MEDIA RELEASE

Armidale to settle 200 refugees

11 Aug 2017

The Turnbull/Joyce Government announced the New South Wales city of Armidale as a new community-driven regional settlement location for the settlement of refugees.

Deputy Prime Minister and Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, was joined by Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter and Assistant Minister for Social Services, Zed Seselja, for the announcement today in Armidale.

Mr Joyce said the first of an estimated 200 refugees would settle in Armidale in February 2018.

“Armidale is a good fit as a new regional settlement location for humanitarian entrants to Australia,” Mr Joyce said.

“It has a strong, welcoming community demonstrated by the fact that this push for the city to be a settlement location for refugees was driven by the community itself.

“I have absolutely no doubt that Armidale will work closely with the refugees settling here to ensure they can take up all the opportunities available to those who choose to embrace the great lifestyle available in regional Australia.

“Some of the people who will settle here are fleeing unimaginable circumstances which have torn families apart.

“I’m sure that, with the necessary settlement services that will be provided and our welcoming community that refugees arriving in Armidale will be able to make a new start and build a safe, stable future which provides them with the same opportunities that all Australians enjoy.”

Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter, said the addition of Armidale as a key regional settlement site was part of the Government’s commitment to encourage migrant and humanitarian settlement outside the major cities.

“This move reflects the Government’s aim to encourage settlement of humanitarian entrants across Australia, not just in our larger cities and I thank and congratulate the people of Armidale and the NSW Government for their support for this initiative,” Minister Porter said.
“Australia is a welcoming country to refugees. Our Humanitarian Program is growing from 16,250 to 18,750 in 2018-19 and beyond and it’s important that through our settlement services we encourage more settlement in regional areas.

Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs, Zed Seselja, said the about 200 humanitarian entrants settling in Armidale would be primarily drawn from persecuted minorities from Syria and Iraq.

“The Government has focused on resettling women, children and families with the least prospect of ever returning safely to their homes,” Senator Seselja said.

“Under the Government’s new Humanitarian Settlement Program, service delivery has been optimised to achieve better outcomes in employment, education and English language.

“We are committed to ensuring humanitarian entrants are able to overcome barriers, start a new life and integrate into Australian society as quickly as possible.

Settlement Services International, which is contracted through the Department of Social Services to provide settlement services, will provide on the ground settlement services to refugees in Armidale.

“This will supplement existing services, providing a further boost to Armidale through SSI staff and resources in the region,” Senator Seselja.

“This settlement program in Armidale will build on the additional 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq who Australia committed to resettling.

“The vast majority of these 12,000 refugees have arrived in Australia, with the remaining families expected to arrive in the coming weeks.

“Ardmale provides a similar regional environment to the refugees’ source country,” he said.

“The Australian Government carefully considers the establishment of new settlement locations.”

Factors considered in selecting settlement locations include:

- availability of mainstream services such as health and education;
- opportunities for employment;
- the size, cultural and religious composition of potential settlement communities;
- the availability of affordable rental housing;
- the support of the local council and community in welcoming new settlers;
- the potential for the harmonious settlement of the specific group.

For more information on the Government’s settlement services, go to the Helping refugees page on
the Department of Social Services web site.