

## Welcoming Australia uses Census data to help newly arrived migrants and refugees settle, contribute and thrive

Welcoming Australia's initiatives help connect refugees, people seeking asylum and recently arrived migrants with their local communities and provide much needed support.

Aleem Ali, CEO of Welcoming Australia says it uses Census data to understand changes in cultural and linguistic diversity, migration, population growth, housing, ageing, and to identify communities that may benefit from its services.

One initiative is Welcoming Cities, a national network of local councils that represents around 30% of the Australian population.

"We work together to help people feel welcomed across all regions in our country," Mr Ali said.

"The size and multicultural diversity of populations differ greatly. There are about 6,500 people spread across 152,000 kms in the southern part of South West Queensland alone. We used Census data to respond to specific challenges in each area."

The 2016 Census data showed that nearly two-thirds of permanent migrants who lived in a regional or remote area of Australia are aged between 20 and 49 years.

It's so important for these people and their young families to connect with their local communities so they can quickly settle, contribute and thrive.

A collaboration between Welcoming Cities, the Queensland Government and Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre has uncovered how local communities are building this connection.

In Balonne Shire, Welcoming Dinners connects established residents with new migrants and creates a sense of belonging and community.

"Census data has been instrumental in providing local insight to ensure people are accessing the best possible migration and settlement support."

It also formed the basis of Welcoming Cities' *Guidelines for Regional Growth*, distributed to all local councils in Queensland.

"Census data provides an evidence-based approach for decision making which, combined with local council knowledge, gives a holistic view to confirm or challenge assumptions about what migrants need to settle well into a new country," said Mr Ali.

"It's also used to inform the councils strategies so community groups, employers and service providers can attract and support migrants and refugees to thrive in their communities."