



Refugee Council  
of Australia

## **REFUGEE WELCOME ZONES**

### **An initiative of the Refugee Council of Australia**

#### **Who is the Refugee Council of Australia?**

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national peak body for refugees and the organisations and individuals who support them. RCOA promotes the adoption of flexible, humane and constructive policies towards refugees and asylum seekers through conducting policy analysis, research, advocacy and public education on refugee issues.

#### **What is a Refugee Welcome Zone?**

A Refugee Welcome Zone is a Local Government Area which has made a commitment in spirit to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community.

This public commitment is also an acknowledgment of the tremendous contributions refugees have made to Australian society in the fields of medicine, science, engineering, sport, education and the arts. By making this Declaration it is hoped that local government will be encouraged in their continuing efforts to support the men, women and children who make the difficult journey to Australia to seek our protection.

The Refugee Welcome Zone initiative began in June 2002 as part of Refugee Week celebrations. At the time, 15 local Councils in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia were declared Refugee Welcome Zones. Today, with more than 120 Local Government Areas having declaring themselves Refugee Welcome Zones, the initiative has proven to be a great success in connecting local governments with the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

#### **What is the process for becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone?**

The process for becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone is very straightforward. It simply involves the Council signing the Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration, which is “a commitment in Spirit to welcoming refugees into our community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in our community”. An example of the Declaration is included at the end of this document.

To mark the occasion of becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone, many Councils choose to hold public signing ceremonies. These provide an opportunity to highlight the initiative and acknowledge the work of local groups and individuals that support refugees and asylum seekers. If possible, a representative from the Refugee Council of Australia will attend the ceremony to present a Certificate of Appreciation.

#### **Why become a Refugee Welcome Zone?**

Local Government has historically played an important role in assisting refugee settlement and promoting community harmony. Since Federation in 1901, Australia has become home to over 800,000 refugees and we have a proud history of settling refugees from all over the world who have gone on to make an

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enormous contribution to our economic, social and cultural life. Becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone is a way to continue this proud tradition of supporting the settlement of refugees.

Signing the Declaration can also promote harmony, social cohesion and respect for human rights in your local community. It is a great way to demonstrate support for refugees and take a strong stand against racism and discrimination. It can help to raise awareness about the issues affecting refugees, foster a culture of mutual respect and promote an appreciation of cultural diversity.

Becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone can also encourage the development of a more coordinated approach to supporting refugee settlement. It can motivate Local Government and local organisations and support groups to work together more effectively so as to improve settlement outcomes for refugees.

### **What are the obligations and responsibilities of Refugee Welcome Zones?**

The Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration does not confer any formal obligations and Refugee Welcome Zones are not required to uphold any statutory responsibilities or financial commitments. The signing of the Declaration is simply a way of demonstrating broad support for the principles it contains. Any actions or activities undertaken by Refugee Welcome Zones to implement the Declaration are voluntary.

However, while signatories to the Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration are not required to undertake any specific activities, any initiatives which help to create a welcoming atmosphere and assist the settlement of refugees and their communities are welcomed and encouraged.

### **How can Refugee Welcome Zones support refugees?**

There are many simple things that your Local Government Area can do to welcome refugees to your community:

- Develop a Local Government policy relating to refugees and asylum seekers or review existing policies.
- Offer funding for community-based projects which support the settlement of refugees.
- Hold community picnics and gatherings to encourage families from different backgrounds and community organisations to meet.
- Build partnerships and work collaboratively with local community groups and service providers to enhance support for refugees settling in your area.
- Organise an event during Refugee Week, such as a street fair or festival.
- Host a community meeting with newly arrived refugees and guest speakers from refugee support organisations to find out how your Council can best support refugees in your community.
- Hold a multicultural film festival.
- Coordinate with local libraries in the area to develop an English tutoring program for newly arrived refugees.
- Liaise with the Red Cross to run information sessions for newly arrived refugees who have been separated from family members and relatives.
- Hold a public forum to enable guest speakers from refugee backgrounds to share their stories.

***How has your organisation, community or council welcomed refugees?***

***Send in your past and upcoming events and initiatives to [media@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:media@refugeecouncil.org.au)***

***We'd like to hear about program or event, big or small!***

## Current Refugee Welcome Zones

There are currently 124 Refugee Welcome Zones in Australia.

Australian Capital Territory: ACT government

New South Wales: Albury City Council, Armidale Dumaresq Council, Ashfield Council, Auburn City Council, Ballina Shire Council, Bankstown City Council, Bathurst Regional Council, Bega Valley Shire Council, Blacktown City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Burwood Council, Byron Shire Council, Campbelltown City Council, City of Canterbury, Coffs Harbour City Council, Cowra Council, Dubbo City Council, Fairfield City Council, Gosford City Council, Goulburn Mulwaree Council, Griffith City Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Hornsby Shire Council, Kiama Municipal Council, Kogarah City Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, City of Lake Macquarie, Leeton Shire Council, Leichhardt Council, Lismore City Council, Liverpool City Council, Manly Council, Marrickville Council, Moree Plains Shire Council, Mosman Council, North Sydney Council, Palerang Council, Parkes Shire Council, Penrith City Council, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, Randwick City Council, Rockdale City Council, City of Ryde, Shellharbour City Council, Sutherland Shire Council, City of Sydney, Wagga Wagga City Council, Warringham Council, Waverley Council, Willoughby City Council, Wollongong City Council

Northern Territory: City of Palmerston

Victoria: Ararat Rural City Council, City of Ballarat, Banyule City Council, Bass Coast Shire Council, Brimbank City Council, Shire of Campaspe, Cardinia Shire Council, City of Casey, City of Darebin, City of Greater Bendigo, Colac Otway Shire, City of Greater Dandenong, Greater City of Greater Geelong, Hepburn Shire Council, Hindmarsh Shire Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Horsham Rural City Council, Hume City Council, La Trobe City Council, Manningham City Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Maroondah City Council, City of Melbourne, Mildura Rural City Council, Moira Shire Council, City of Monash, City of Moonee Valley, Moreland City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Mount Alexander Shire Council, City of Port Phillip, Borough of Queenscliffe, Greater Shepparton City Council, Surf Coast Shire, Swan Hill Rural City Council, City of Whittlesea, Wyndham City, City of Yarra, Yarra Ranges Council

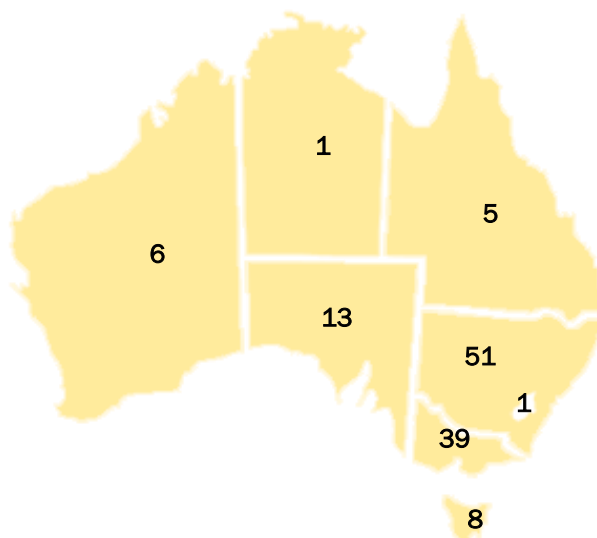
South Australia: Adelaide City Council, Adelaide Hills Council, Campbelltown City Council, Town of Gawler, City of Marion, City of Mitcham, City of Mount Gambier, Rural City of Murray Bridge, City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters, City of Onkaparinga, City of Port Adelaide Enfield, City of Prospect, City of West Torrens

Queensland: Brisbane City Council, Diamantina Shire Council, Flinders Shire Council, Toowoomba Regional Council, Townsville City Council

Tasmania: Break O'Day Council, Clarence City Council, Derwent Valley Council, Hobart City Council, Kingborough Council, La Trobe Council, Launceston City Council, West Tamar Council

Western Australia: City of Fremantle, Shire of Katanning, Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, City of Subiaco, Town of Victoria Park, City of Vincent.

*Map of Refugee Welcome Zones in Australia*



# The Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration

(Council crest/logo)

The \_\_\_\_\_ Council,

Declares the Council of \_\_\_\_\_ a

## Refugee Welcome Zone

*This Declaration is a Commitment in Spirit to*

*Welcoming refugees into our community,*

*Upholding the **Human Rights** of refugees,*

*Demonstrating **Compassion** for refugees and*

*Enhancing cultural and religious **Diversity** in our community.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
[name and title of signatory]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*This Declaration is proudly supported and endorsed by the*



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of Australia

*The Refugee Council of Australia is a national umbrella organisation representing over 1,000 organisational and individual members. The aim of the Refugee Council is to promote the adoption of flexible, humane and constructive policies toward refugees and asylum seekers by the Australian and other Governments and their communities.*

To obtain an editable copy of the Declaration for signing by your Council, please contact us on (02) 9211 9333 or [media@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:media@refugeecouncil.org.au)