

Sutherland Shire Refugee Connection

Vision

Who are We?

The Sutherland Shire Refugee Connection (SSRC) , formed in 2018, is a grassroots organisation of like-minded individuals with a sense of compassion and concern for our fellow human beings, who want to support people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to settle in the Sutherland Shire area.

Vision

Compassion and solidarity for people from refugee backgrounds and those seeking asylum, welcoming them into our community and facilitating and supporting their settlement into Sutherland Shire

Background:

In the context of Australia's refugee policy and processes, those from refugee backgrounds and people seeking asylum fall into two broad categories: those who have permanent visas, and those who are on temporary visas including bridging visas. Whether people are on permanent or on temporary visas, government-funded services and support are limited, especially in the area of accommodation.

While the Sutherland Shire has been declared a refugee welcome zone by the Sutherland Shire council, affordable housing remains scarce and the number of people from refugee backgrounds settling in the area are low. Other barriers, such as a lack of support for those learning English as a second language, difficulties in accessing employment, lack of existing communities with similar cultural backgrounds, and the lack of availability of culturally and religiously appropriate food, are also factors.

The SSRC is supported by a diverse range of settlement and community service providers, government organisations and local faith organisations, and each member of the group brings with them their own set of skills, expertise, and community connections. The group recognises that settlement is a long process and commits to using these assets to provide a continuity of support for individuals and families to ensure healthy participation and linkage into the Sutherland Shire community.

The SSRC approach is based on the successful Northern Beaches Initiative.

Aims:

1. Support families and individuals to sustainably settle long term, into the community of Sutherland Shire, with connection to employment, community, and education, while acknowledging that not all will be able to.
2. Promote the Sutherland Shire as a refugee welcome zone and increase cultural diversity in the area

The role of SSRC

1. Social and community: provide a welcome point for social and cultural connections and support participation and linkage into the Sutherland Shire community.
2. Accommodation: assist in providing subsidised/affordable housing and/or facilitate/provide affordable accommodation for 1-2 years in Sutherland Shire.
3. Education and employment: connection/support to employment & educational opportunities and assist with English language skills.
4. Resources: connections to services working with people from refugee and asylum seekers in other parts of Sydney, fundraising/seek funding opportunities and recruiting volunteers.

Information on refugee and asylum-seeker processes is available from:

- Refugee Council of Australia: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/refugees-in-australia/>
- Refugee Advice and Casework Service: <https://www.racs.org.au/causes/factsheets/>

Refugee and asylum-seekers processes and potential SSRC role

