



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Humanitarian Settlement Services

Regional Profile #11
The Hunter region, New South Wales

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DSS wishes to express its thanks to Navitas English for compiling this material.

While every care has been taken, DSS makes no guarantees that the information provided is up to date.

For further information on the Humanitarian Settlement Services programme see:
Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)

About the Hunter region

The Hunter Region, also known as the Hunter Valley, is a region of New South Wales that extends from about 120 km to 310 km north of Sydney. It is known for its wineries and coal industry. More than half of the region's population of 550 000 live in the cities of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

Newcastle has a strong multicultural history. More than 11 per cent of the population identify as coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background and the commonly spoken languages other than English are Macedonian, Italian, Greek, Polish, Cantonese, German and Mandarin. During the period 2004-2011, 615 refugees settled in Newcastle.

The following communities are now established in the Hunter Region:

- Burundian
- Congolese
- Mauritanian
- Sudanese
- Afghan
- Ethiopian
- Rwandan

Several of the longer-settled communities have established community councils. Community members welcome and assist new arrivals in the region. For the communities from African source countries, there is a peak body established in Newcastle – the Hunter African Communities Council.



Service providers

Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) services provided in the region focus on helping refugees to gain access to mainstream services such as Centrelink, Medicare, banks, general and specialist health and medical services, English language tuition, training and employment, in addition to links to the community and community organisations. The principal aim of the HSS programme is to assist new arrivals to develop autonomy and self-direction in their first 6-12 months in Australia.

Navitas English is the service provider in the Hunter Region on behalf of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The Navitas English Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) consortium delivers services to humanitarian settlers, working in partnership with Mission Australia, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the NSW Refugee Health Service.

Accommodation

Navitas English uses short-term accommodation in several suburbs of Newcastle. The properties are always located on or close to bus routes, schools, shops and other services. They are fully self-contained and are furnished with essential household items, furnishings and appliances.

As of September 2012, Navitas English is head-leasing seven short-term accommodation properties:

- two bedroom houses
- three bedroom houses
- four or more bedrooms



Short-term accommodation in North Lambton

Examples of Short-term accommodation



Kitchen



Bathroom



Backyard

For the first four weeks after arrival, HSS clients do not pay rent for this accommodation. From week 5, there is an obligation to pay rent to Navitas English. Rents are calculated based on the family income and are deemed affordable on Centrelink benefits.

After five or six weeks, Navitas English staff will help people find a new property for them to rent independently for the next 6-12 months. Staff will find suitable properties, assist them to view the

property, help with a tenancy application and, if successful, assist them with signing the lease. When it is time to move, staff will help move the family to their new location, providing basic furniture and other goods for their first Australian home.

As at September 2012, approximate rent for long-term accommodation in the Newcastle region is:

- one bedroom property: \$210-\$290
- two bedroom property: \$300-\$360
- three bedroom property: \$300-\$470
- four or more bedrooms: \$530-\$750.

It is difficult to find affordable accommodation in Newcastle for single clients. Usually two or more single clients agree to share accommodation in order to secure a lease which is financially sustainable. Single clients who share accommodation might expect to pay between \$110 and \$170 per week for their long-term accommodation.

Suburbs where refugee clients often secure long-term accommodation include Argenton, Broadmeadow, Carrington, Islington, Jesmond, Mayfield, Shortland and Wallsend.

Example of long-term accommodation



Education

Education institutions in the region offer pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary services to refugees.

Children of school-age are enrolled in local schools within four weeks of arrival. Newcastle schools are very experienced in working with newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants and are very welcoming to new families. Schools are usually within walking distance of accommodation.

Newly arrived adults begin their study at the Hunter Institute of TAFE, where they are assisted to enrol for the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The Hunter Institute delivers AMEP classes at Cessnock, Glendale, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Singleton, Gosford and Wyong. Child-care is available for all eligible clients. Eligible students can access the Home Tutor Scheme and distance learning is an option. The Translation Referral Service provides free translations for eligible clients.

At the Newcastle campus, students attend AMEP day or night classes for 20 hours per week. The campus also has AMEP classes specifically designed for young refugees between the ages of 15 and 20. These classes run for five days per week over a six month period, and are intended to prepare students for school or further education. On-site childcare is available.

As a component of the AMEP, TAFE provides a 'Settlement Language Pathways to Employment' training course, which includes both English language training and work experience. Most people either continue their study or find employment at the end of this course.

TAFE students have access to libraries, computers and the internet, canteens and book stores.

TAFE also offers training in vocational areas leading to employment. Many people stay to study at TAFE after they have finished their English language learning and work experience. Courses that have been popular with refugees in Newcastle include community services, nursing, accounting, retail and child care.

The University of Newcastle offers free 'New Step' and 'Open Foundation' courses to assist HSS students to access tertiary education. Courses that have been popular with refugees in Newcastle include social work, nursing and social sciences.

Volunteers from Mission Australia and Northern Settlement Services offer assistance with studying.

Health Services

The NSW Refugee Health Service is a partner with Navitas English in delivering HSS support services to clients in the Hunter Region. Hunter New England Health offers free and confidential refugee health care for people who have recently arrived from overseas for humanitarian reasons.

The services provided include:

- Nurse-led health assessments and home visits
- Pathology screening for common health conditions
- Medical consultations and treatment
- Immunisations
- Health education and information
- Referrals to family planning clinics
- Public dental clinic referrals

The voluntary clinics introduce refugees to the health service in Hunter New England. Professional health care interpreters are used to ensure effective communication with health personnel. Referrals to the clinic are received primarily from non-government resettlement organisations.

The clinic does not provide ongoing health care, but can provide information on local general practices and specialist referrals as required. A number of general practices provide health care for refugees in the community

Employment Opportunities

There are various employment opportunities for HSS clients in the Hunter Region such as:

- Factory and processing work for men and women over 16 years of age (Chandler McLeod Recruitment).
- Interpreting positions with the Department of Human Services and Hunter New England Health Services. TAFE offers pre-training courses for English exams, and Centrelink offers free courses to enable speakers of several languages to gain accreditation.
- Opportunities for work experience in many fields through volunteering (Hunter Volunteer Centre).
- Training and employment in lawn and garden maintenance for men and women over 16 years of age (Job Quest).
- Free training courses for refugee women in food preparation and customer service, to enable them to run a food stall in the local markets (Northern Settlement Services).
- Working as youth workers with disadvantaged young Australians (Allambi Youth Services).
- Volunteers from Mission Australia assist clients with resumés, interview skills and to look for work.
- Career Links offer programmes for refugee youth, focused on education and employment.

- Navitas English, Northern Settlement Services and the Neighbourhood Multicultural Centre employ people from refugee backgrounds including as case workers and bilingual workers.
- The Hunter Business Centre supports people, including those from refugee backgrounds, starting their own small business, through advice, coaching, and grants where applicable.
- John Hunter Hospital is a large employer, providing opportunities for medical professionals and administration and maintenance work.
- Steggle's chicken factory frequently has casual work available.
- The Hunter Region's coal ports, coal mines and processing plants are a large source of employment. The largest employers are BHP Billiton, Orica Mining and specialist mining recruitment agencies, such as Hays Recruitment and Contec Recruitment.
- Local supermarkets and retail shops frequently have part-time and casual work available.

jobactive providers that specialise in assisting refugees in the Hunter Region include:

- Mission Australia Employment Services (Mayfield, Charlestown, Singleton)
- Break Thru Employment Solutions (Charlestown, Newcastle, Raymond Terrace, Toronto, Wallsend). JobFind Centres are located in Newcastle, Wallsend and Charlestown.



Hunter Street Mall in Newcastle

A welcoming community

The Navitas English HSS consortium provides integrated service delivery for the first months of a refugee's settlement. A case-management approach ensures that the special needs of refugees are identified and addressed. Clients are assisted in accessing mainstream services such as Centrelink, Medicare, health and medical services, banks, English language classes, training and employment, and many other links to the community.

HSS service providers offering support services to refugees in the Hunter Region include:

- *Northern Settlement Services*: support services for refugees, including assistance with education, housing, welfare, volunteers, migration agent, homework centres for children and youth programmes.
- *STARTTS*: provide trauma and torture counselling service, holiday camps for school students and the Families in Cultural Transition Programme.
- *Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre*: child's playgroup and youth services.
- *Ethnic Community Council*: community events, children's playgroup.
- *Centrelink Multicultural Unit*: interpreters and support for refugees.
- *Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre*: conversational English classes, financial counselling.
- *Penola House*: welfare support, English classes, employment training, driver supervision programme.
- *Mission Australia*: employment, housing, welfare, volunteers.
- *St Vincent de Paul*: second-hand clothing and welfare support.

- *Samaritans Foundation*: welfare emergency services, assistance in paying energy bills, food vouchers, clothing.
- *Baptist Community Services*: interest-free loans, Food For Life (low price groceries), financial counselling.
- *Community Relations Commission*: financial sponsorship of sporting registration costs for refugees.



Newcastle as seen from the air