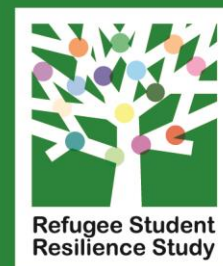


# Key Issues Paper No. 2



## Education pathways in South Australia and Queensland for students from refugee backgrounds<sup>1</sup>

There are multiple and complex pathways into and through education in Australia for students from refugee backgrounds. Not all students necessarily take the same pathway. This key issue paper identifies some of the most common pathways into education in South Australia and Queensland. While the pathways are similar in other states of Australia, this key issues paper focuses on South Australia and Queensland as the two focus states of the Refugee Student Resilience Study.

On arrival to Australia, students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) are most commonly directed to attend specialised intensive English programs offered at Government funded schools to assist them to learn English and settle into life in Australian schools. Students can attend these specialist programs for a limited time upon arrival. This time is between six months and two years but often around one year, depending on individual student readiness as assessed by the school. Intensive English programs are available across metropolitan areas with more limited availability in regional and rural areas. Where intensive English programs are not available, resourcing is usually provided for specialist English teachers to support newly arrived students.

After attending an intensive English program, students are required to transition out of the program, and attend a local or chosen government, Catholic or independent school. After completion of the intensive English program, students may be eligible for ongoing funding and support in their individual schools based on localised opportunities, expertise and school and sector context. This ongoing support is the focus of the Refugee Student Resilience Study, of which this Key Issue paper is a part.

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<sup>1</sup> Baak, M., Johnson, B., Sullivan, A., Slee, R., Brown, J. L. & Miller, E. (2019). Education pathways in South Australian and Queensland for students from refugee backgrounds, *Refugee Student Resilience Study Key Issues Paper No. 2*. University of South Australia. doi: 10.25954/5d4a5d664db5f



## Overview of initial pathways for students from refugee backgrounds in Australia

### 0 – 12 months in Australia

Initial government funding is available for most students from refugee backgrounds to access specialised support during settlement. Most often funding lasts for one year, but in some cases this may be reduced or extended. When students are assessed as ready to transition then they are moved out of these programs to other schools or classrooms. Some students with refugee experiences may not have access to these programs due to their current visa category, level of English language proficiency, or inaccessibility due to location and/or distance.

#### Metropolitan

Newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds can enrol in government-funded English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) programs. These programs help students by providing:

- Intensive English language support from specialist teachers;
- A modified curriculum;
- Smaller classes;
- School and community activities including excursions and social events;
- Bilingual classroom support.

Students who are unable to access these programs may receive localised support through EALD programs run within independent or Catholic schools. Any schools with students who would otherwise be eligible to enter these government programs can claim funding for these students.

#### Rural or regional

Students from refugee backgrounds living in rural or regional areas face more limited options. If government-funded programs are not available, then they are eligible to receive support within their school through the localised EALD program or teacher. Any schools with students who would otherwise be eligible to enter these government programs can claim funding for these students.

### >1 year (approx.) in Australian school

Ongoing settlement or EALD funding and education support can be accessed through government or independent/Catholic programs.

Much of the support available to young people with refugee backgrounds in school is via the English language support programmes. After transitioning out of initial programmes, ongoing EALD support is available, however, once a student surpasses a minimum score on their language and literacy levels, they are no longer eligible to receive funding relating to settlement.

Ongoing settlement funding through external service providers is available to some people with complex needs. Individual schools may also have local practices that support students with challenges that are not related to language learning.

## Refugee Student Resilience Study Overview

The *Refugee Student Resilience Study* aims to investigate how schools transcend the past life experiences of students from refugee backgrounds by creating the social and educational conditions that enhance resilience. It is focusing on the policies, practices, relationships, and events that shape the schooling experiences of students and promote their resilience. The research will collect data from a selection of case study secondary schools in two Australian states, including regional and metropolitan locations. These schools will contribute to the research with contextual data relating to good practices that enhance resilience for students from refugee backgrounds.

Education is recognised as a key protective factor in facilitating successful settlement and positive lifelong outcomes for young people from refugee backgrounds. Young people from refugee backgrounds have often had disrupted experiences of education prior to displacement and while language acquisition remains important in refugee education in Australia, we argue that schools may have a more holistic role to play in supporting students from refugee backgrounds. Schools are sites in which students from refugee backgrounds may access opportunities for academic, social, emotional and cultural learning and development.

For further information please see [www.refugeesatschool.edu.au](http://www.refugeesatschool.edu.au)

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- Australian Refugee Association (ARA)