

REFUGEE YOUTH ISSUES NETWORK OF SA (RYINSA)

REFUGEE YOUTH **FAMILY RELATIONSHIP** POLICY

Background

Research expounds that achieving positive resettlement for refugee youth is underpinned by the development and maintenance of trusting relationships with their family and cultural community. Many young refugee people arrive in Australia unaccompanied by their parents, without their complete family unit or significant caregivers. Family groupings have often been restructured, due to the death of family members, family separation during the war or conflict periods and the migration process. Therefore resettlement often involves young people and their families reconfiguring their roles and functions amidst other resettlement challenges.

It is important to note that while resettlement for young refugees in Australia is often characterised by many very 'ordinary' adolescent experiences (negotiating family, education, youth culture, etc.). For refugee youth this is occurring within the context of great loss and change, relating to their refugee experience and as a result additional support is required as they transition through this fundamental life stage.

Policy Position

Young people and adults are provided with supports to enable them to develop and sustain safe, supportive and nurturing family relationships that assist them to reach their full potential.

In accordance with its commitment to social justice, RYINSA believes that young people should be provided with;

- Opportunity and access to develop and maintain their cultural connections
- Access to culturally appropriate family mediation and relationship counselling
- Opportunities to participate in the development of strategies and policies that enable, families to take responsibility for, and contribute to their own advancement
- Equitable access to all mainstream services for young people and their families
- Accessible and equitable standard or care protection for young people and their families
- Support in developing coping mechanisms and strategies to enable healthy relationships between young people and their caregivers.

Current Challenges

- Refugee youth face the compounded challenge of transitioning to adulthood while they transition to a new culture and having to manage the practical adjustments associated with resettlement, whilst also dealing with past trauma from their refugee experience which often involves separation from family.

- The challenges affecting refugee youth impact upon their relationships with the carers, and this intergenerational conflict is a significant issue that requires a broad range of responses.
- A further challenge is the impact on the carers of the youth who are often young people themselves, who may encounter struggles in their parenting role and maintaining their relationships while facing resettlement challenges.
- Carer rights as culturally determined are being impacted upon by western concepts of individualism, self-determination as well as the value of the biological nuclear connections. The impact of these notions is undermining family roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Primary carers require a greater involvement in matters relating to youth i.e. independent youth allowance

Key Priorities

- To engage in research about the resettlement experience of young people and the effect it has on physical, socio-emotional, psychological, development and potential. With the aim to identify areas to target resources.
- Research and analysis to be used to determine the best service delivery models for refugee families in need or relationship support.
- Enhance and expand community based programs for young people that provide positive developmental opportunities and promote community and family connections.
- Promote and encourage increased awareness and training of those who work with young people and families who are facing difficulties.
- Ensure that young people who have caring responsibilities within their families are supported as carers and can pursue their aspirations as young people
- The development of practice approaches that consider a young person within a broad range of family systems such as biological, kinship and an extended cultural community.
- The family system as defined by the young person is recognised, in service delivery and acknowledge that this family system have an invested interest and capacity to provide protection and wellbeing of a young person
- Ensure the provision of culturally appropriate programs and services are framed by principles of choice, self management and self- determination.

