



The health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers

This position statement sets out the HealthWest Partnership's commitment to the improved health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers in the west of Melbourne.

Why is the health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers a priority?

Refugees and asylum seekers are among the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in Australia. The political, economic and social circumstance of recently-arrived refugees, and, more particularly, asylum seekers, is in flux. This, in turn, contributes to the development of new health issues and/or escalation of pre-existing conditions. The personal histories of individuals and families are often characterised by war-related torture and trauma, deprivation and ill-health.

There is a growing body of evidence supporting the need to strengthen the service system that provides health and wellbeing services and programs for refugees and asylum seekers. More specifically, systems improvement strategies need to span the spectrum from primary health promotion to acute tertiary care – and across the lifespan of individuals from infancy to old age.

What will HealthWest do?

HealthWest recognises the importance of working with service providers to enhance their understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of refugees and asylum seekers. HealthWest will support capacity-building activities that up-skill organisations to provide more culturally responsive and better informed services.

HealthWest confirms that refugees and asylum seekers have the right to be informed and involved in the decisions that impact on their health. To this end, we will support local systems and processes that enable refugees and asylum seekers to participate in the social, economic and political life of the community.

HealthWest appreciates that positive action is required to improve the population health status of refugees and asylum seekers. This includes strategies designed to achieve equity of access to, and participation in public health services and programs. We will advocate across all levels of government, and within the public health sector for initiatives that will positively impact on the health and wellbeing of these vulnerable groups. We will encourage and engage in the development of relevant statewide, regional and local policies and plans. These documents provide the necessary mandate for the establishment of programs and services that will assist people to recover from existing injuries and illnesses, and enable them to optimise their physical and mental health for the future.

Endorsed by the HealthWest Partnership Board

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