



THINKING OF MOVING TO REGIONAL NSW?

If you have a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV), you might be thinking about moving to a regional area but you are not sure where to start and how to go about it.

This information sheet covers things you should think about and do before making a move.

The information here is also relevant to other refugees, including those on Temporary Protection Visas, who are considering moving into regional NSW.

Why Move to Regional NSW?

For refugees with a SHEV, the answer to this is obvious: moving away from Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong opens the possibility of getting a permanent visa when the SHEV expires.

This is not, however, the only reason why refugees should think about moving to regional NSW. Cities and towns in regional NSW offer:

- welcoming communities
- job opportunities
- affordable housing
- access to good educational and medical facilities
- a good standard of living.

It is true that you will be moving away from friends and your community but in regional areas you have the opportunity to make new friends and you can stay in touch with people in Sydney.

Where Do I Move To?

There is no simple answer to this, other than to say “do your homework”.

Every regional city and town is different. They offer different job opportunities, they have different climates, they are closer or further from Sydney. You need to think about what you are looking for and try to find the place that best meets your needs.

To help you to learn about regional centres that are ‘refugee friendly’, a set of regional profiles have been prepared. The profiles cover the following locations:

Albury	Leeton
Armidale	Port Macquarie
Bathurst and Orange	Southern Highlands
Griffith	Tamworth
Glen Innes	Wagga Wagga
Goulburn	Woolgoolga



Each profile provides general information about the city or region as well as details about employment, accommodation, education, health care, transport, shopping, places of worship and other things you might be curious about. The profiles also give details of people who can help you and websites where you can find more information.

The profiles can be found on the Refugee Council of Australia Website at www.refugeecouncil.org.au.

A WORD OF WARNING

Please be aware there are many independent Farm Labour Hire Contractors operating in regional areas that recruit from major cities and via web employment search apps.

These contractors are not well regulated and some have reputations for mistreatment of overseas workers.

To minimise risk always ensure that your employment contractor:

- is properly insured with Workcover
- is registered with an appropriate Superannuation Fund
- has a valid Australian Business Number
- has a Registered Business Address that is able to be looked up independently of information provided by the contractor.

Also be alert to requests or demands from the contractor that:

- you provide your actual visa and migration documents
- you sign an employment contract that refers to expectations regarding payments for accommodation on site and behaviour both at work and outside of work that seem too controlling (e.g. where they say that you are unable to leave the worksite, must pay for tools, must not talk to other people or workers in the community or on the worksite etc),

If offered work with accommodation, you should ask for a separate tenancy or boarding agreement to your employment contract and confirm the numbers of people living on the premises and ask for the street or road address for emergency contacts.

If in doubt, seek advice from one of the agencies listed in the profile of the area you are thinking about moving to.

If you find yourself in a bad situation, contact the office of the Fair Work Ombudsman via www.fairwork.gov.au.

Go to www.fairwork.gov.au/languages for information in your language about workplace entitlements.

What Should You Do Before You Move?

Once you have found a place that looks promising, DON'T just move there. This can be an expensive mistake.

Before you make any move, there are some things you should do:

- Visit the place you think looks nice: spend a couple of days there, looking around and talking to people. See if it 'feels right' for you and has everything you want. If it doesn't, look for another option.
- Talk to the refugee support worker or group about the area and find out about what they can help you with.
- Think about what you will do when you are there: if you want to work, explore job opportunities. It is a good idea to have a job to go to, even if it means living in temporary accommodation until you find something longer term. If you want to study, talk to the educational providers and make sure they have the right course for you and that you will be able to enrol.
- Talk to your friends: it is hard to begin a new life if you are alone but if you have friends who are interested in moving to a regional area too, you can make plans together.
- Organise your life: it is a very good idea to finish your English course before you leave Sydney. While there are English classes in regional areas, it might be harder to find classes that fit your schedule or are at the right level for you.
- You should also use this time to get medical, dental or counselling help from the specialist providers who are experienced in working with refugees. Here too, there are people in regional areas who can help you with these things but if you are in the middle of treatment, ask about whether it can be finished before you leave. If it can't, get a referral letter from your doctor or dentist so you can hand it to the next person who will help you.
- Find somewhere to live: it is wise to arrange accommodation (short or long term) before you move. If you don't, you might only be able to find expensive options.
- Think about how to move: if you have furniture or other things you want to take with you when you move, you need to make arrangements for this. You might have friends who can help or you can hire a van or truck.

What Should You Do After You Move?

There are some things that are important after you move, these include the following:

- Give your new address to:
 - the Department of Immigration and Border Protection
 - Medicare
 - Centrelink (if you are receiving benefits)
 - Roads and Maritime Services (for your driver's licence)
 - your bank.
- If you have not done so before moving, find long term accommodation. The regional profiles have details of how you can do this.
- Make sure the utilities (electricity and gas) at your long term rental property are transferred into your name. You will need to pay these bills every month or, in some cases, every 3 months.
- If there is a landline (telephone) in your rental property, think about whether you want to use it. If you only want to use your mobile, make sure the line is disconnected otherwise you might get bills. If you do want to use it, make sure it is connected and transferred to your name.

- Register with a Medical Centre or General Practitioner that bulk bills so when you are sick, you have somewhere to go.
- If you need to find furniture for your new home, a good place to look are the local charity shops (shops run by groups like the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army). These shops have cheap second hand furniture, as well as clothes and household goods (cups, plates etc). There are also some stores that have reasonably priced new goods: K Mart, Target and Fantastic Furniture.
- Meet the locals: the more you connect to others in the town, the easier things will become for you. Find out about groups that are linked to things you are interested in: sport, music, drama, art, poetry, food, cars, bushwalking etc. There is sure to be a local group just right for you. Join it and participate in their activities.
- Don't cut your connections to your community: use phone, Skype, Face Book, Instagram and other means to stay in touch and when you can, come back to visit. You might also like to think about inviting people to visit you, or organise an event in your new home that others can come to. That way they will see what a lovely place you are living in and understand why you have moved there. They might even think about moving too.
- Plan for your future: if the job you have is not using your skills or is not going to help you to get a permanent visa, think about other options. This might involve doing some more study. Talk to people in town about what's available.¹

What If Things Go Wrong?

If things are not working out as you hoped they would, don't just give up and move back to Sydney. There are people in town who can help you to find the things that will make you feel more at home. The regional profiles give the contact details of people who you can turn to for advice and assistance.

This fact sheet complements the information in the Exit Information Pack you might have received when you got your visa. Don't forget to keep this with you and refer to it when you have questions. If you do not have an Exit Information Pack, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.au.

¹ If there are no local options, you can study by 'distance learning' through OTEN (part of TAFE). See www.oten.tafensw.edu.au for more information. It is important to recognise, however, that this study might not qualify as 'study in a regional area' for visa purposes.