Humanitarian Settlement Services
Regional Profile #3
Mount Gambier, South Australia
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DSS wishes to express its thanks to the Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre 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 Mount Gambier

The city of Mt Gambier has a population of 28,313, and is the largest urban area in South Australia outside the state capital, Adelaide. It is located approximately 450 km south of Adelaide and is just 17 km from the border of Victoria.

The 2006 census reveals that approximately 51.4 per cent of the population of Mt Gambier were female, 86.2 per cent were Australian born, over 92 per cent were Australian citizens and 2.1 per cent were indigenous.

Mt Gambier is situated in an area known as the Limestone Coast area, is 28,000 square km in area and has a population of more than 63,000. Smaller towns in the Limestone Coast region have the following population numbers: Naracoorte – 5,835, Bordertown – 2,792 and Millicent – 5,371.

In 2008 it was estimated that new arrivals to the Limestone Coast area were made up of the following:
- 64 per cent Burmese
- 24 per cent Afghani
- 7 per cent African
- 5 per cent Syrian.
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 Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) delivers services on behalf of the Department of Social Services (DSS) for the whole Limestone Coast region and has offices in Mt Gambier and Naracoorte and outreach services in Bordertown and Millicent.

The Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) coordinates service networks in regional South Australia for refugee and migrant settlement groups, and encourages participation in these communities.

The following services are designed for refugee arrivals.

**Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)**

HSS services are delivered in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner by a team of qualified bilingual, bicultural staff. They are assisted by community volunteers and interpreters specifically trained to work with the HSS programme.

The following services are provided in Mt Gambier

- case management
- accommodation
- orientation
- local area co-ordination
- volunteer programme.

Settlement services include:

- assistance with settlement of migrant and refugee new arrivals
- information, assessment and referral
- migration information and services for example, regular group information sessions by the MRCSA migration agent and individual appointments by arrangement
- settlement and citizenship information workshops run by the MRC and DSS to give information to new arrivals on citizenship requirements and processes
- case management and case coordination.

Community development and participation programmes:

- The MRC Community Centre in Mt Gambier provides a meeting place for all new arrivals. The Centre provides a kitchen, computers, a range of multimedia devices, a communal garden, BBQ facilities and an area for community gatherings.
- Volunteer training and work experience opportunities exist within the community and have been used by new arrivals. Some of the employment areas which have taken on volunteers and trainees include office and clerical positions, interpreting and community services, domestics, kitchen hands and cooks.
- Social, recreational and cultural activities include a youth group, weaving group, seniors group, Football United (a local organisation which helps new arrivals with equipment and clubs fees to play soccer), local library, Baptist Church (provides Sunday church services for Karen/Karenni), Karen choir and Liberty Church.
- The MRC also helps new arrivals to search for jobs in the newspaper and online and to apply for jobs on-line.
Many agencies have been encouraged to provide additional assistance with the new arrival group, including Community Health, Boandik Lodge, Country Arts SA, Mount Gambier City Council and Mount Gambier Lions Club.

**Empowering families**

- Early intervention assistance is given to vulnerable families, including young people and children in central Mount Gambier.
- Men’s and women’s support groups for Congolese, Burmese and Afghani new arrivals.
  All child care provided at the MRC Community Centre is free of charge.

**Accommodation**

The Limestone Coast MRC (LCMRC) coordinates the full package of HSS services in the region, including accommodation in conjunction with Anglicare SA.

Anglicare sources appropriate accommodation for all new arrivals on a needs basis from the private rental market. Anglicare has established close working relationships with local real estate agents who have committed to allocate a percentage of their housing to refugee new arrivals.

The average rental price for a house in Mt Gambier is $200–$270 per week. LCMRC and Anglicare provide assistance to refugees who wish to source their own accommodation and liaise with local real estate agents who are positive in engaging this client group as tenants.

**Education**

There are kindergartens and early childhood centres located at Mount Gambier, Naracoorte and Millicent. Primary schools are located at Bordertown, Millicent North, Mount Gambier North, McDonald Park, Reidy Park & Naracoorte. The New Arrival Programme at the Mount Gambier North Primary School delivers an Intensive English Language Programme for new arrivals. High schools are located at Mt Gambier North, Mt Gambier, Grant, Millicent, Naracoorte and Bordertown.

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1 Approximate rental prices as at September 2012
Mt Gambier High School

TAFE SA has campuses at Bordertown, Millicent, Mount Gambier and Naracoorte. UniSA has a campus at Mt Gambier. At the Naracoorte campus, English classes are held twice a week during the day and occasionally at night where on-site child care is provided. Average class sizes are 12 people per session.

Clients who have achieved a satisfactory level of English can move on to other pathways of study, for example, courses in mainstream areas of study offered by TAFE SA. Clients can also enrol in further study through the University of South Australia (UniSA). UniSA courses include: Foundation Studies in Applied Science and Engineering; Business; Education; Arts and Social Sciences; Health Sciences; Information Technology; Nursing; Social work.

New arrivals have attended and graduated from TAFE SA courses in retail, hospitality, computer skills, aged care, child care and asset maintenance (cleaning). More specifically for the Limestone region, the Rural Operations Certificate 1 course, covering topics such as operating chainsaws and four wheel drive vehicles, has been well attended by new arrivals and has led to work in the dairies, herb farms and nurseries in the area.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

Literacy, Numeracy and Preparatory Studies courses are offered at TAFE SA, Mt Gambier campus and Naracoorte campus.

“AMEP students at Mt Gambier have been learning about Australian Rules Football. Volunteer tutor, Di King brought in a football for them to kick around after class. Ms King realised that they didn't know very much about the game. They were spotted kicking the ball around by Robbie Ransom, the Facilities Team Leader at the TAFE SA Mt Gambier campus, who happens to be a football coach and umpire for the local teams in Mt Gambier.”

“Mr Ransom joined in the fun and enjoyed the experience so much that he rounded up half a dozen used balls, some tackling gear, trained our students and organised a footy match between our students and another team. When the match was played we couldn’t decide who the winners and losers were because everyone was having so much fun that they lost count of the goals. It was also very entertaining for the spectators” a spokesperson said. (see below)
Health Services

Specialised refugee health services include:
- New Arrival Refugee Immunisation Programme
- dental services
- diabetes educators
- dietician.

General Practice (GP) clinics in the regional areas have been helpful in providing health services to newly arrived refugees. The doctors use the interpreter service and bulk bill HSS clients under Medicare.

The local hospitals in Naracoorte and Mt. Gambier are equipped to diagnose tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Immunisations and vaccinations are administered by Community Health nurses at Mount Gambier City Council and Naracoorte Community Health.

Employment Opportunities

Refugees have found work in local dairies, herb farms, the local wine industry, aged care and child care industries, hospitality and in retail.

jobactive providers Job Prospects and Workskill Inc have offices across the Limestone Coast. They provide services such as interpreting, employment plans and assistance with transport costs to eligible job seekers.

Many refugees gain work through the Limestone Coast Migrant Settlement Committee Network. This network of organisations is spread throughout the Limestone Coast area with most located in the Mount Gambier, Naracoorte and Border town central business districts.

A welcoming community

The Limestone Coast MRC works with many groups and organisations in the community, including organisations from both the public and private sector:

Mt Gambier
- Mt Gambier North Reception to Year 7 (R-7) School provides new arrivals classes, special classes, instrumental music service, and transport to after school care programmes
- Centrelink provides multicultural services for new arrivals
- Inclusive Directions is an inclusive playgroup that has been operating in Mount Gambier since 2001 and offers a supportive environment where children and families feel welcome.
- South Australia Police provide information sessions to new arrivals on Australian laws and policing
- Boandik Lodge provides programmes for seniors.
- Country Health promotes healthy eating and exercise for new and emerging communities
Active communities in the area include the Burmese-Karen Community and the Congolese community.

Anglican Community Care in Mt Gambier provides accommodation services, emergency relief and family relationship assistance.

Rotary Club of Mt Gambier has provided donations to the MRC including items such as furniture and computers to individual new arrivals in some cases.

Employers such as the meatworks and a number of vineyards have provided employment to new arrivals.

**Naracoorte**

- Rotary Club of Naracoorte provides social integration for refugees
- Naracoorte-Lucindale Council provides community engagement
- Naracoorte Police provides Australian law education
- Naracoorte Health Service provides immunisations & health checks
- Anglican Community Care provides a range of support services for families
- The Afghan Community provides child care, religious and social support
- Rotary Club of Naracoorte provides community, vocational and youth services.

**Bordertown**

- Bordertown Lions club provides community services.

Bordertown High School has a strong focus on information technology, agriculture and vocational education, with a large number of students engaging in these areas.