



**CatholicCare**  
Social Services

# TRAMS

# Volunteer Handbook



**TRAMS**

Toowoomba Refugee  
& Migrant Support



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# WELCOME TO CATHOLICCARE TRAMS!

Welcome to *Toowoomba Refugee and Migrant Support (TRAMS) CatholicCare*. This handbook contains all you need to know to get started with our TRAMS program, and provide you with an understanding of CatholicCare's Mission, work environment and policies and procedures. It has been divided into two sections:

1. **Volunteering at TRAMS: important information, procedures and policies related to volunteering**
2. **Background information for successfully working with new arrivals and refugees**

This handbook and the accompanying induction will provide you with information on the ethical and legal responsibilities of both CatholicCare and yourself as a volunteer. We appreciate your time in reading through this information as you begin volunteering with us.

We appreciate your involvement in our programs, and the support you are providing to CatholicCare and its clients, as we know that our volunteers are the heart and strength of our TRAMS community.

If you have questions or concerns or would like additional information, please speak with your Coordinator at any time.



# TRAMS AND CATHOLICCARE

In understanding the culture and mission of TRAMS it is important to understand the background and development of TRAMS and *CatholicCare*.

TRAMS began as a group of citizens concerned about the needs of a growing number of refugees and migrants living in the Toowoomba community. Originally this work was funded solely by donations from the community, but as one of *CatholicCare's* services, we receive funding for some services from Department of Social Services and Mercy Works. We still rely on community fundraising and donations to continue providing many of our services as this allows us to provide services to a wide range of people regardless of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, and age or visa status.

TRAMS provides a number of support services to former refugees and migrants residing in the Toowoomba area, including:

- English classes for adults
- Homework assistance
- Group information sessions
- Access to computers
- Community connections
- Women's support
- Employment support
- Referrals to access other community support services
- Casework support for everyday living, forms, and government departments

*"Sharing special moments with students. This goes beyond teaching and learning. Sometimes we are there, just... human beings together and we get to share a very special and deep understanding of each other's life." Volunteer explaining what they enjoy about volunteering at TRAMS*

TRAMS, as a program delivered by *CatholicCare*, operates under the Mission and Vision of *CatholicCare*.

## Mission Statement

**Our Mission is to empower individuals, families and communities to meet the challenges of life and relationships.**

## Vision Statement

**A community of kindness and justice reflecting Christ's mission**

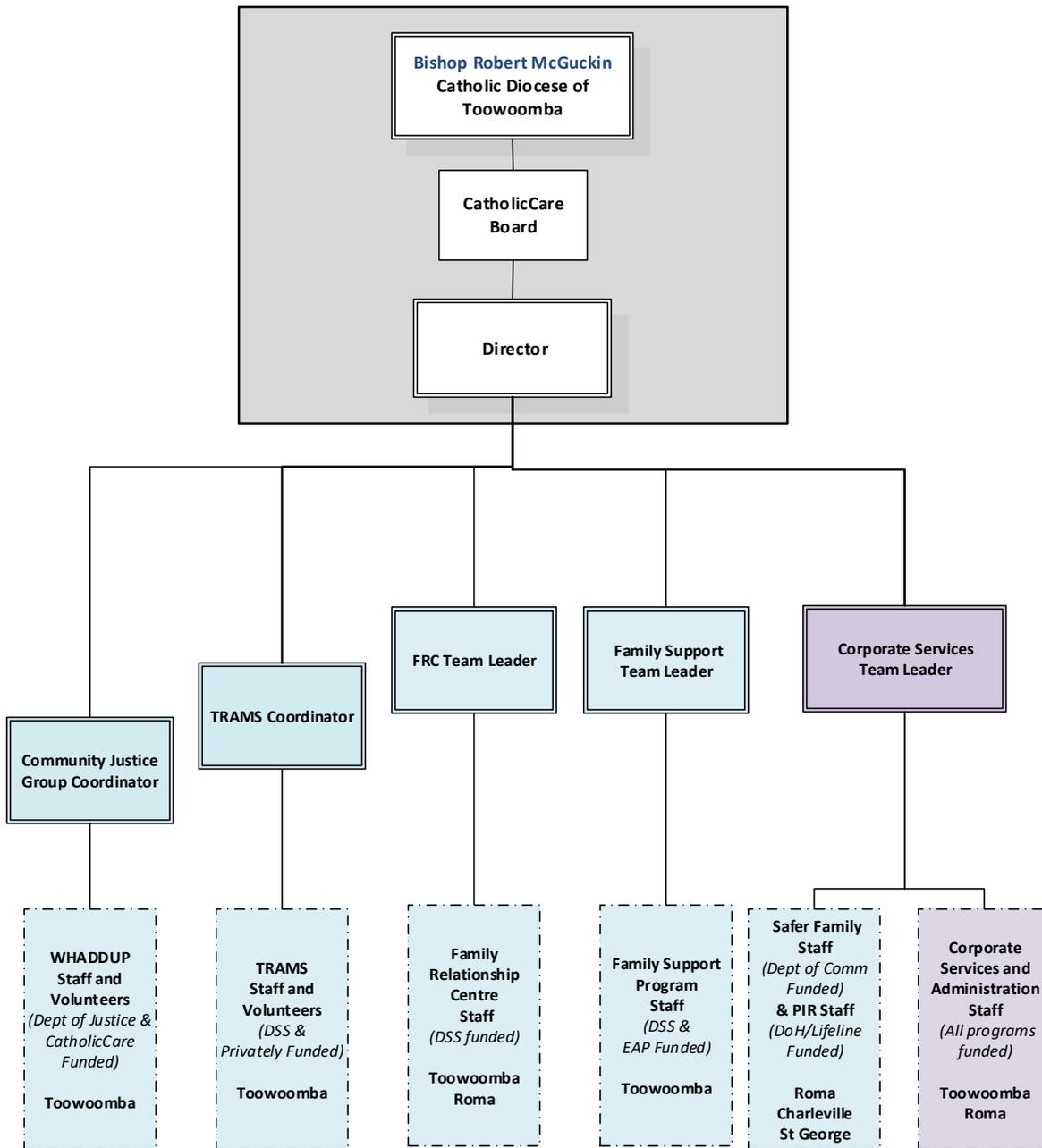
## CatholicCare Values

Our values inform the way that our people relate to the community, those we serve and to each other:

- ◆ Compassion
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Integrity,
- ◆ Justice
- ◆ Hope



# CatholicCare Organisational Structure



Version 20 February 2018

# TRAMS VOLUNTEERS

## Signing in and out

Volunteers who work on site at TRAMS are asked to sign in and out when they work in their volunteering role. The visitor's book used for this purpose is located near the front door. This book is used in case of emergency so we can account for everyone on the premises. It also enables us to account for the time you have given in your volunteering role at TRAMS and to confirm who was present for different sessions.

Volunteers who work at schools should sign in at the school administration block on arrival.

## Identifying volunteers

While volunteers are at TRAMS they need to wear the volunteer identification provided. Identification will vary depending on the specific role filled by each volunteer.

## Unable to attend scheduled session

If a volunteer is unable to attend their usual session, we ask that they contact us as soon as possible to advise us. If a replacement is required, we will make every effort to find one.



*"In my work at TRAMS I see the newcomers to our country embracing the support offered and as a result they blossom... I feel I gain from working with these families as well." TRAMS Volunteer*

# PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All volunteers are required to sign the *TRAMS Volunteer Code of Conduct & Ethics Declaration* which contains Privacy and Confidentiality provisions.

- Your obligations regarding privacy and confidentiality apply while you are a CatholicCare volunteer and continue after you have ceased being a CatholicCare volunteer.
- Confidential information is to be secured in the appropriate confidential filing system at the end of each day.
- In terms of CatholicCare's operations and staff, you are to keep confidential information that is not public knowledge.
- The privacy and confidentiality of client information is of vital importance: Volunteers should not reveal whether individuals are clients or not of CatholicCare. Volunteers are not to access information about clients that is not relevant to them. They must ensure that client information is not left unattended or in a manner that it can be seen by unauthorised people (hard copy and electronic form).
- CatholicCare has in place strict regulations about when client information may be released to a third party. Volunteers are to take care that the security of client information is preserved when transmitting information.
- Should you receive a request for client information of any kind (including a subpoena), you must immediately advise you're Coordinator, who will inform the Director. CatholicCare will fully investigate the appropriateness of releasing information.

***Refer to CatholicCare's Policies located in a folder at TRAMS for further information or speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers to request access to relevant policies.***



# CHILD AND CLIENT SAFETY

CatholicCare is committed to the safety and well-being of children, young people and all clients accessing our services. We support the rights of these vulnerable people and will act without hesitation to ensure a child- and client-safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure and safe environment for all participants in CatholicCare activities.

## As a representative of CatholicCare do:

- Actively seek to be a positive role model to all.
- Abide by organisational policy, procedures and work instructions in relation to the safety and appropriate treatment of children, young people and all clients.
- Treat all young people and clients with respect and be mindful of their reactions and respond sensitively and appropriately.
- Raise all child and client safety concerns with your Coordinator as soon as possible in accordance with the *Working with Children and Vulnerable People Policy*.
- Be aware of the nature of the relationship you have with young and/or vulnerable clients. This includes being aware of the power imbalance between you and the client, and the need for them to be empowered.



## As a representative of CatholicCare do not:

- Engage in any behaviour that involves inappropriate touching, contact or teasing that may result in offence, embarrassment or intimidation.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children or clients in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way. Any touching must:
  1. Be only in response to the need of the child/client and not the need of the worker;
  2. Be only with child's/client's permission – resistance must be respected;
  3. Avoid breasts, buttocks and groin;
  4. Be open and non-secretive.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to any person, even as a joke.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child, young person or other client can do for themselves, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Initiate communication with child/ren (external to your role at CatholicCare); only communicate with parent/guardian or sibling (over 18 years), where absolutely necessary.
- Spend time alone with a child without having another responsible adult present on the premises that is aware of the child/young person's whereabouts. Take a child or client to your home, participate in or encourage arranged personal meetings outside the designated service delivery.
- Take (or allow the taking of) any visual records (photos, videos, etc) on personal devices. If taken, then these records are to be treated as confidential information, as described under 'Ethical Standards' below.
- Take any child/ren to your home under any circumstances, or provide babysitting services for any CatholicCare clients who are not part of your extended family.

***Refer to CatholicCare's Policies located in a folder at TRAMS for further information or speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers to request access to relevant policies.***

# VOLUNTEER BOUNDARIES

## Transport

Volunteers are NOT to transport child/youth clients without having the relevant permission forms signed by their guardian/parent and only if specifically requested by staff as part of volunteer duties. If it is necessary to transport adult clients, it must be done only in exceptional circumstances as the focus is to promote independence as much as possible. Private vehicles cannot be used to transport clients.

## Receiving and Giving Gifts

Volunteers must be careful when providing gifts to clients, otherwise clients can think that gift-giving is part of the volunteer activity.

Volunteers must not provide money, goods or household items as this is outside the volunteer role. If a volunteer believes there is a need, then they are to speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator.

Likewise, if volunteers are offered gifts from clients, they are to speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator. If volunteers are offered refreshments by clients, it is appropriate and courteous to accept.

*“Getting to know the children and families and seeing the improvement in the children’s academic performance. I really feel like I’m making a valuable contribution and love feeling part of the TRAMS community.” Volunteer explaining what they enjoy about volunteering at TRAMS*

## Personal Relationships

Refugees are extremely vulnerable and will look to volunteers and staff for guidance, help and friendship. The role of the volunteer is to provide assistance and support as per the position description, and therefore volunteers must be careful not to enter intimate personal relationships. Volunteers need to be aware that if these professional boundaries are crossed it is an abuse of the volunteer/client relationship and will have to be followed up by the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator.

## Photographs

It is not appropriate for volunteers to take photographs of clients on personal devices. If a volunteer is aware of something happening during a session that would make a great photograph, please let staff know and a TRAMS camera can be provided for use.

## Social Media

Volunteers must be very cautious about the use of social media with regard to their work at TRAMS. Confidentiality must always be maintained. It is not appropriate for volunteers to be friends with TRAMS clients on social media.



# VOLUNTEERING IN THE HOME

*“The hour I spend in home tutoring really is the highlight of my week!” TRAMS Volunteer*

If a volunteer is involved with tutoring in the home, they are only to do so if there are TWO (2) VOLUNTEERS in attendance AND is a guardian/parent present. If they are not home then the volunteer is to leave and ring the Coordinator of Volunteers, the Settlement Services Coordinator, or the Duty Officer (after hours) and inform them of the situation. They are also to ensure that the homework support only occurs in the common shared areas of the home (e.g. living or dining room), preferably in sight of other family members.



## Family Conflict

The role of the volunteer does not include that of mediator or conflict manager, so although it is possible there will be conflict within a client's family, it is not appropriate for the volunteer to get involved. If the volunteer has concerns then they are to speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator.

If a volunteer is a witness to any family violence, they must leave the home immediately and call the On-call Duty Officer (**Kate: 0427 210 298** OR **Lyn: 0409 639 915**), if they cannot speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator.

It may be appropriate to call **000**, if the volunteer believes that any family member may be in personal danger.



# GRIEVANCES AND DISPUTES

As a TRAMS volunteer you are expected to follow CatholicCare's Staff Grievance policy. In following the attitudes and behaviours prescribed, the event of grievances and disputes should be minimised.



However, should a dispute or grievance arise between you as a volunteer and another CatholicCare staff member, volunteer or client then the matter should be resolved as quickly as possible. A grievance should attempt to be resolved firstly following informal procedure.

## Procedure for Informal Staff Grievance

1. Volunteer with concern/issue speaks with another work-related person to whom the grievance relates. The issue may be able to be resolved if the Volunteer is able to discuss issue/concern with other party and requires no further action. Ideally the issue should be discussed as soon as possible, after the event or issue has arisen.
2. Volunteer speaks to the Volunteer Coordinator in the first instance OR the Settlement Coordinator. If the Volunteer speaks to Volunteer Coordinator or Settlement Coordinator, then that person will have a vested interest in resolving any issues that arise. They will address the grievance with a view to resolving the issue promptly. The matter may be resolved. All parties are to maintain complete confidentiality at all times. Staff Grievance Register to be completed by the Settlement Coordinator.

Should this fail, the grievance should be resolved by following formal procedure as set out in the Policy.

If the Volunteer would prefer not to speak with a staff member at TRAMS regarding their concern, they can contact CatholicCare directly on **1300 477 433**.

***Refer to CatholicCare's Policies located in a folder at TRAMS for further information or speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers to request access to relevant policies.***



# WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

## All Staff are responsible for:

- Identifying all existing or potential hazards/risks they may be exposed to and taking the required action to prevent them or the job being impacted by that risk;
- Reporting all breaches of requirements and risk exposures in accordance with CatholicCare procedures;
- Attending training to improve their knowledge and understanding of compliance and risk management; and
- Obtaining information about job requirements and potential risks to themselves and the environment.

## Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Observe **CatholicCare's** health and safety policies and procedures;
- Act with due care for themselves and others;
- Co-operate with employers to enable them to fulfil their legislative responsibilities;
- Use any equipment and protective clothing in accordance with instructions on its safe and proper use;
- Report hazards and work related injuries and/or incidents;
- Attend annual training in Workplace Health and Safety;
- Not wilfully place at risk the Workplace Health and Safety of another person.

## Safe Work

- You are only asked to do work which you can perform safely. If you feel you cannot do a job safely or have any safety issues, please discuss with the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator immediately.

## Reporting Hazards

- Should you see a hazard, or you become aware of something that might injure you or someone else and you can rectify the hazard immediately then do so e.g. moving the trip hazard from a pathway. If the hazard cannot be rectified easily it will need to be reported to the either the Volunteer Coordinator or the Settlement Coordinator.
- If you are involved in an incident or near miss or sustain an injury, please report the matter as soon as possible to the Coordinator of Volunteers or the Settlement Services Coordinator.

## Illicit Drugs and Alcohol

- ☒ The consumption or use of illicit drugs or alcohol is prohibited whilst performing work related tasks.
- ☒ The responsible consumption of alcohol is permitted at special celebrations or events.

## Housekeeping

- Please leave all work areas clean and tidy. These buildings are used by a variety of people and may include children, elderly and disabled.
- Walkways and corridors are not storage areas and shall remain free from obstacles and clutter.

***Refer to CatholicCare's Policies located in a folder at TRAMS for further information or speak to the Coordinator of Volunteers to request access to relevant policies***

## CONTACT DETAILS

### TRAMS Staff

Hannah Belesky (Settlement Coordinator)  
Rachel Smith (Coordinator of Volunteers)  
Akol Mager (Settlement Worker)  
Helen Hale (Settlement Worker)  
Shakeela Abdul Hadi (Administration Trainee)



### Contact Us

502 Ruthven Street, Toowoomba  
Phone: **1300 477 433**

### Emergency and Outside Hours Contact

In an emergency situation (with a client in their home, at the TRAMS office or at another site) it is necessary to inform CatholicCare management as soon as possible. If emergency services are required, always call 000 first.

The first people to call are either the Volunteer Coordinator or the Settlement Coordinator, on **1300 477 433**.



If neither of these staff are available and it is during Business Hours, then the Volunteer needs to call CatholicCare and speak to Lyn Tate (Corporate Services Team Leader) or Kate Venables (Director) **1300 477 433**.

If neither of these staff are available and it is outside of Business Hours, then the Volunteer needs to call the Duty Officer and report the matter to that person (**Kate: 0427 210 298 OR Lyn: 0409 639 915**).

### The following pages contain information relevant to clients you may meet in your work at TRAMS.

In providing the following material, we acknowledge the work of:

- MDA  
“Working with Refugees” Training
- MercyWorks  
Mercy Connect Project Volunteer Handbook
- Refugee Council of Australia  
Refugee Week 2016 Resource Kit, available at:  
<http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Refugee-Week-2016-Resource-Update-1-June-2016-FINAL1-1.pdf>
- QPASTT (Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma)  
“Trauma Training”  
<http://qpastt.org.au/what-we-do/counselling/>

# WORKING WITH PEOPLE FROM A REFUGEE BACKGROUND

## What is the difference between refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants?

“The terms ‘refugee,’ ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘migrant’ are often used interchangeably, particularly in the media. However, there are important distinctions in their definitions.

A **migrant** is someone who chooses to leave their country to seek a better life. They choose where they migrate to and they are able to return whenever they like.

**Refugees** are forced to flee from their country and cannot return unless the situation that forced them to leave improves. Some are forced to flee without any warning; many have experienced torture and trauma. The motivating factor for refugees is safety and protection from persecution and human rights abuse, not economic advantage.

An **asylum seeker** [now referred to as “person seeking asylum”] is a person who is seeking protection as a refugee and is still waiting to have his/her claim assessed. Every refugee has at some point been an asylum seeker.”

“Under Australian law, a person is entitled to apply for asylum in our country if they are escaping persecution. This right is protected by international law as set out in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

*(Taken from the Refugee Week 2016 Resource Kit by the Refugee Council of Australia:*

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Refugee-Week-2016-Resource-Update-1-June-2016-FINAL1-1.pdf>)

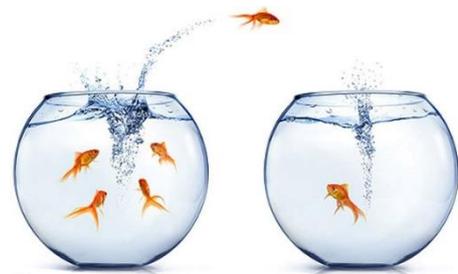
## What is the difference between migration and forced migration?

Migration	Forced Migration
Choose to move	Forced to move (no choice)
Choose where they move to	Have little to no choice about where they move
Have time to prepare to move	Have little to no time to prepare or take things with them
	Must flee
	Possible reasons: war or civil unrest, persecution, environmental degradation, economic hardship

## Pathways to Australia

Most people from overseas who come to live in Australia come through one of the following visa streams:

- Humanitarian stream
- Family stream
- Skilled stream
- International students



The visa number they entered Australia on decides what support they can access in Australia. At TRAMS, some aspects of our funding is limited to specific visa categories and for only the first five years of settlement.

## The UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a non-political organisation and the key international body that works to protect, assist and seek lasting solutions for refugees worldwide. As part of this work the UNHCR works to:

- Ensure that refugees are treated appropriately by countries that have signed the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and under the 1967 Protocol*. Australia is one of those countries.
- Ensure that refugees are given the same rights as nationals of the countries accepting them.
- Protect refugees from being forced to return to their countries or to another country where they may be persecuted
- Promote the reunification of families
- Take into account the special needs of particular refugee sub-groups e.g. women and children



## How is a person identified as a refugee?

*“Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.”*

(As defined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; 1967 Protocol)

“The important parts of this definition are:

- The person has to be outside their country of origin
- The reason for their flight has to be a fear of persecution
- This fear of persecution has to be well founded i.e. they must have experienced it or be likely to experience it if they return
- The persecution has to result from one or more of the five grounds listed in the definition
- They have to be unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their country”

*(Taken from the Refugee Week 2016 Resource Kit by the Refugee Council of Australia:*

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Refugee-Week-2016-Resource-Update-1-June-2016-FINAL1-1.pdf>)

When a person is able to approach the UNHCR to have their status determined, UNHCR will use this definition as a guide to decide whether this person should be classified as a refugee.

## Options for Refugees

There are three basic options for refugees:

1. **Voluntary repatriation.** The UNHCR will at all times prefer the first option of voluntary repatriation to the country of nationality/residency where the refugee came from. This will usually occur when changes have occurred within the country such as change of government or end to a war. There are obstacles to this solution such as landmines, loss of infrastructure, groups still at war with each other.
2. **Local settlement.** Where it is not possible to repatriate people in the foreseeable future, the UNHCR will first seek to locally settle people within the country to which refugees have first fled. As many of the countries to which refugees flee are also suffering politically, economically, an/or socially, this option is not always possible. The poorest countries in the world house the largest Asylum Seeker/Refugee populations such as Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, and Jordan.

3. **Resettlement in a third country.** Only as a last option will the UNHCR seek resettlement in a third country. Resettlement is not considered a right. In 2014, the top countries in the world offering resettlement on a regular basis were: USA (73011), Australia (11590), Canada (12279), Sweden (1991), Norway (1286). **Only a very small fraction of the world's refugees are ever resettled in a third country.**

### Australia's response

Australia is committed to sharing responsibility with other countries for protecting and finding orderly resolutions for refugees and others in humanitarian need. Australia provides some overseas aid to improve conditions in countries that refugees flee from and to increase the capacity of countries of first asylum to host refugees.

Australia's Humanitarian Program is an important part of our contribution to the international protection of refugees. The Refugee/Humanitarian Program has two components:

1. The **onshore** (asylum) component offers protection to people **in Australia** who meet the refugee definition in the United Nations Refugees 1951 Convention and those who initially sought asylum in Australia and have been given refugee status.
2. The **offshore** (resettlement) component offers resettlement for people **outside Australia** who are in need of refugee/humanitarian assistance also meeting the United Nations Refugee Conventions criteria. This is the biggest resettlement group.

### Potential consequences following experiences in countries of origin and of asylum

Emotional Consequences	Personal and Social Consequences
Fear	Social and economic dependency
Anxiety	Disrupted education/ employment
Grief	Lack/loss of family support
Guilt	Changed family relationships
Shame	Cultural, racial and religious integrity undermined
Depression	Loss of sense of place/belonging
Helplessness	
Loss of ability to trust	

### Settlement Needs and Issues

Practical Needs	Emotional Needs
Pre-embarkation preparation	Safety
Initial information and orientation	Trust
Affordable accommodation	Control over the environment
Material assistance	Ability to plan for the future
Budgeting skills	Sense of belonging
Language	Restoration of sense of dignity
Education	Regaining a sense of self worth
Income support	No longer termed a refugee
Employment	
Income support	
Employment	
Health care (including dentistry)	

Torture-trauma counselling	
Legal assistance	
Community orientation – where settled	
Religious expression	
Leisure	
Becoming part of the community	
Support for special needs groups	

### Key indicators of settlement

- ✓ Social participation
- ✓ Economic wellbeing
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Personal wellbeing



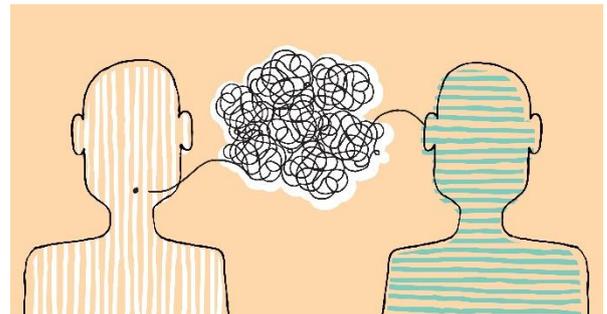
# TIPS FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION

## Communicating with clients who have low English proficiency:

- ◆ Speak steadily with normal loudness, not too slow nor too fast
- ◆ Give instructions in a clear sentence
- ◆ Be aware of indirectness (I wonder if you would mind following me while I find a nice spot for us to sit and chat?)
- ◆ Simple sentence structure
- ◆ Use plain English and simple words
- ◆ Avoid idiom, slang, contractions
- ◆ Allow people time to process instructions or information
- ◆ Back up verbal instructions with demonstration if appropriate
- ◆ Get the client to repeat back the message to ensure they have understood. Remember that if you ask “Do you understand?” you may often get a reply of “yes” even if the client did not understand. Ask them to repeat the information back to you.
- ◆ Provide written back up (but be aware that some clients may not have literacy skills required to find written material helpful)

## Other aspects of communication to be mindful of (will vary from culture to culture and individual to individual):

- ◆ Personal space
- ◆ Appropriateness of touch e.g. hand shake, hand on arm
- ◆ Eye contact
- ◆ Gender of person you are speaking to
- ◆ Use of silence
- ◆ Non-verbal communication
- ◆ Expression of emotions
- ◆ Appropriate topics of conversation



## Keys to being a successful cross-cultural communicator:

- ◆ Be aware of your own culture
- ◆ Have awareness that cultural factors be operating in any given situation. Try not to make assumptions or to be easily offended by the different way someone may approach an interaction.
- ◆ Always approach others with an attitude of respect and compassion
- ◆ Ask questions where appropriate. It may be appropriate to explain that you do not wish to offend them and ask a question about what they would prefer you to do in that situation e.g. whether to remove shoes or not when at someone’s home. Avoid direct personal questions about a person’s past experiences, giving respect to potential experiences of trauma.
- ◆ Manage your emotions

# TRAUMA

## What is trauma?

“We use the term ‘trauma’ to refer to the pain, distress, suffering and other physical, psychological or social consequences that our clients experience prior to, or arising from, their forced-migration journey.

It can result from an actual experience such as war or civil conflict but can also be caused by witnessing or hearing about a traumatic event or being the target of actual or threatened death or injury. Trauma is commonly characterised by the person feeling overwhelmed, helpless and fearful at the time of the trauma.

Refugees and people from refugee-like backgrounds may have been through many traumatic experiences, including torture, as a result of the actions of other human beings in the context of war and persecution that could have a long-term traumatic impact. For many there is ongoing trauma due to the fears they hold for loved ones who remain in situations of risk, such as the country of origin, refugee camps or other countries where their rights and safety are in jeopardy.”

*(Taken from the QPASTT website: <http://qpastt.org.au/what-we-do/counselling/>)*



## Although trauma will impact each individual differently, impacts may include:

- sleeping difficulties, nightmares, excessive tiredness
- often unexplained general aches or other pains
- always on alert for danger or easily startled, even in relatively safe environments
- difficulty concentrating, remembering and learning new things
- confusion
- anxiety, sadness, fear, anger, irritability, guilt, shame, self-blame, numbness
- persistent thoughts or memories of the event, “flashbacks”, fears for the safety of loved ones
- changed sense of self, beliefs, loss of trust, disempowerment, loss of self-esteem
- social withdrawal or isolation

## Signs/impacts of trauma on children:

- aggression/ persistent anger
- out of control behaviour
- crying a lot
- shyness or withdrawal/ apathy
- poor school attendance
- frequent illness related to stress
- sleep problems, nightmares
- easily upset
- developmental delays, regression to an earlier developmental stage, or acting younger or older than their age
- low self-confidence
- “clinginess”
- poor concentration
- stealing or hoarding e.g. food, books, clothing

Such impacts may be observed immediately following a traumatic experience or may not be apparent until many years later.

**As a TRAMS volunteer, please give consideration to the following as you work with clients:**

- **Clients may or may not have experienced trauma.** If a client chooses to share their experiences with you, please listen with compassion and respect and treat this information confidentially. Please do not explicitly ask a client about trauma they may have experienced. If you have any concern about a client, please speak with TRAMS staff.
- **Trauma experiences may impact on the way a client engages with you or others, their ability to concentrate and learn, the way they respond to situations.** Be mindful of this in your interactions with clients and as you work together.
- We can help to support those who have experienced trauma by:
  - **Helping to restore safety, predictability and control**
    - By providing a predictable and safe environment
    - By always being trustworthy in our interactions with clients e.g. maintaining confidentiality
    - By giving choices and promoting/encouraging independence where appropriate
  - **Fostering connections**
    - By developing trusting, continuing, and predictable relationships
    - By encouraging and providing opportunity for links with community
    - Providing opportunity to share about culture and being curious about cultural beliefs and practices
  - **Helping to restore purpose and meaning**
    - Providing opportunity for and encouraging participation in activities that give meaning and purpose
    - Modelling human encounters that are predictable, respectful, of genuine concern and which have limits
  - **Enhancing dignity and self-respect**
    - By being respectful of difference and always treating people with respect
    - Forming warm, genuine and trusting relationships
- **There are services available to support clients who may have experienced trauma** e.g. The Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT). If you are concerned about a client, please share your concerns with a TRAMS staff member so we can ensure clients are provided the support they need.
- **Take care of yourself.** Please seek support if you need it and always know you are welcome to speak to staff at TRAMS with any concerns.



# STARS FOR SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT AND LEARNING

Unicef has developed the STARS model to highlight 5 ways schools can support settlement. The components of this model could easily be adapted to fit any of TRAMS programs e.g. English classes for adults, homework programs.



**Safety:** Teachers have skills to create a classroom that is safe, secure, and structured. Often a daily haven for traumatised students.

**Trust:** Teachers are in a key position to model trustworthy relationships. They are reliable, predictable, fair, and kind.

**Attachment:** When you trust somebody you connect with them. Feeling accepted in the school creates a sense of belonging.

**Responsibility:** Teachers provide students of an asylum seeker/refugee/humanitarian background with opportunities to regain control of their lives as they involve them in the decision making process.

**Skills:** Most students of an asylum seeker/refugee/humanitarian background have lost out on time and the opportunity to learn. Teachers are in a strategic position to develop competence. A new sense of hope can emerge as connection, competence, and hope are powerful ingredients for healing and resilience.

# TEACHING PRE-LITERATE ADULTS

## What is a pre-literate adult learner?

A pre-literate adult is one who is unable to read or write their own language and who comes from a culture in which literacy is rare or non-existent.

*“We acknowledge that being an adult learner is difficult, that being an adult second language learner is even more difficult, and that being a pre-literate adult second language learner must be nothing short of a painful situation.” Donna McGee, 1978 – Preliteracy Definitions*

## Some tips for teaching/assisting at TRAMS

Proverb: “How do you eat an elephant?”

“One mouthful at a time”



Learning/teaching English is the elephant... lessons should be mouthfuls!

- **Speed:** These students will learn very slowly with long intervals between grasping the material. Do not become discouraged and don't throw too much at the learner at once. It is important not to become discouraged and also to remain patient.
- **Repetition:** Attention span or memory may be affected by post-traumatic stress and the stress of migrating to a country so different from their own. Some learners will be quite old and language is harder to acquire the older you get. Much re-teaching will be needed. The same material needs to be repeated in many different ways over extended periods.
- **Level of motivation of the learner:** Why is the learner here at TRAMS? You will say, “To learn English of course!” Don't be so sure. Some are here for friendship and community. Some may need a break from being home and alone with their children. Even if they are coming to learn English, the learner may be depressed, suffering from PTS or grieving. They may feel that it is all too hard to start learning at their age. They may lack confidence in their learning ability. Lots of encouragement, patience, empathy, and genuine care are needed.
- **Starting level:** Students' level of knowledge/lack of formal education means that we need to adapt totally to the needs of the learner. We need to focus on the oral part of teaching. Symbolic or written language will not mean anything to them at this stage, and while the learners will have to learn to write eventually, the spoken word is most important now.
- **Variety:** Do the same thing in many different ways. Change activities regularly in the course of the lesson so that interest is held.
- **Let them do the talking:** Remember, much of what you say is not understood. Explain things simply and don't use too many words. Talk slowly. You can speak English already. Say less and get your learners to say as much as possible.
- **Become an actor:** You are going to need to mime, dance, act out, use other teachers to help you act out etc. Now is the time get those dramatic bones working!
- **Use as many different senses as you can:** Sight, movement, hearing, tactile stimulation, dance, singing etc. Involve the whole person in the learning experience. Immerse them in it!
- **Keep the class relevant to the needs of the group:** Our focus at TRAMS is functional English. Use the guide of topics to structure your classes and focus on practical things that your learners will be using as they and their families settle into Toowoomba.

## General Goals for Pre-Literate Learners at TRAMS

1. Reach and retain the interest of adults who have little or no formal education.
2. Teach practical skills that have immediate application to the learner's lives.
3. Inspire self-confidence through success and meaningful learning.
4. Provide a firm foundation in those skills needed for continuation of learning.
5. Keep the lessons as concrete as possible i.e. relating to real objects in the world.

## Specific goals

1. **Oral instruction in English language.** Get oral English up and running. Oral development must precede writing and reading (think about how children learn). Other cultures, such as the Sudanese, have a strong oral tradition of stories and songs. We, as literate people, rely on the written word in order to remember things such as lists. While some clients may have memory difficulties because of trauma, they still have a propensity for hearing and learning.
2. **Orientation to print.** Show how symbols can convey meaning. Start with pictures if needs be. Help learners to develop the fine motor control they will need for writing by doing exercises on large paper. Learn the alphabet by rote (sing or chant it every lesson). Recognise letters on flash cards. In particular, oral language should deal with:

Commands e.g. Please give me... Tell me...

Questions e.g. Where is...? How do you...?

Statements e.g. I am... I have...

Negatives e.g. I do not want... I have not... I cannot...

3. **Cultural orientation and adaptation.** One of our major aims should be to provide immediately practical, useable information so that learners can begin to function in the community of Toowoomba e.g. saying your own name clearly, being able to give your address and phone number. Cultural orientation also means helping learners to understand some of the norms of our society. What is considered rude and what is polite? Explain the importance of punctuality, excusing yourself when arriving late, please and thank you, and appropriate greetings in Australia.

