

Supporting young people from a refugee background in the Victorian education system

Pathways support for students in the Refugee Minor Program

Simone Cassidy and Bojana Popovic

Overview of the Refugee Minor Program

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
- Social and recreational activities
- Education, employment, and training



Education support within the RMP

Education and Training Advisors:

- Support RMP young people with their education.
- Work with the young person, family, school and case manager, in a care team approach to ensure students are able to access equitable education.
- Work with senior secondary students to support their transitions to tertiary education.

Case Study – “Amina”

Amina’s education journey

Amina arrived in Australia when she was 15 with her 4 siblings. Amina’s education was disrupted by war, flight to another country, the death of her parents and poor health.

Amina has experienced schooling in Swahili, French and Luganda but arrived with no English. After 1 year at a language school, Amina started mainstream school (Year 10).

Amina presents as shy and well mannered. Her teachers report that she is diligent and hardworking but that she rarely asks for help despite struggling with schoolwork at times.

Amina completed Year 11 VCE and found this challenging (but passed). Amina decided to do VCAL in Year 12 with a VET subject in Community Service as she is hoping to become a social worker.

Case Study – “Amina”

Amina’s education journey

Amina passed Year 12 VCAL (Senior Certificate) and her school assisted her to apply for a Diploma of Community Services (Case Management) at a TAFE which advertised that the course is offered in a nearby suburb. According to the TAFE, applicants need to be 18 or older and have Literacy and Numeracy skills equivalent to Year 11. Amina meets the criteria and so her school are confident she will be successful.

The TAFE confirms admissions in the following January and rejects Amina’s application. Amina is confused as to why, but her school is closed so she is unable to ask for help. Amina emails the TAFE to inquire and is told that either her numeracy or literacy score on their entry test was too low. The TAFE offers Amina a place in a preparatory course (literacy and numeracy) to improve her skills but is told that this course has significant fees. Furthermore, it is only run at a campus which would entail 1.5h of travel each way. Amina worries she will not be able to continue with her studies and approaches her RMP worker.

Case Study – “Amina”

Amina’s education journey

Amina’s RMP worker discovers that the TAFE mistakenly thought Amina was not a domestic student, hence the information they provided about fees. The RMP worker asks Amina for some ID so that she can demonstrate her status as a permanent resident but the Immi card that the school used to enrol her initially, has since expired.

Further investigation reveals that Amina has no other form of ID (Learner's permit, Tax File Number, etc) and that Amina does not understand her visa subclass and what that means for tertiary study.

Amina feels overwhelmed and disheartened.

Barriers to accessing tertiary education

What are the barriers impacting on Amina as she seeks to continue her studies?

Feel free to pop answers in the chat

Barriers to accessing tertiary education

Possible barriers that could affect her application/enrolment:

- Locating a course nearby, no access to support with transport
- Passing the LLN to the required level
- Digital Literacy required for online applications
- Not having enough points of ID, not understanding the entitlements of their visa
- Misinformation/misdirection from tertiary provider
- Racism
- Lack of confidence, shying away from help

Strategies to support refugee-background students

Link (will open in new window):

[Padlet Link](#)

OR

QR Code:



References and further reading (included in handout)

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>