



Supporting People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

RMIT's Strategy and Outcomes 2018-20

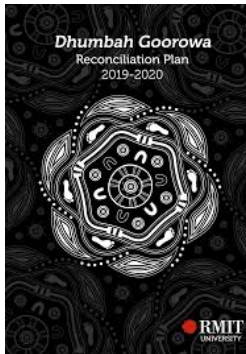
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What's next...

Inclusion: A Core RMIT Value



Inclusion is a key organisational value and a major commitment in our *Ready for Life and Work* strategy, central in our aspirations towards a value-led culture.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Framework and related Action Plans outline how we translate this commitment into purposeful actions and outcomes for our whole community, including key cohorts.



Our journey towards a shared future with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges and cultures is outlined in *Dhumbah Goorowa* (RMIT's Reconciliation Plan to 2020) and the *Bundy Girri* project.

"RMIT creates life-changing opportunities for all, welcomes students and staff from diverse backgrounds, honours the identity and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, and is an accessible and open institution dedicated to serving the needs of the whole community."

- Ready for Life and Work



People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

Strategic Context



The RMIT project *Enabling Educational Opportunities for People Seeking Asylum* aims to support access to education and career opportunities for students from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds, who would otherwise be 'locked out' of access due to the need to pay international student fees.

This program supports a number of key objectives within RMIT's *Ready for Life and Work* strategic plan and reflects an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion as RMIT values.

The program comprises a holistic and sector-leading package of support for access, retention, success and graduate outcomes.

This report provides an overview of the program's key elements, student experience and outcomes from 2018 - 2019.

People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

RMIT identified barriers to access and success...



Difficulty navigating tertiary education offerings, pathways and application processes



They must pay full international student fees



May have multiple, complex, simultaneous personal issues, along with the stressful uncertainty of government policy, and of the determination of their own visa application



Require additional development in English for academic purposes



Discrimination in the employment market, lack of local qualifications, and lack of social and professional networks impede graduate employment



A lack of government income support, with limited, precarious, and low-paid or no employment, leads to poverty and insecure housing

People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

Our Response



Financial challenges

Colleges provide fee waivers:

- 3 Higher Education
- 35 VE or VCE programs
- 5 Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation
- 5 Certificate III or IV in English Language

Provide \$5,000 living allowance bursaries and annual Myki.



English language support

RMIT School of School of Vocational Design & Social Context offers early-stage English language assessment (pre-IELTS) and pathways advice.



Navigating offerings and processes

Deliver individualised advice and support on careers, educational pathways and the tertiary education application processes for applicants.

Partners and collaborators: Equity and Inclusion team as project lead, with:

RMIT Schools and Colleges
RMIT Coursework Scholarships
ARG and International

RMIT School of Vocational
Design & Social Context

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Study@RMIT, ARG
RMIT Skills and Jobs Centre

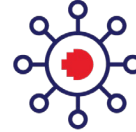
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Our Response



Employment support and opportunities

Provide dedicated jobs on campus, and customised career development programs.



Personal and legal complexities

Adopt a case management approach, enabling fast referral to personal, legal and academic support services, as well as community supports.



Social and professional capital

Provide personalised engagement with industry and employers to facilitate employment, and social and networking opportunities.

Partners and collaborators

RMIT Careers and Transitions
Operations portfolio

RMIT Student Wellbeing
RMIT Connect
Mental Wellbeing Initiatives team

RMIT Careers and Transitions
RMIT Student Life
Community partner organisations

People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

Our Outcomes



Navigating offerings
and processes

6

Presentations
and events for
prospective
students

100%

of presentation
audience felt
inspired to study
at RMIT



Social and
professional
capital

Welcome event
for commencing
students

56

Student Support
Appointments

427

Student Service
Enquiries



Personal and legal
complexities

47

Student referrals
to specialist
support services

8

ELS consults

17

Counselling
Appointments



Financial
challenges

57

Fee waivers
provided by
Colleges

\$350k+

Support from
RMIT Schools
and Colleges



Employment support
and opportunities

33

Career support
appointments

14

Students attend
career workshop

21

Students
graduated since
2018

People Seeking Asylum and Refugees



Our Impact

"Receiving the Scholarship is a dream come true. I can't stress enough how I feel about this Scholarship. It helped me a lot in many ways. "

"Without the Scholarship I wouldn't be studying. I would probably be depressed and sleeping thinking about my future... the Scholarship gave me the opportunity to start what I want to do with my life."

"Receiving this scholarship I feel greatly reduced my financial burden and [has] given me peace of mind and allows me to continue to pursue my educational dreams."

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Case study



Aida (not her real name) is a woman in her 40s who arrived in Australia from Iran in 2013, currently on a Temporary Entry Bridging Visa. In her home country, Aida practised as a psychologist in a wide range of clinical fields with a focus on young people and family dynamics. Aida has been volunteering at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and takes part in regular meetings with members and staff. Aida's Centrelink SSRS payments were cut off in early 2018 and since then she has been depending on her partner's income as a handyman.

Aida is passionate about having a positive impact on the lives and individuals in her community and hopes to become a qualified psychologist or social worker in Australia to pursue this passion and in time find the financial independence to support herself. In late 2018, Aida applied to study a Diploma of Community Services (Case Management) at RMIT and was awarded a fee waiver place and living allowance to support her studies. Aida also received a myki pass with six months' travel to support her transportation to and from RMIT to attend classes. She studied full time for one year and completed the program at the end of 2019.

Having considered the pathway options of this program, Aida decided to apply for a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) and accepted a place in early 2020. She enrolled in the four-year program and received a fee waiver place and living allowance to support her further studies.

When asked about the scholarship Aida replied, *"It made it easier to live and study, I don't think about my financial problems. It changed my life. I can study and get a qualification for a future. My dreams, come true."*

People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

Learnings and Recommendations



- Drawing on international and local best practice, engaging the RMIT community of academic and professional staff, collaborating across RMIT operational units and with community sector partners, **RMIT can design and deliver impactful programs that address significant community disadvantage**
- **College support for fee waiver places, along with living allowance bursaries**, are crucial in providing access to tertiary education
- **Providing holistic support across the ‘student lifecycle’ and using a ‘whole of community’ approach** underpins our aspiration to help students gain access to education, but also to stay, succeed, and attain meaningful employment
- We need to **reflect and affirm the strengths and potential of this cohort**: 100% of students have continued studies throughout the challenging COVID-19 pandemic period reflecting the commitment of the group.