Settlement Services
Regional Profile #3
Mount Gambier, South Australia
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DSS wishes to express its thanks to the Mount Gambier 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.
About Mount Gambier

Mount Gambier has a population of around 26,000, and is the second largest South Australian city outside the state capital Adelaide. It is located about 440 km south east of Adelaide and just 17 km from the border of Victoria.

According to the 2011 Census, 51.7 per cent of the population of Mount Gambier were female, and 85.9 per cent of the population were Australian born.

Mount Gambier is situated in an area known as the Limestone Coast, which is 28,000 square km in area and encompasses the smaller towns, Naracoorte, population 5691, Bordertown, population 2792 and Millicent, population 5024.

Estimated number of new arrivals who directly settled in Mount Gambier from 2007 to 2016 were:

- Myanmar (Karen) 370
- Congolese: 219
Service providers

The onshore Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) will provide early practical support to refugee and humanitarian entrants on arrival, and throughout their initial settlement period. Service providers deliver the program on behalf of the Australian Government and assist clients to build skills and knowledge for social and economic wellbeing through a needs-based case management approach.

Support through the HSP will aim to provide refugees and humanitarian entrants to Australia with the knowledge, skills and independence to commence their new lives and contribute to the economic and social fabric of Australia.

HSP service providers work with clients to identify their needs and goals and develop an individual case management plan. Service providers support clients to achieve outcomes in:

- Housing;
- Physical and Mental Health and Well-being;
- Managing Money and Transport;
- Community Participation and Networking;
- Family Functioning and Social Support;
- Justice;
- Language Services;
- Education and Training; and
- Employment.

Accommodation

Most houses in Mount Gambier are within the Central Business District, where many shops and services are located. Suburban areas have small local shops areas within reasonable walking distance from most homes.
Education

Several kindergartens and early childhood centres meet the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrant families in Mount Gambier. The Mount Gambier North, Reidy Park and McDonald Park schools are among the public primary schools in the city, while public secondary schools are Grant and Mount Gambier high schools.

The New Arrival Program at the Mount Gambier North Primary School and Mount Gambier High School, also delivers an Intensive English Language Program for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

Schools

Further Education

TAFE SA and UniSA have campuses in Mount Gambier as well as across the Limestone Coast at Bordertown, Millicent and Naracoorte.

Students who have achieved a satisfactory level of English can move onto other pathways of study, for example, courses in mainstream areas of study offered by TAFE SA. They can also enrol in further study through the University of South Australia (UniSA).

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 refugee and humanitarian entrants and has led to work in dairies, herb farms and nurseries in the region.

For further information on courses available at TAFE SA, Mount Gambier campus can be found at: https://www.tafesa.edu.au/locations/limestone-coast/mount-gambier
UniSA courses include Foundation Studies in Applied Science and Engineering, Business, Education, Arts and Social Sciences; Health Sciences, Information Technology, Nursing and Social Work.

Further information on courses available at the UniSA can be found at: http://www.unisa.edu.au/Study-at-UniSA/Regional-Students/Mount-Gambier-Regional-Centre/

English language Tuition

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is delivered by TAFE SA and provides English language tuition to eligible migrants and former refugees to help them learn foundation English language and settlement skills.

Further information on the AMEP is available at: https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-0

Health Services

Specialised refugee health services include:
- New Arrival Refugee Immunisation Program
- dental services
- diabetes educators
- dieticians
- radiology and x-ray services.

General Practice (GP) clinics in the Mount Gambier area provide health services to newly arrived refugees. The doctors use telephone interpreter service and bulk bill clients under Medicare.

The Mount Gambier Hospital is equipped to diagnose tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Immunisations and vaccinations are administered by Community Health nurses at Mount Gambier City Council and Community Health Services attached to the hospital.
Employment Opportunities

Many humanitarian clients are employed as seasonal and permanent workers in the dairy, winery and forestry industries. Several are permanently employed at a herb farm outside Mount Gambier while others are in ongoing employment in the aged care industry.

Three Burmese families own and manage two restaurants in Mount Gambier, where they employ several casual workers from their community.

Several former refugees from Burmese and Congolese background are employed in the retail and hospitality industries while others work as cleaners. Increasingly more refugee and humanitarian entrants are employed at a meat processing plant in Naracoorte north of Mount Gambier.

The Mount Gambier North School and Tenison Woods College employ refugee and humanitarian entrants in various roles.

Jobactive providers, Job Prospects and Workskill Inc have offices in Mount Gambier and across the Limestone Coast. They provide assistance with employment plans and source interpreters during these sessions.

The Career Development Centre assists humanitarian clients with resumés and assesses their skills against suitable employment in the region.

Volunteering

Refugee and humanitarian entrants are encouraged to engage in volunteering opportunities in workplaces in and around Mount Gambier to improve their English language and build an understanding of occupational health and safety regulations and gain confidence in engaging with Australians in the workplace.

Currently, two Congolese refugee volunteers are hosting their own show in Swahili, on a community radio station every Sunday afternoon. They broadcast news about their community and talk about events offered to former refugees.

A Congolese refugee is engaged with the Mount Gambier Men’s Shed, where he is learning how to use appropriate tools for the wooden and limestone sculptures he is creating. The artist has also painted the mobile unit of a local radio station, which is used for live broadcasts around the Limestone Coast.

Karen and Congolese refugees are volunteering as interpreters and assist with the organising events and information sessions for new arrivals.

A number of Congolese and Karen men and youth have been trained as football umpires with various clubs in and around Mount Gambier. Several adults and youth are actively involved in various sporting clubs, including netball, soccer and football.

A welcoming community

At least 12 Australian born volunteers engage with former refugees on a weekly basis where they provide social engagement activities, conversational English and introduce new arrival families to Australian culture.

Mt Gambier

- Mt Gambier North Primary School and Mount Gambier Secondary School also provide new arrivals classes, special classes, instrumental music service, and transport to after school care programs.
- 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 aged care facility provides transport for seniors and engages the migrant community in social activities for their residents, including on Harmony Day and during Refugee Week.

Country Health SA promotes healthy eating and exercise for new and emerging communities.

Lifeline provides information sessions on suicide and depression, gambling and household budgeting.

South East Legal Services provides information to new arrival families about legal contracts and documents.

The broader community engages in cultural activities, including music and food, with new arrival refugees at public events.

Citizenship ceremonies with former refugees are warmly supported by the communities.

The Mount Gambier City Council makes public spaces available to refugee families for cultural celebrations and supports events with grants.

Volunteers from the Mount Gambier Men’s Shed repair unwanted bicycles for donation to refugee adults and children.

Naracoorte

- Naracoorte-Lucindale Council provides community engagement
- Naracoorte Police provides Australian law education
- Naracoorte Health Service provides immunisations and health checks
- The Afghan Community provides child care, religious and social support

Bordertown

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

Parks

Shopping Centres
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Markets

Recreation