



Dreaming Big and Aiming High:

Supporting Young People of Refugee-Background
to Achieve Beyond Secondary School

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Overview of the Refugee Minor Program (RMP)

The program provides intensive and ongoing case management support to young people and their families. Areas of support include:

- Resettlement, housing and financial goals
- Supporting the care arrangement and relationships within the home
- Health, wellbeing and mental health
- Cultural and religious continuity
- Linking in with legal services
- Supporting family reunification
- Social and recreational activities
- Education, employment, and training



Education support within the RMP

Education and Training Advisors:

- Work with the young person, family/carer, school and case manager, in a care team approach to ensure students have equitable access to education.
- Work with senior secondary students to support their transitions to tertiary education.
- Ensure support provided is trauma-informed, considerate of the young person's pre-arrival experiences and student led.



Refugee-Background Young People and Pathways: The Research

Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian schools EEJSC Submission No. 87 Received 16 January 2018 Victorian Multicultural Commission Submission to the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee of the Parliament of Victoria [Submission 87 - Victorian Multicultural Commission 16012018.pdf \(parliament.vic.gov.au\)](#)

‘School is where you need to be equal and learn’: insights from students of refugee backgrounds on learning and engagement in Victorian secondary schools Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (2019) https://www.foundationhouse.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/STUDENT-PERSPECTIVE-RESEARCH-PROJECT-REPORT_A4_WEB.pdf

Preparing African students with refugee backgrounds for transition: School practices. *Australian Journal of Education*. 2022;66(1):5-25. Tebeje Molla, School of Education, Deakin University <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0004944121997468>

Case Study – Amina



Amina – let's consider some systemic measures which could be implemented across a school to support young people in pathways planning.

Amina's Story

At 15 years of age, Amina arrived in Australia from the DRC, with her younger sister and three older brothers. Amina's education was disrupted by war, flight to another country, the death of her parents and at times, poor health.

Amina was well supported at school and comfortably passed Year 12 VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning). Her school assisted her to apply for a Diploma of Community Services (Case Management) at a local TAFE. According to the TAFE, applicants need to have Literacy and Numeracy skills equivalent to Year 11. Amina's school are confident that she will meet this criteria and be successful.

The TAFE confirms admissions the following January and rejects Amina's application on the basis that she scored too low in the required online literacy test. Amina's school is closed for the holidays and so they unable to assist her. The TAFE offers Amina a place in a preparatory course (literacy and numeracy) at another campus which is 1.5 hours away. The staff member Amina speaks to explains that the course will improve her skills but also that the course has 'significant fees for overseas students'. The TAFE asks Amina for ID documents to enrol in this course. Amina then realises that the immigration card she used in her initial application has since expired. Amina has no other forms of ID.

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Checklist for Refugee-Background Student Transitions

Students can be supported to ensure they:

- understand their visa subclass (they are NOT international students!)
- have adequate ID
- understand TAFE literacy and numeracy requirements
- are encouraged/supported to practice for TAFE online literacy and numeracy assessments
- have a plan B for if they don't meet TAFE numeracy/literacy requirements
- understand how Special Equity Access works in their state/territory and what they are entitled to
- know whether they can return to school the following year for support
- are informed about local providers who provide career support/mentoring/training opportunities outside of school

Case Studies – Musharef




Musharaf – let's consider the one-on-one relational nature of careers conversations with young people of refugee-background.

Musharef's Story

Musharaf arrived in Australia in 2019 from Afghanistan with his uncle. He was 16 years old. Musharaf's younger siblings and parents are still in Afghanistan. Musharaf arrived with very little English but his education in Afghanistan was uninterrupted. In Afghanistan, Musharaf was considered a highly capable student. His parents are well-educated professionals and they expected him to do well and go to university in Kabul.

Musharaf is now 19 and finishing Year 12.

It has been a hard year for Musharaf. A family member in Kabul was killed early in the year and since then, Musharaf consumes news daily about Afghanistan. He worries constantly about his family and has trouble sleeping. Musharaf has also been working weekends and evenings to contribute financially to his family. Despite these challenges and the difficulty in keeping up with the language demands of his subjects, Musharaf is passing (just) all his VCE subjects (Victorian Certificate of Education: an academic pathway).



Musharaf meets with his school's careers teacher, Mr Conner, and tells him that he would like to become a lawyer. Mr Conner explains that a very high ATAR is required to study law and that this isn't a realistic option for Musharaf. Mr Conner suggests to Musharaf that he could study interpreting or social work and shows him some courses to apply for.

Mr Conner also tells Musharaf about something called an 'Equity Access Scheme'. Musharef is told that he should write a statement about whatever has been difficult for him and that the university he applies for will consider this when looking at his application.

Mr Conner is friendly and reminds Musharef: 'I'm here if you need me'. Musharef thanks Mr Conner but leaves the appointment feeling quite down. He is embarrassed to tell his uncle and parents that he won't be able to become a lawyer. Musharef writes a statement about how it's been difficult to learn English and applies for a degree in social work. However, he starts to think that perhaps he should forget about studying and focus on working full time to better support his family financially.

Discussion Questions:

Things seemed to go wrong somewhere in the course of this encounter.

1. What informs our understanding of Musharef's story that Mr Conner isn't aware of, or isn't seeing?
2. In an ideal world, if you could rewind this conversation, how would you like it to play out?

The Australian Education System: No Assumptions



Setbacks Do Not Equal Failure:

Which person didn't have a successful year 12?



Ghofran Al-nasiri

- Completed a PhD (Science related)
- Teaching undergraduate bio chemistry lab classes
- Received the Dean's Scholar Awards of College of Engineering and Science.



Janine Allis

- Founder of Boost Juice
- Owner of AUD\$200 million global business
- Induction into the 'Business Women Hall of Fame'.



Kot Monoah

- Bachelor of Laws
- Chairman of the South Sudanese Community Association of Victoria
- Principal Lawyer at Sunshine Lawyers
- 2017 Law Institute of Victoria's Rising Star Award



Graduate from University & Gain Related Employment

Starts working as a Registered Nurse in a major hospital

Obtain Sufficient ATAR

Family members assist with understanding university admissions process and course options - chooses Nursing



Study at University

3 year BA of Nursing (Studies with a HECS-HELP loan)

Academic Year 12 subjects (Health/Bio focus)

Privately funded tutoring support provided for weaker subjects - maths





Graduate from TAFE & Gain Related Employment

Starts working as a Enrolled Nurse in a major hospital

ATAR not Sufficient for Uni Entrance



Work while Studying at University

BA of Nursing is 2 years for Enrolled Nurses or 4 years part time. Able to work in well paid position as nurse while studying

Study at TAFE

2 year free TAFE program: Diploma of Nursing



Academic Year 12 subjects (Health/Bio focus)

Gaps in school experience + multiple barriers provide challenging context for learning

