the Multicultural Development Association (MDA), worked to support the settlement of many hundreds of refugee men who travelled to Rockhampton to find work. Years later, it is a success story of regional settlement. The Rockhampton Regional Council provided a formal welcome to the new refugees in 2010 that is still remembered positively. This welcome initiated the strong collaborative approach to community building that continues today. Newly-arrived refugees benefited from the strong volunteer networks in the Rockhampton area including organisations such as Sanctuary and the Central Queensland Multicultural Association. A partnership focused on employment with AWX, the local Teys Australia meatworks and MDA was integral to the successful settlement of almost 500 newly-arrived refugees to the region.

A report on the successes in Rockhampton, including several personal stories, is available at

<http://www.mdainc.org.au/sites/default/files/Settlement%20Works.pdf>.

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