

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: Afghan Support Subgroup Meeting

Videoconference – 17 November 2021

On 17 November 2021, SETSCoP facilitated the first meeting of the new Afghan Support subgroup, where issues concerning recent arrivals from Afghanistan were discussed.

Presentation from AMES Australia

Anthony Feretto, Acting Manager Operations & Practice, at AMES Australia, presented to subgroup members on the HSP support that AMES is providing in Victoria to Afghan arrivals.

Noting the large number of arrivals within a short timeframe, some of the key challenges for the cohort include:

- Essential registration issues and bank activations (e.g. difficulties setting up bank accounts due to ID requirements)
- Arranging identity immicards
- Accessing legal support
- High level of community concerns about family reunification and the impact of the Taliban having access to government records
- Essential health checks, mental health screens and COVID safety, including access to vaccinations
- Access to technology / bandwidth / credit
- Transport
- Long term housing
- Education
- Employment

AMES has an integrated service hub which assists with the above and has established strong partnerships to assist with support for and the provision of services to clients.

Other issues noted include that many clients are entitled to Special Benefit payment, which requires a Centrelink review every 13 weeks and clients are concerned they may stop receiving payments, and that there has been an increase in in-language scam text messages. AMES has established information sessions for community members about how to protect themselves against scams.

Catherine Lawson from HOST International provided an update about their Employment Pathway Support Program, which is working to fast-track skilled refugees into employment. The program offers one-on-one career coaching, support to identify and address barriers to employment and education, identification of skills recognition and gap training to pursue careers, networking and mentoring support and developing job search skills and application competitiveness. HOST has teams in Victoria, NSW, Qld, SA and WA.