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(Re)Claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for students from refugee backgrounds into Australian higher education

Final report, 2018

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List of acronyms used

AARE	Australian Association for Research in Education
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
HEB	humanitarian entrance background
IEC	intensive English centre
LEAP—MM(RM)P	Learning, Education Aspiration, Participation— Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) Program
MYAN	Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
PHAA	Public Health Association of Australia
RCOA	Refugee Council of Australia
SEE	skills for education and employment
SfRB	student from refugee background
SIG	Refugee Education Special Interest Group
TAFE	technical and further education
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VET	vocational education and training

Executive summary

Background and project context

In the past two decades, Australian universities and schools have received increasing numbers of students from refugee backgrounds (SfRBs). These students have been from the Former Yugoslav Republic (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo), West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia), East and Central Africa (South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Congo) and now the Middle East (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan) (Earnest et al., 2010; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Woods, 2009).

Approximately half of Australia's refugee intake are aged between 15 and 19 years, an age when education is a priority (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). Furthermore, there is a paucity of research that addresses the educational, social and cultural expectations and experiences of SfRBs in higher education, and transition, especially those who were educated and held status in their own countries and who are now looking to gain educational and economic capital in Australia. Given these factors, it is of local, national and international significance to explore SfRBs' movements into the Australian higher education sector and to develop programs and strategies to support SfRBs to participate meaningfully and achieve meaningful success in their studies.

This project comprised three sub-projects undertaken by the three partner institutions: The University of Newcastle, Macquarie University and Curtin University. Each partner examined a different 'pathway' with three different 'starting points' from which SfRBs might commence their higher education journey. The University of Newcastle examined a technical and further education Adult Migrant English Program Tertiary Preparation Certificate, Macquarie University examined students at High Schools who attended the LEAP (Learning, Education, Aspiration and Participation) Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) Program, and Curtin University examined the departure point of high-school-based intensive English centres. All three programs aim to enable SfRBs to enhance their English speaking and comprehension skills and prepare them for further high school and undergraduate study. Key areas of focus for this study include equity and higher education, transition and pathways, reclaiming 'social capital' through participation in higher education, and language and cultural barriers to meaningful participation for SfRBs.

Aims of the project

The overarching aims of this project were to:

- Conduct a nationwide audit of pathways SfRBs take to enter higher education and consult with relevant stakeholders to identify key issues;
- Examine in depth three educational pathway programs that open access to higher education for SfRBs and review their efficacy through qualitative analysis of student feedback;
- Develop a set of best practice recommendations for pathway providers who engage with SfRBs;

- Strengthen the sense of community among Australian higher education institutions with regards to supporting SfRBs' transitions;
- Contribute towards and facilitate SfRBs' positive engagement with university study so as to identify issues that could improve levels of retention by seeking to better understand their transitions; and
- Enhance educational opportunities by developing resources that improve SfRBs' understandings of the academic language and culture that shapes Australian higher education.

Project approach

This project had two primary stages. It conducted a nationwide audit of Australian higher education pathways available to SfRBs and an in-depth examination of the three outlined distinct pathways. Focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews were undertaken with students from all three 'departure' points, as well as those who had transitioned to higher education. Key informant interviews with educators (Curtin University, The University of Newcastle) informed the broader discussion around the impact of policy on SfRBs' education experiences. Acting as a comparison, additional focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with undergraduate students who had not participated in the respective discrete pathways.

Thematic analysis of interview data was undertaken using the process described by Braun and Clarke (2013). This process enables the researcher to identify and analyse patterns that appeared within the data. From these findings a set of best practice recommendations for practitioners and policymakers and a set of transition materials, to support adult students to move into enabling and undergraduate programs, was developed.

Project outputs, deliverables and resources

The national desktop and telephone audit of available pathways for SfRBs captured pathways and initiatives between vocational education and training, community, school and higher education sectors and is organised in themes of access schemes, preparation for study, financial support and networks and belonging—connectedness. The national audit of pathways is freely available on the [Refugee Council of Australia \(RCOA\) website](#) and will help student advisors and settlement services provide guidance on relevant pathways to higher education in each state/territory. Also emanating from the project is the [Refugee Education Special Interest Group \(SIG\)](#). This is an active, national community of practice that can also be accessed via the RCOA website. Education providers are able to access curricula and teaching materials designed specifically for SfRBs preparing to transition to university via the [project website](#). Best practice recommendations for pathway providers who engage with SfRBs can be found within the project final report and will be elaborated on in future academic publications.

Impact of the project (outcomes to date and projected future impact)

The project has had an impact on education practitioners, academics and the wider refugee support community via a series of national practitioner workshops, conference symposiums

(national and international)/presentations, project reference group involvement, and, participation in the Refugee Education SIG within RCOA, and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network. Further, participation in a NSW Premier and Cabinet Round Table, on the role of further education institutions in refugee resettlement, has influenced policy and practice in the resettlement and education opportunities for newly arrived refugees from Syria and Iraq in NSW. With planned academic papers and publicity about the report, future dissemination of project findings is promising.

Key findings

The findings and recommendations from this project are situated within an understanding that the trajectories and experiences of each student from a refugee background in Australia—and internationally—are both unique and overlapping. By tracking and tracing these trajectories and experiences a complex web of interwoven themes connected not only to language, culture and education, but to settlement, family, community and belonging, has been uncovered.

Findings challenge the idea of ‘the transition’ into higher education (as a ritualised and normative set of experiences); instead, the data suggest that transition is strongly influenced by a student’s age, familial responsibilities, clarity of future vision (professional/career aspiration), support networks, and understanding of what higher education entails (in terms of the time and space needed to undertake higher education studies). While the participants expressed their desires to ‘work hard’ to fulfil their goals and carry on with their lives, they do this within educational and settlement contexts that persistently, yet unintentionally, place challenges before them. Few students took a linear pathway from each of the ‘departure points’; rather, the ‘norm’ was false starts, missteps, pauses and attrition, but all underpinned by a desire to return to higher education when the conditions were ‘right’. The findings suggest there were disconnections between the participants’ and the academy’s cultural understandings of education and the practices (including temporal and spatial practices) that facilitate successful study in Western education systems.

Unsurprisingly, English language proficiency featured prominently in students’ accounts of the difficulties they experienced in Australian tertiary education. Students’ English proficiency can negatively impact on their overall learning experience. In addition, for many students, both Australian-born and from refugee backgrounds, understanding and uncovering the ‘hidden’ curriculum of a particular educational context such as higher education is challenging. The availability, accessibility and use of face-to-face support was reported by many participants across the three sites of study as significant in the development of not only academic and language practices, but also in the development of social and cultural networks. A significant challenge is ‘time’ in many of its guises: the imperative to ‘make up’ for lost time and the converse lack of time to develop appropriate language and academic practices, time-limited assessment procedures that invisibilise the labour of linguistic translation, and inflexible scheduling of academic programs and settlement obligations.

What lies at the centre of many of the challenges experienced by SFRBs are tacit, implicit, assumptions by policymakers, institutions and educators that privilege Western knowledges and misrecognise what SFRBs bring with them to Australian educational spaces.

'Misrecognition' has been identified as one of the over-arching themes of this project, yet it is also a concept that is useful in understanding more broadly the experiences of SfRBs transitioning into higher education. Misrecognition (Fraser, 1998) acts to mask non-normative experiences and attributes, thereby hiding the multiple effects of SfRBs' prior experiences, multiple settlement commitments, linguistic challenges and cultural obligations. Throughout the data across the domains of education and settlement, participants in this project spoke of experiences that reveal institutional, pedagogical, linguistic and cultural misrecognitions. When the complex connectedness of the effects of multiple misrecognitions are rendered 'other', invisible—or at best opaque, blurred or homogenous—appropriate, specific supports and interventions are difficult to both offer and access, and information is difficult to tailor and properly target. Working to expose these assumptions and misrecognitions and also to illuminate the strengths, experiences and challenges SfRBs bring with them may lead to better, more positive outcomes.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	iii
List of acronyms used	iv
Executive summary	v
Background and project context.....	v
Aims of the project	v
Project approach.....	vi
Project outputs, deliverables and resources	vi
Impact of the project (outcomes to date and projected future impact).....	vi
Key findings	vii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 The University of Newcastle: TAFE and enabling programs to undergraduate studies	2
1.2 Macquarie University: school-to-university transitions	2
1.3 Curtin University: intensive English centres and beyond	2
1.4 Rationale	3
2 Project context	4
2.1 Global patterns of forced displacement and education in camp contexts.....	4
2.2 Young SfRBs and education in settlement contexts	5
2.3 Mature age SfRBs and education in settlement contexts	5
2.4 Key areas of focus for this project	6
2.5 Partnerships	9
3 Project approach	10
3.1 National audit of pathways into higher education for SfRBs.....	10
3.2 Specific transition-related interventions	10
3.3 Empirical tracking research.....	11
3.4 Research design	11
3.5 Ethical challenges and concerns	12
3.6 Data analysis	13
3.7 External evaluation	13
4 Findings	14
4.1 Students' experiences of transitioning into, through and out of higher education	14
4.2 Experiences of transitions into higher education	15
4.3 Challenges for university SfRBs resulting from language and cultural disconnections	15
4.4 Time	18
4.5 Settlement and education	23
4.6 Navigating educational systems and partial information gaps	24
4.7 Taking on the imperative to 'work hard to succeed'	26
4.8 Support, 'trusted people' and building a sense of belonging	27
4.9 Misrecognitions and assumptions	30
5 Recommendations for knowledge translation	32
5.1 Programs and interventions (for schools, TAFEs and universities).....	32
5.2 Policy (senior leaders, government and policy officers).....	33
5.3 Future research.....	33

6	Project outputs	34
6.1	Analysis of factors critical to success and those that impeded the project	35
6.2	Linkages within and across disciplines.....	35
6.3	Other linkages.....	36
7	Impact and dissemination	37
	References	40
	Appendix A.....	45
	Appendix B.....	46
	Appendix C.....	47
1.	Summary.....	47
2.	Background: Project objectives and the evaluation plan	47
3.	Terms of reference for external evaluator	49
4.	Project governance, leadership and management.....	51
5.	Methods.....	51
6.	Evaluation data	52
7.	Outputs and Outcomes.....	52
8.	Dissemination of findings from the project.....	55
9.	Implications for other projects	56
	Annex 1: Evaluation processes.....	57
	Annex 2: Program Logic	58
	Annex 3: Figure 2-4 (Graphs of final survey question)	59

1 Introduction

In the past two decades, Australian universities have received increasing numbers of students from refugee backgrounds (SfRBs). These students have been from the Former Yugoslav Republic (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo), West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia), East and Central Africa (South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Congo) and now the Middle East (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan (Earnest et al., 2010; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Woods, 2009). At this time of widespread international conflict, refugee migration to Australia is likely to continue (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, n.d.).

Approximately half of Australia's refugee intake are aged between 15 and 19 years, an age when education is a priority (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2017). It is therefore of both local, national and international significance to explore the consequences of such movements into the Australian higher education sector and to develop programs and strategies to support SfRBs to participate meaningfully and achieve success¹ in their studies. There is relatively little research that addresses the educational and sociocultural expectations and experiences of SfRBs, especially those who were educated and held status in their own countries and who are now looking to gain educational and economic capital by entering Australian higher education. Moreover, although there is a small body of work that addresses the educational experiences of refugee youth (Earnest et al., 2010; Joyce et al., 2010; Matthews, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Woods, 2009), and a growing interest in refugee school–university transitions in Australia (Naidoo, 2015; Naidoo et al., 2015; Singh & Tregale, 2015), there is little research to our knowledge that addresses the experiences of adult SfRBs in accessing and participating in higher education, transitions made from vocational education and training (VET) to university study and alternative pathways that offer access to higher education, such as enabling education courses, and intensive English centres (IECs).

Therefore, the aiding and facilitating of SfRBs' entrance into university from outside of higher education is an underdeveloped area of research to which we will contribute through the findings of this project. In addition, little is known about the transitional experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students, and SfRBs in particular, in terms of accessing, participating in and departing from higher education. This project seeks to contribute richer understandings and practical resources to support the first two of these foci (access and participation).

The project comprised three sub-projects undertaken by the three partner institutions: The University of Newcastle, Macquarie University and Curtin University. Each partner examined a different 'pathway' (see Section 2.4.2 for theoretical discussion of this concept) and implemented their own research design (see Section 3.4).

¹ We understand that the notion of 'success' in education is contentious and often defined according to institutional imperatives of retention and achievement, which do not always align with the intentions of the students as they entered and negotiated their ways through higher education. In this report, we define success as a fluid and contextualised phenomenon that shifts to meet a student's own needs and goals. Where possible we will refer to students' meaningful participation instead of talking about their 'success'.

1.1 The University of Newcastle: TAFE and enabling programs to undergraduate studies

The University of Newcastle is the lead institution on this project, and as such took oversight of a national audit of the available pathways into higher education for SfRBs (see Section 3.1). Initially envisaged to review the VET/technical and further education (TAFE) and higher education sectors, the initial stages of this review of publicly available information quickly pointed to the need to include both the school and community sectors. In addition to this, the University of Newcastle have developed and trialled a set of transition materials to support adult students' move into enabling and undergraduate programs (curricula and teaching and learning resources). These materials were based in part on the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC)-funded LIFE (Learning Interactively for Engagement) materials, developed by team member Jaya Dantas² (see Section 6.2). These curricula and resources have been taught, adapted and evaluated in three iterations, and the materials can be accessed at the [project website](#).³

In addition to the national audit of pathways and the teaching materials, the University of Newcastle have undertaken a three-year ethnographic exploration of the experiences of adult SfRBs as they moved out from the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and into (and out of) higher education. This longitudinal research was purposefully designed to develop trusting relationships and facilitate the collection of thick data that spoke to the richness and complexity of the individual participants' educational journeys as they settled in Australia. Using a repeat interview methodology, the University of Newcastle researchers have followed these participants' trajectories over three and a half academic years.

1.2 Macquarie University: school-to-university transitions

Macquarie University's research element focused on exploring the learning experiences and the nature of support that high schools and university SfRBs are receiving. Macquarie University's element of the research explored learning and support experiences of Macquarie University students who had gone through the LEAP (Learning, Education Aspiration, Participation)—Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) Program (LEAP—MM(RM)P), high school students currently on the LEAP—MM(RM)P and Macquarie University students who did not go through the LEAP—MM(RM)P. All the research participants were interviewed using one-on-one interviews and the use of focus group discussions (see Section 3.4). These data generation activities were aimed at exploring how SfRBs are coping with their cultural and learning experiences while in high school and as they make the transition into university and through their undergraduate degrees.

1.3 Curtin University: intensive English centres and beyond

Curtin University explored how students studying at IECs, and holding a humanitarian visa, experience preparing for entrance into Australian higher education and how this experience affects their expectations for transitioning into undergraduate study. The learning

² Previously published under the name 'Jaya Earnest'.

³ The assessment tasks have been mapped to Certificate in Spoken and Written English III learning outcomes and are available for free download. More tasks will be added to this page in future.

experiences of SfRBs who had already transitioned to university were also examined. Views from key informants in the IECs working with refugee youth were also obtained. The research focused on motivations and expectations for higher education among IEC students, the different pathways students followed to enter university, and students' experience of language and academic culture at university.

1.4 Rationale

The imperative for this project was to not only understand the specific linguistic and sociocultural needs of SfRBs so that effective transition pedagogies could be developed, but also to understand and assist with the needs of people from refugee backgrounds who enter Australia with aspirations and educational dreams.

Two key studies provided context to this important but underexplored area of interest when we entered the field.⁴ Most salient to this project is the paper that emerged out of an ALTC-funded project by Earnest et al. (2010), in which they questioned whether universities were adequately responding to the needs of SfRBs. In their qualitative study with 10 SfRBs at two Australian universities, Earnest et al. present three key findings that are significant to this study. First, carrying 'the burden of their refugee background' makes adjusting to Australian university culture and the academic system a 'long and arduous process' for SfRBs, often experienced as anxiety-ridden and emotionally distressing (2010: 168). Second, Morrice's (2013a) work highlighted the financial pressures that can inhibit adult participation in higher education, which largely results from the responsibility to contribute financially to family back home (see also Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Lawson, 2014).

The overarching aims of this project were to:

- Conduct a nationwide audit of pathways SfRBs take to enter higher education and consult with relevant stakeholders to identify key issues;
- Examine in depth three educational pathway programs that open access to higher education for SfRBs and review their efficacy through qualitative analysis of student feedback;
- Develop a set of best practice recommendations for pathway providers who engage with SfRBs;
- Strengthen the sense of community among Australian higher education institutions with regards to supporting SfRBs' transitions;
- Contribute towards and facilitate SfRBs' positive engagement with university study so as to identify issues that could improve levels of retention by seeking to better understand their transitions; and
- Enhance educational opportunities by developing resources that improve SfRBs' understandings of the academic language and culture that shapes Australian higher education.

⁴ We note the exponential growth in literature and empirical interest in students from refugee backgrounds and higher education since commencing this project; this is reflected in the bibliography and the development of the Refugee Education SIG (p. 32).

2 Project context

2.1 Global patterns of forced displacement and education in camp contexts

This report has been written at a time of unparalleled worldwide levels of mass forced migration. The UNHCR (2016a) report that by December 2016, approximately 65.6 million people had been forcibly displaced, with nearly a third (22.5 million) assessed as refugees, with just under 17 million under the remit of UNHCR (2016b), with the remaining 40.3 million people being internally displaced and/or awaiting assessment, and 2.8 million classified as asylum seekers. The UNHCR (2017) estimate that 20 new displacements are created every minute, and 10 million people are currently stateless or at risk of statelessness. In 2016, 55 per cent of the world's refugees came from three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan, reflecting the severity of current global conflicts. Despite that over half of the world's refugees are estimated to be children (under 18 years), there is a serious and significant lack of education provided to refugees in situations of protracted displacement (in camp contexts). The UNHCR (2016b) report that more than half of the children of primary and secondary school age have no access to education, with refugee children five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee counterparts, and only 22 per cent of secondary school age refugee children have access to high school. Unsurprisingly, given the impoverished access to school, only one per cent of young refugees have access to university study, as well as technical and vocational education. There are opportunities to take part in higher education in camp contexts, such as the UNHCR scholarship program (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), and in-camp higher education schemes, such as the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins program, run in the Dadaab camp in Kenya, Malawi and Jordan (Crea, 2016; Crea & McFarland, 2015; see also Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2016; MacLaren, 2010; Wright & Plasterer, 2010; Zeus, 2011); however, these are seriously restricted, as the one per cent figure demonstrates.

2.1.1 Patterns of migration to Australia

In 2016, UNHCR estimated that 84 per cent of the refugees under their remit are hosted by developing regions (2016a). The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) report that, in 2015, only 0.66 per cent of the world's refugee population were resettled by three countries: the USA, Canada and Australia (RCOA, 2017). Australia has a long history of welcoming refugees, with over 870,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants resettled to the country since the end of World War II (RCOA, 2017); however, recent trends toward more conservative and border protectionist politics (such as the Brexit decision in the UK and the election of President Trump in the USA) have been reflected also in Australian policies, with a marked shift in political and media discourse toward demonising migration, and conflation of refugees and people seeking asylum (for example, MacDonald, 2017). In 2015–16, Australia granted 13,765 visas in the humanitarian program, including 3790 humanitarian visas issued under the Australian Government's commitment to provide an additional 12,000 visa places for people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, n.d.). In 2012–13, Australia saw a stark rise in the number of people processed under the visa subclass 200 (Refugee), from around 6000 to 12,012. Iraqi refugees represented the largest group of arrivals, followed by Afghanistan and Burma/Myanmar with 4064, 2431 and 2352 entrants

respectively. This shift in the applicants' countries of origin may be significant in terms of their previous educational and professional backgrounds and experience, although it is important to remember that the 'refugee experience' is highly heterogeneous (Lenette, 2016; Matthews, 2008; Woods, 2009). This in turn could be seen to place different stresses and challenges on the Australian education system.

2.2 Young SfRBs and education in settlement contexts

With regard to young SfRBs' transitions into higher education, a common finding reported in the literature is that the needs of refugee youth are complex and the Australian education system is not well equipped to meet these needs (Joyce et al., 2010; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Uptin, Wright & Harwood, 2013), despite the best efforts of individual schools (Matthews, 2008; Olliff & Couch, 2005; Woods, 2009). This is in part because many SfRBs are 'unschooled' (Woods, 2009), in that they are unfamiliar with Western conceptions of schooling and discipline, and they are often 'clustered' together (Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Woods, 2009), thus creating stress for specific schools and areas. Similarly, Ferfolja and Vickers (2010), in their exploration of the transitions SfRBs make from IECs to school, note that teachers and students struggle with the fundamental challenges that relatively 'unschooled' youth bring and face when entering the school system. They make the case that this 'culture shock' is 'well beyond the resources being made available to schools' (2010: 160) and foreground the need for further research into this alternative pathway open to SfRBs. In particular, the language and literacy needs of such students are not well supported in schools, because traditional English as an Additional Language/ Dialect (EAL/D) approaches are insufficient for addressing prior fragmented schooling (Olliff & Couch, 2005; Stevenson & Willott, 2007) and the literacy instruction required (Woods, 2009) to enable refugee youth to participate meaningfully in their education. Creagh (2014) points to how Australia's commitment to standardised testing of literacy and numeracy (such as NAPLAN testing⁵) disproportionately disadvantages SfRBs, especially new arrivals, and yet the conflating of SfRBs into the broader umbrella category of 'domestic', non-English speaking background, which also includes high achieving students—often from north Asia—skews the data, suggesting that these students are overachieving and therefore do not require additional resources.

2.3 Mature age SfRBs and education in settlement contexts

In comparison with the literature on refugee youth, there is relatively little that explores the experiences of adult SfRBs in higher education, and little that explores their experiences of transition. Notable exceptions to this dearth of literature include the contributions from Turner and Fozdar's (2010) exploration of adult students from a South Sudanese community in Australia, Brooker and Lawrence's (2012) study of the challenges faced by recently arrived immigrants in Adelaide, Perry and Mallozzi's (2017) exploration of the experiences of adult refugees in the USA seeking to access higher education, and Linda Morrice's (2009, 2013a, 2013b) work, which has explored the experiences of professionally qualified refugees in the UK. Morrice's study (2013a) is particularly relevant to the University of Newcastle arm of this project, as it offers a rich picture based on thematic narrative analysis of four SfRBs'

⁵ NAPLAN is the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy, which tests students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 of Australian schooling.

experiences of being university students in the UK. These SfRBs had professional or academic status in their home countries. This study is of particular salience because the author alludes to the educational qualifications and experiences that some SfRBs are seeking to attain in the context of loss of previous academic and social capital as refugees with professional backgrounds. Morrice's study also documents how some refugees arrive in their new countries with high levels of human capital in the form of previous professional and academic experience; for these people, higher education is 'one of the key ways that they can re-establish their lives and begin to rebuild their professional identities' (2013a: 653) following periods of great disruption and trauma that can follow the refugee migration journey.

2.4 Key areas of focus for this project

2.4.1 Equity and higher education

Australia has a long history of pursuing the project of 'equity' in higher education, seeking to widen access to 'non-traditional' students who have traditionally been underrepresented in university studies. In 1989, the Australian Government formally identified six 'equity groups' who had disproportionately low participation in higher education, in comparison to their demographic profile: Indigenous students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, students from rural and remote locations, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, and women in non-traditional areas. These groups still remain formally identified, although government spending priorities have shifted attention to three of these groups, whose participation in higher education has remained consistently low: Indigenous students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and rural and remote students. Of particular interest to this project is the conflation of many students in the umbrella term of 'non-English speaking background', which includes SfRBs (see Mestan & Harvey, 2014, for critique), which leads to significant misunderstandings about language learning, language needs and cultural mismatches.

We consider the idea of 'non-traditional' students to be problematic, because it contributes to the deficit framing of particular student groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education. We also argue that the idea of 'non-traditional' has become obsolete as widening participation to higher education has significantly diversified the student body, leaving the 'traditional' student (young, middle/upper class, white, English language speaking, school leaver) in the minority (for example, Devlin, 2017).

2.4.2 Transition and pathways

Transition is an important conceptual frame for this project. The term 'transition' is often used to describe both the discourse and phenomenon of students' movements between educational spaces. Transition is most commonly used in the educational literature to describe students' movements between educational levels; for example, school to university and less commonly VET⁶ to university. The literature also attends to other transitions, such as:

⁶ Vocational education and training is commonly known in the UK as 'further education'.

- *geographic and spatial transitions*: between familiar and unfamiliar physical spaces (Ambrose et al., 2013; Baker & Stirling, 2016; Bathmaker et al., 2008; Pallas, 2003)
- *interpersonal transitions*: leaving friends and family, making new friends, communicating with tutors and other institutional staff (for example, Christie et al., 2008; Gourlay, 2009; Leese, 2010; McCune et al., 2010). A significant body of work explores the experiences of ‘non-traditional students’ (for example, Christie, 2009; Delly, 2016; Keane, 2011; Meuleman et al., 2015).

However, despite questions being raised about how effective pathways are for addressing stubborn inequitable participation patterns (for example, Wheelahan, 2009), there are less-developed conversations within the transition literature that relate to *linguistic transitions*—which include not only moving between languages, but also moving between registers (such as spoken, familiar communication to written, academic communication)—and *cultural transitions* (moving between different education systems, between disciplines, modules and tutors). We contend that for non-English speaking background students, and SfRBs in particular, these linguistic and cultural transitions are often overlooked as a result of institutional systems and programs that are underpinned by assumptions about shared language and cultural backgrounds among students.

The idea of ‘pathways’ links with this dominant but limited conception of transition. As Gale and Parker (2014) note in their typology of transition studies, the idea of pathways connotes with their conceptualisation of ‘transition as induction’, which they argue ‘is conceived as a linear progression through a number of “phases”’ (p. 739), which are often ritualised, and embedded within movements between educational stages, such as school to university. In his 2003 work, Pallas describes pathways as ‘well-travelled sequences of transitions that are shaped by cultural and structural forces’ (p. 168), which are driven by established career paths. Pallas contends that the structure of schooling works as a ‘sorting system’, which makes particular pathways available (or not) to people, dependent on their background (including family and network, socioeconomic status, geographic location). This is particularly salient for ‘newcomers’ into a society/region, and especially so for people who do not share the same language or cultural practices of the institution (Anderson & McCune, 2013; Naidoo et al., 2015; Power & Hibbert, 2016; Vickers & Zammit, 2015). Although we recognise the limitations of the idea of ‘pathways’ given its dominance in higher education policy (at both political and institutional levels), we have chosen to use this term in this report for ease of uptake. However, we also want to foreground our linguistic reflexivity: we acknowledge our own participation and contribution to the pathways discourse, and we recognise how, if underexamined, it can lead to the maintenance of hegemonic and limited understandings of transition. In our work, we take a view that transition is multiple, complex and long term, and is deeply individual and context driven. A key theoretical output of this project is to challenge reductive views of transition, which contribute to deficit framings of students, and to provide rich empirical data that speak to the many transitional challenges that SfRBs have to overcome in their efforts to attain a higher education degree.

2.4.3 (Re)claiming ‘social capital’ through participation in higher education

The Bourdieurian notion of capital is a highly salient theoretical vehicle for researchers seeking to explore transitions into higher education, especially for SfRBs (Gray & Irwin, 2013;

Morrice, 2009, 2013a). As an element of Bourdieu's sociological 'thinking tools', capital exists in different guises—cultural, social, economic and symbolic—and offers a suite of resources that can be used to gain positional societal, educational and economic advantage (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; see also Morrice, 2013a). A sociological analysis of a person's capital should not be undertaken in isolation; it should be analysed in dialogue with the field (in this case, there are multiple education-related fields) and habitus—the 'open system of dispositions' or 'taste' that a person embodies as a consequence of their cultural capital and the field(s) in which they are located (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Where researchers have tried to explore how SfRBs draw on prior experience of learning (including language, literacies and other cultural practices) to facilitate aspirations for, or access into, higher education, they have often used the notion of capital to capture the inequalities apparent in the higher education system (Gonzales, 2010; Naidoo, 2009; Santoro & Wilkinson, 2016; Yohani, 2013). A common argument in the literature is that when students from less-advantaged backgrounds try to draw on their previous experiences to facilitate their transfer into the academy, these experiences often fail to provide a sufficient basis for the students to build and acquire the kinds of capital, or knowledge as a form of currency, valued by the academy (Scanlon, Rowling & Weber, 2007; Smyth & Banks, 2012). This view sets up a distinction—often based on the student's socioeconomic background—between students who have the necessary 'knowledge of' higher education (insider, contextually tested knowledge) rather than naive, outsider 'knowledge about' higher education.

Working from Bourdieu's foundational work, Yosso (2005) has articulated additional forms of capital, which are pertinent to inquiries examining culturally diverse people: *aspirational*, *navigational*, *social*, *familial*, *linguistic* and *resistant* capitals. These additional analytic lenses are particularly useful for resisting the deficit discourses that are often ascribed to people who are seen to 'lack' the 'right kinds' of capital for higher education. In this project, we started from the understanding that students bring many resources with them that are often not recognised as 'valued' forms of capital and habitus in the field of higher education. One intention of the project is therefore to contribute a strengths-based view of SfRBs in Australian higher education. The work of Linda Morrice (2009, 2013a, 2013b) was particularly influential on our thinking around what students bring to higher education, what they feel they have lost, and what they hope to gain from higher education. Morrice (2009, 2013a) draws on the notions of habitus and capital to situate and make sense of how her four SfRB participants experienced UK higher education, and she concludes that not only do SfRBs lack social status and recognition in higher education—gathered as they are within the domestic student demographic—SfRBs have a unique habitus (ways of being and doing) that are shaped by the shame and embarrassment they feel as a result of their refugee status and by the negative public and policy discourses around refugee and asylum seekers. It is likely that under current media narratives in the Western world, this policy discourse has markedly increased in severity and hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers (see Taylor & Sidhu, 2012 for a similar argument).

2.4.4 Language and cultural barriers to meaningful participation for SfRBs

A key area of inquiry in this project is students' language, and academic writing in particular. As writing forms the core of all assessment in the academy, the ability to communicate effectively in institutionally endorsed ways is an essential activity for success; inability to do

so can lead to attrition and failure (Baker, 2015, 2017; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Lillis & Scott, 2007). With the stakes already high, students with language backgrounds other than English are at a disadvantage; for SfRBs the stakes are arguably higher as they have to deal with the additional complexities of resettlement, trauma-related psychological issues, fragmented schooling and often significantly different education backgrounds and academic cultures (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Lenette, 2016; Morrice, 2013a; Naidoo et al., 2015; Olliff & Couch, 2005; Woods, 2009). The research described in these studies share concern regarding SfRBs' language capabilities.

2.5 Partnerships

A significant impetus for this project was the intention to strengthen and formalise existing partnerships that each institution had, not only across higher education but particularly with other educational sectors: TAFE (The University of Newcastle), schools (Macquarie University) and IECs (Curtin University). During the course of the project we have enhanced our working relationships with the reference group, RCOA, the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), the Coalition Assisting Refugees After Detention and the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

2.5.1 The University of Newcastle

The relationships between the University of Newcastle and the local VET providers (TAFE in particular) was tenuous prior to this project, and largely dependent on individuals' relationships and serendipitous connections or meetings, rather than any systemic and sustainable partnerships. There are also opportunities for strengthening relationships between enabling education and faculties within the University of Newcastle to better support students' transitions from enabling to undergraduate education.

2.5.2 Macquarie University

Macquarie University's LEAP program is run in partnership with schools across Sydney. The program was set up in 2011 in consultation with the NSW Department of Education, partner schools in Western Sydney and with input from SfRBs. Since its inception, the program has partnered with 10 partner schools across the Greater Western Sydney area.

2.5.3 Curtin University

Relationships with the three IECs in this study have been strengthened. Potential for greater collaboration was found in one specific local program—the university preparation course modified from the Edith Cowan University enabling program and delivered at Balga Senior High School. This could be replicated between other higher education institutions and IECs. The launch of the project findings at Curtin University and at Flinders University were attended by a combined number of nearly 120 people from community organisations providing refugee settlement services, representatives from various faculties across a number of universities, and other educational institutions such as TAFE and community education providers.

3 Project approach

The overall project adopted a longitudinal, qualitative methodology. Longitudinal, qualitative research is concerned with understanding processes of change over time (Corden & Millar, 2007). The length of time spent in the field and the closeness of the associations that can be made with the people studied is an integral part of ethnographic research. Indeed, McLeod (2003) asserts that such lengthy engagement permits observation of ‘continuities as well as change and upheaval in a relatively “close-up” way’ (p. 204).

3.1 National audit of pathways into higher education for SfRBs

A national desktop and telephone audit of available pathways for SfRBs was conducted over 2015–16. The audit captured pathways and initiatives between VET, community, school and higher education sectors and was organised using the following themes: access schemes, preparation for study, financial support, networks and belonging—connectedness. The data from the audit is kindly hosted by the Refugee Council of Australia as a searchable database (see Section 6).

3.2 Specific transition-related interventions

Whilst Macquarie University had an existing mentoring program, the University of Newcastle have developed preparation programs and resources through iterative, reflexive praxis. The experiences of SfRBs within these programs were explored as part of the investigation of the different pathways in this study. The programs are detailed below.

3.2.1 The University of Newcastle

The transition curricula and associated resources have been developed with a view to explicitly teaching language and cultural elements of transition, open a space to discuss expectations, and offer opportunities to visit local campuses so as to support SfRBs when entering enabling and/or undergraduate studies. The curriculum has been implemented and mapped to the requisite outcomes in three contexts: the AMEP, a university-based short bridging program and skills for education and employment (SEE). These three contexts were purposefully chosen because they offer three relatively long-term funding streams, as opposed to activities that are precariously funded by annual-cycle higher education equity funding.

3.2.2 Macquarie University

The LEAP—MM(RM)P at Macquarie University connects SfRBs with university student mentors to help them navigate the associated challenges that SfRBs can face with transitioning from school to university. The LEAP program engages university student mentors, some of whom are from migrant or refugee backgrounds themselves, to mentor SfRBs who are between Years 9 and 12 in high school.

3.3 Empirical tracking research

The third intention of this project was to empirically track and represent the experiences of SfRBs as they sought to move into and through higher education studies. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no similar longitudinal engagement with the experiences of SfRBs in higher education, and little that attends to the previous educational experiences of SfRBs prior to entering higher education.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 The University of Newcastle: methods and participants

The University of Newcastle took an ethnographic approach to their empirical research with the intention of tracking SfRBs' experiences in, through and out of education as they navigated their lives and educational trajectories in Australia. We employed several methods to gather data, such as focus group and individual interviews, collection of curriculum documents, collection of other related documents and photos. The University of Newcastle's research participants were adult SfRBs, primarily from Afghanistan, who were initially studying in the AMEP and had expressed a desire to enter university via an enabling program. Although we started with 14 participants, there was some participant attrition, which we expected as part of this longitudinal study. Overall, we followed seven students from the latter half of 2014 to the end of 2017. Each participant was interviewed between four and seven times over the period. The pre-arrival experience of participants in the University of Newcastle study was unique. Most of these students had experienced perceived high status as cultural and linguistic advisors to the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Anecdotal evidence shared by the Afghan students noted that they had been advised, in an unofficial capacity, that apprenticeships, well-regarded jobs and education opportunities in Australia were plentiful. In addition, these students' status was built upon their linguistic capabilities. These factors resulted in understandably high expectations for employment upon their arrival and subsequent frustration upon entering and attempting to negotiate the specific bureaucratic employment and education systems, for which they were ill prepared, both linguistically and culturally.

3.4.2 Macquarie University: methods and participants

Macquarie University's project involved generating qualitative data through interviews and focus group discussions with three groups of SfRBs from local high schools. First, the learning experiences and support that high school SfRBs receive through their mentors was explored (i.e. for students who are part of the LEAP—MM(RM)P). A total of 16 high school SfRBs that had participated in the refugee mentoring program participated in this phase of the project. Second, the experiences of nine SfRBs who were studying at Macquarie University and who had not participated in the LEAP—MM(RM)P were investigated. Last, the experiences of 10 SfRBs who are currently studying for an undergraduate degree and had previously been part of the LEAP—MM(RM)P were explored. All research interactions focused on developing in-depth understandings of how SfRBs are engaging with the university teaching and learning culture and the nature of the transition that they are making between high school and university. As part of the research process, a member check process was used. The member check comprised one focus group discussion (with four participants), two individual

interviews and one key informant interview. The member check process supported the data analysis and served to cross-check initial outcomes and interpretations of the data generated.

3.4.3 Curtin University: methods and participants

Curtin University used qualitative focus group discussions and individual semi-structured key informant interviews to obtain data from three separate groups. First, an exploration of the motivations and expectations of 45 SfRBs currently in IECs, who were planning to transition to either mainstream high schools for Years 11 and 12 and/or higher education, was undertaken. Subsequently, interviews with seven key informants/stakeholders, including teachers and principals working to support SfRBs, explored the factors affecting transition of students through the education system at personal, community and national levels. Discussions included topics such as policy and funding issues impacting on the operations of IECs and teaching capacity. Finally, interviews were conducted with 11 Curtin University undergraduate SfRBs who had transitioned to higher education. The students had transitioned from a variety of pathways, including the IEC pathway. These interviews explored undergraduate students' perceptions on the transition to higher education, including barriers, enablers and recommendations for further support.

3.5 Ethical challenges and concerns

A full discussion of the ethical challenges of working with people from refugee backgrounds, vulnerable communities, and the issues inherent in longitudinal research, is beyond the reach of this project report. However, we have been heavily influenced by Block et al.'s (2012) call to engage in constant 'ethical reflexivity', as well as Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) imperative to engage in 'ethics in practice' (ongoing checking of informed consent to participate, consideration of the 'micro-ethics' of the research in each project), rather than taking a 'procedural' (tick-box) approach to ethics. We see our ethical responsibility as extending well beyond the institutional requirement to gain Human Research Ethics Committee approval (which each project team secured before engaging in the field). As well as thinking through the power dynamics and complexities of researching with people who may have had negative experiences of being interviewed by status-laden officials, we were also mindful of the advice put forward by BenEzer and Zetter (2014), who argue that when researching with people from refugee backgrounds, we must be constantly vigilant with regard to inadvertent triggering of prior trauma: 'As researchers, we should be aware of the fact that our interviewee has to navigate between painful memories and thresholds of memory which they cannot be sure how to cross, and which we are unlikely to have experienced ourselves. Thus, great sensitivity is needed' (p. 314).

Initial approval was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Newcastle (approval number H-2014-0239). Approval was then obtained by Curtin University (approval number RDHS-38-16) and Macquarie University (approval number 5201600439).⁷ Further ethical approval was obtained from the Western Australian Department of Education

⁷ Information statements, consent forms, and interview schedules for focus group discussions and individual interviews are located at each partner site. Please contact each site for access to this documentation.

by Curtin University to access staff and students at high schools where IECs were located (reference number D16/0391626).

3.6 Data analysis

Thematic analysis of interview data within the micro-(individual) level was undertaken using the process described by Braun and Clarke (2013). This process enables the researcher to identify and analyse patterns that appear within the data. To commence the process, interview and focus group audio files were transcribed verbatim. Each researcher–interviewer read and reread the transcripts, making notes and ascribing initial codes to meaning units identified. Field notes taken during the interviews were also reviewed to provide context. Initial codes were then combined into categories and final themes were revealed for each site. Emergent themes were noted and regularly shared between the institutional and wider project teams. Points of contention were discussed both in person and by email, and consensus was reached. From this initial micro-analysis, patterns of similarity between participant groups, as well as discrepancies between participants, were noted. This, importantly, revealed the heterogeneity of the participant groups and allowed for further thematic distinctions to be made between, for example, older and younger students.

3.7 External evaluation

An external evaluation comprising formative and summative assessment supported the study by informing project impact and effectiveness in progressing and meeting established project objectives (see Appendix C).

4 Findings

4.1 Students' experiences of transitioning into, through and out of higher education

In this section of the report we first provide a concise picture of the findings from each of the three projects. We then further explore the dominant findings across the project. Many of these findings are common across each of the three sites of investigation, while others are particular to specific contexts, with those particularities associated with time of arrival/length of settlement time and age group of participants.

4.1.1 The University of Newcastle

The major findings from the University of Newcastle project were that education for adult SfrBs is directly impacted and inhibited by settlement pressures and processes (such as finding suitable accommodation, finding work, translating for the family and communicating with family back home), and this is particularly the case for new arrivals. In addition, the myriad responsibilities and stressors that are a legacy of migration and settlement have significant consequences for how future time is viewed, and how these understandings play out in students' decisions, study practices and attitudes with regard to their education and careers.

As described in Section 3.4.1, the University of Newcastle project involved a longitudinal, ethnographic research design, following 14 students through their studies, and seven throughout the entirety of the three and half years of data collection. This facilitated the crafting of detailed individual case studies on which we draw here.

4.1.2 Macquarie University

The major findings from Macquarie University's project were that there was inadequate support for SfrBs, especially within the first few weeks and months of being a university student. This often leads to various mistakes at the very start of their university education journey. SfrBs also reported a general lack of awareness within the university support services of the peculiar learning needs of SfrBs. Moreover, SfrBs are often surprised and sometimes shocked by the standards and quantity of work required at university level. This situation often leads to unprecedented pressure on the individual student. Students suggested that universities need to take on more responsibility of providing SfrBs with adequate guidance, sufficient preparatory information and support, especially in the first few months of being a student.

4.1.3 Curtin University

Findings from Curtin University highlighted that SfrBs were highly motivated and demonstrated a strong work ethic. However, disrupted schooling, travels through multiple countries and limited English were significant challenges. Academic practices such as referencing and academic writing were sometimes new concepts for students, as was the concept of homework for high school-based students. Socialisation and stigma contributed to a sense of social isolation among university SfrBs. However, academic and social support (both formal and informal) from peers, teachers, university programs and family were

contributing factors to academic progress. Arriving early in adolescence enabled more time in the IEC and high school environment, which facilitated transition to higher education.

4.2 Experiences of transitions into higher education

Overall, there were a variety of experiences of transitioning into, through and prematurely out of higher education among the students who participated in this project. Our findings challenge the idea of ‘the transition’ into higher education (as a ritualised and normative set of experiences). Instead our data suggest that transition is strongly influenced by a student’s age, familial responsibilities, clarity of future vision (professional/career aspiration), support networks, and understanding of what higher education entails (in terms of the time and space needed to undertake higher education studies). In the University of Newcastle and Curtin University projects, there were few students who took a linear pathway from each of the ‘departure points’; rather, the ‘norm’ was false starts, missteps, pauses and attrition. Students expressed a preparedness to change courses, institutions and study mode as they navigated the higher education system and managed their immediate competing priorities. However, this was all underpinned by a desire to return to higher education when the conditions were ‘right’.

4.3 Challenges for university SfRBs resulting from language and cultural disconnections

For SfRBs, linguistic and cultural challenges experienced in education are tied to notions of powerful, legitimised and valorised knowledges (see Section 4.9). Although the linguistic and institutional expectations of higher education provide challenges for all students (see work by Gourlay, 2009; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Turner, 2011), we set out to explore how these would impact on students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and who have a refugee or refugee-like background. Our findings suggest that there were disconnections between the participants’ and the academy’s cultural understandings of education and the practices (including temporal and spatial practices) that facilitate successful study in Western education systems.

For instance, several participants reported difficulties with cultural assumptions embedded in course content across both high school and enabling contexts. For the students who participated in the Macquarie University study, there was a commonly expressed difficulty in understanding and negotiating the information and expectations regarding tacit academic practices such as meeting assignment deadlines. Echoing the Curtin University data, these SfRBs have come from a context where there is little or no flexibility in how assessments are carried out. However, in the Australian context, students are provided with flexibility and have rights, especially when they have genuine circumstances that adversely affect their academic performance. In addition, there is little clarity regarding what event or circumstance might qualify as fulfilling any of these circumstances. Local students who have been schooled within the Australian education system have knowledge and experience of what can be counted as one of these events; in addition, they may be able to call upon the knowledge and experience of friends or family members who have participated in Australian higher education. SfRBs are not necessarily able to draw on the context of family members or a community who possess this tacit knowledge of the education system to support or advise

them. The implications are that some SfRBs who have legitimate reasons to seek an interruption of studies do not, and they then enter a cycle of failing their registered courses and potentially dropping out.

Unsurprisingly, English language proficiency featured prominently in students' accounts of the difficulties they experienced in Australian tertiary education. Students' English proficiency can negatively impact on their overall learning experience. Learning difficulties such as dyslexia can go undiagnosed as teachers assume the academic issues are a result of English difficulties. Trauma can also go unrecognised as teachers assume symptoms such as silence are related to poor English ability. In particular, difficulties with spelling and grammar were highlighted, along with concerns about being laughed at for poor pronunciation, especially among female high school students. This impacted on their confidence to speak in class and on their written work. All of the participants operate in at least two languages, translating written work back and forth, using devices such as Google Translate to assist them in understanding content and producing written work. The translation process means completing assessments takes a significantly longer time, which is particularly problematic in time-bound examinations:

I could understand the content but when it comes to the final exams I couldn't remember all of the things that I should write exactly. If they ask me, write it in Persian I could answer it perfectly. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

For John (The University of Newcastle) the need to translate basic terminology created significant additional work; he estimated for every hour of lecture materials, he felt he needed at least two further hours of self-study to understand.

It takes me like so much time to translate the terms first and then learn the terms and then learn how they are used in the sentence. So, it's like multiple steps process for me. (The University of Newcastle: undergraduate student)

Moreover, there is also additional time pressure when students are trying to fit in extra English classes, which results in daily stress. The University of Newcastle participants were offered bespoke language classes to support their studies in the enabling program but they rarely attended (with the exception of Nilofer, a young woman studying the full-time program for 18–20-year-old students). One of the University of Newcastle participants, Yusuf, clearly articulated why he didn't seek support for the linguistic elements of his studies:

... when I used to [attend lectures and tutorials] because I had a goal and they could get me to it and I knew from then if I don't attend to them and if I don't study them so I'm not going to get enough marks and when I don't get enough marks I will not pass and I will not get to my goal. And people—like students—if they see that English class is running at the university but there is no marks for it, they don't get fail if they don't go to attend the class whenever they want they don't attend. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

In other 'mainstream' educational spaces (i.e. classes that do not have an English as a Second Language teacher or focus), language support staff are not always available to provide English or other academic support. In the higher education context, specific English language support

is offered to international students, but not necessarily something that domestic SfRBs/CALD students can access or know about. This combination of language proficiency and academic language practices can create significant stress for these students:

Yeah, it's very, very different and the class, the work is very different. They expect very, very high, high achievement. You need to get HD [high distinction] in this, that. It's very difficult to get [for me], especially English is a second language and they want an essay academically, it's very, very hard. (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

Many students in the University of Newcastle study chose enabling courses based on their perception of the English language load, such as mathematics. However, as also found in the Curtin University study, English was revealed by both students and teachers to have an impact on learning mathematic subjects. Mathematical problems are presented as scenarios, in the form of a written paragraph. This requires students to have a relatively high level of English to identify the mathematical details within the problem. A degree of English translation is required before the mathematical processes can be undertaken:

If you doing, if you doing the ATAR [Australian Tertiary Admission Rank] maths and on the other hand you're doing the EALD English [English as an Additional Language or Dialect] that's going to be harder for you to do the ATAR math. (Curtin University: IEC student)

4.3.1 Academic literacies and tacit assumptions

For many students, both Australian-born and from refugee backgrounds, understanding and uncovering the 'hidden' curriculum of a particular educational context such as higher education is fraught. Yet, for SfRBs who may have spent comparably little time in an Australian educational context, the work required to make visible the tacit practices of academia is compounded. Higher education in Australia is underpinned by a set of tacit Western/Global North cultural assumptions and powerful knowledges regarding pedagogies, andragogies and academic practices. Students reported difficulties with teaching and learning styles and the concept of academic integrity as these often differed from those students were familiar with. For example, one University of Newcastle participant, Fardin, was horrified to learn that he had failed an assignment because he had 'plagiarised' by drawing on a friend's previous efforts at undertaking the same assignment. As he described:

When I submit it—I got a paper from teacher that you just copy it. You just plagiarise it. I said, 'I didn't do that, because for me, for us—for the person who is second language if you give me, like, the books'—for other people it's pretty easy to read it and make it, like, changing the words. So I only had a couple of hours so I just copy it from—I didn't copy I just [name of other student] from books. When I submit it shows that similarity is pretty high. So that is the problem. So, for example, if they have the words but they know the meaning of, like, [gives example] for that word and a couple of more in their minds. For us we need to check it in dictionary, we need to check it to find the other meaning. Then to link it on that sentence and write something which is readable. So that was pretty difficult. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

As Fardin's example highlights, the practices, expectations and conventions of academic writing can cause significant stress. This is exacerbated by significant differences between the kinds of writing that students undertake for school and TAFE studies, which requires different engagement with reading, writing and thinking (Baker, 2017; Lea & Street, 1998; Turner, 2011), underpinned by different assessment strategies and epistemologies (Baker, 2015). For the participants across all three arms of the project, academic reading/writing, referencing and research were all described as difficult or as new concepts:

I'm not familiar with basically academic writing, it was my first time when the lecturer told us to do this assessment and it has to be like this. This is the structure, referencing and the language that you use, the citation, everything was completely new for me. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

... for me, it's—I'm getting a bit familiar with the referencing and paraphrasing and everything. But not really well. Yeah. I still—I need—I need help. I need coaching which can help me in regard my essay and the referencing and everything. Yeah ... (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

Although writing was the main focus of the participants when discussing language-related challenges, reading was also a significant challenge for students. In addition to the additional work of translating between languages, there are also tacit layers to the practices that constitute academic reading. Again, while this is not restricted to SfRBs, because all students have to adapt to and develop strategies for academic reading, this was keenly felt by some of the participants:

I didn't have a problem with the reading but with the meaning that I wanted to get from the book that I was reading it was a bit difficult for me because of the English I couldn't understand it. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

4.4 Time

Time is a concern that was prevalent throughout the study. The ways that the participants in each project cohort understood time differed according to age, responsibilities to/for family, and clarity of target career, and time spent displaced. This overarching theme can be characterised in terms of (but not limited to) time to study, flexibility (or not) of time/programs of study/timetabling, time to access support, organisation of time to study, and 'lost' or wasted time.

4.4.1 Time and young SfRBs in school and IECs

For younger students, those who arrive earlier in adolescence are advantaged because they are able to access school earlier and acculturate to the education system of the country of settlement (Due & Riggs, 2009; Nunn et al., 2014; Pugh, Every & Hattam, 2012). Students need as much time as possible in (ideally) an IEC and/or mainstream high school before entering higher education, so as to develop networks, familiarity with educational systems, and proficiency with language and literacies (including numeracies). If students arrive before the age of 14 they can transition from the IEC into Year 10 mainstream schooling, and thus have extended time at school. Those who arrive later in adolescence are disadvantaged as they

have had more interruptions to schooling and must transition to Year 11 from the IEC. This is very difficult because these students are generally not able to choose ATAR subjects that lead directly to university and thus their pathways to higher education are limited to ATAR-alternative entry schemes and programs. Teachers in Curtin University's project suggested that, for many new arrivals, it is better to stay down and repeat a year—even though they are then older in the year group—than push ahead:

The guys that they turn 18 in IEC they're going to go to Year 11 straight, straightaway but it's a bit hard for them if they want to go to university after that. (Curtin University: IEC student)

The Australia-wide⁸ standardised ATAR system is a significant barrier for school participation and learning for students who arrive later in the school system. The ATAR determines a student's options for direct-from-school tertiary entry. Students and teachers perceive it to be inflexible, particularly for students arriving in Australia during their adolescence. Early in Year 10, students must choose the subjects they will study in Years 11 and 12; those who have to do this before they have finished in the IEC and when their English journey is still new may find that they have made decisions that are not commensurate with their future study aspirations. Another layer of challenge lies in the ranking component of the ATAR. In the high school and IEC context, students were aware of their disadvantage and that they were competing with local students for ATAR scores. They felt frustration and stress as a result:

They've been here for 15 years [local students] and I just been here for like 10 months, I'm competing with them. (Curtin University: IEC student)

If students are able to spend more time in school, parents are better able to learn the school and higher education system over time and adapt their expectations of their children's education and future career pathway. As other literature has contended, parental expectations and aspirations can exceed what is possible in the short term, or may not align with a child's aspirations (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; McWilliams & Bonet, 2016; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017):

At the beginning my parents were pressuring, like they wanted me to do pharmacy, I can't do anything else. But when it comes to real life where you tell them what are the requirements and what you need to do they came to understand. (Curtin University: IEC student)

I wanted to do Bachelor in Psychology so my mum told me 'no', like it's not a good way to; they told me to do nursing because you get a job too. (The University of Newcastle: undergraduate student)

Similar to the findings in Ferfolja and Vickers (2010), both students and teachers in the IECs felt that SfRBs need more time than locally born students to complete work and learn new concepts:

⁸ With the exception of Queensland, which will begin using the ATAR system in 2020.

Two years in the IEC is not enough time to get a child or a student who's coming from this background, to a Year 10 or 11 level, which is often where they'll be put. (Curtin University: teacher)

This data is particularly pertinent when the variability of access to IECs is considered; for example, in regional spaces like Newcastle (NSW) there is no IEC; rather, individual schools can apply to the NSW Department of Education for some IEC funding if the number of English as an Additional Language or Dialect students is high enough. This means that not all, if any, SfRBs who are settled in regional spaces like Newcastle will have access to an IEC before transitioning into 'mainstream' schooling, which presents a significant additional layer of regional disadvantage to SfRBs' schooling and future education prospects (Curry, Smedley & Lenette, 2017; Major et al., 2013).

4.4.2 Time: impacts of interrupted schooling

In the study of IEC students carried out by Curtin, students reported periods of time where they did not have access to schooling during the journey to Australia, which for some extended over several years:

I didn't go to school for about two years so I forgot everything. (Curtin University: IEC student)

Similar themes emerged from talking with the adult SfRBs interviewed by the University of Newcastle team:

We have been out for five to six years since high school and everything was gone because we were in a war zone over there in Afghanistan and it is when we came here [the teacher] start from zero and [the knowledge] is coming back and we are getting ready for uni. (The University of Newcastle: TAFE student)

... we are almost graduated from the high school long time ago. Maybe six year, seven years or more ... [and] we were away from reading, writing, this stuff for a long time. You need to refresh. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

Disrupted schooling means missed concepts, in particular in disciplines that are vertical discourses (Bernstein, 1999), such as maths and science. For instance, simple concepts such as addition and subtraction may have been missed, impacting on progression into higher maths concepts. In contrast, some IEC students interviewed in the Curtin University study had experienced continuous schooling but in multiple languages (for example, Syrian, then Turkish, then English), often having to learn the language from scratch to participate in schooling. All of this resulted in some missed concepts, and a need for additional academic development, compared with their Australian peers, and that required students to undertake additional schooling in Australia prior to commencing high school:

I did a preparation course at senior college for six months, which was for the next year to choose what we want to do. And then after that six months I started doing Year 12 after that. Then I did Year 12 twice. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

However, despite these challenges the Curtin study found that aspirations and expectations for higher education were affected by students' pre-arrival experiences. Students in the IECs had aspirations for higher education, primarily in nursing, information technology, engineering and science. They saw higher education as being achievable and relevant to their lives, as well as a way of moving beyond their current circumstances:

I want to make my life better than now. (Curtin University: IEC student)

4.4.3 Adult students: concerns about wasting time

The data collected from the participants in the University of Newcastle study illustrate the complexities for adult students and students with family responsibilities.⁹ Similar to the data collected in the Macquarie University and Curtin University projects, the adult students signalled a high level of aspiration for further study, particularly because of the challenges they had grown up with in Afghanistan with relation to access to further (post-compulsory) study:

I was thirsty to study, especially when I came from Afghanistan, you know, the situation was very difficult. We had one choice, work or study. Study was very difficult because the economic situation was not good and yeah, that was very difficult at that point. Here we have more chance to study and work, even part-time work, part-time study, nights you study. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

And it's one of the very, very high goal of my life to get a university degree, especially when I came from the country that they just, they don't let us to study. It's something that I want to get. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

However, the University of Newcastle participants' relative inexperience with the Australian education system resulted in misunderstandings and mis-expectations about what higher education (enabling education in the first instance) would require of them. Underpinning their desire to access further study was arguably a desire to reclaim some of what they had lost in their journeys to Australia: status, a career trajectory, financial security, and respect from family and peers. This translated into a sense of panic about 'losing' time, with the notion of 'wasting time'—in English classes or from making missteps in their educational decisions—particularly prevalent in the participants' talk:

It's been two years that I'm here in Newcastle or in Australia, and I think I almost wasted it. I don't want to waste anymore so I plan to enrol in the [enabling course] again ... (The University of Newcastle: ex-enabling program student)

I guess we all have that thought at the back of our mind that we need to catch up with our age and the structure that schooling has back home. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

This sense of urgency was broadly counterproductive for the University of Newcastle participants; especially the decisions to depart their English language studies early and move

⁹ We recognise that family responsibilities extend beyond immediate family, and that these responsibilities are not the exclusive domain of adults.

into other programs (the enabling program and other TAFE courses) without using their full allocation of free hours of AMEP. This is particularly clear in the case of two students, Modaser and Ahmad, who decided to study in both the part-time enabling program and a Certificate III in Community Pharmacy at TAFE. Despite being told that this was not a good idea by people in the enabling course and at TAFE, they persisted with both for a semester because they both offered an alternative route into undergraduate studies and, in the case of Community Pharmacy, a possible route into work. Unfortunately, there were two flaws in this plan: first, Modaser did not pass the Certificate III course because he missed a practical assessment and could not complete the unit. Second, there were insufficient enrolments to secure the future of the follow-up Certificate IV course (which was also a pathway to higher education), meaning that Modaser and Ahmad were not able to take this course. This was particularly unfortunate because they both withdrew from the enabling program on the understanding that the Certificate IV course would run, which left them with no clear options for the second semester, as captured in Modaser's interview data:

And, after holidays, we had no choice to do anything because they're not running the Certificate IV and we have to select some other courses like, other subject, different subject ... We did enrol, with the confirmation and still we are waiting for the response, from the teachers. And it's not clear where and when will happen, the course, when will start, the course, it's not clear.

4.4.4 Time: balancing paid work and study

A common theme that emerged from all three projects was that SfRBs were either engaged in, or planned to do, paid work alongside their studies. While many Australian university students combine work, for SfRBs, having a job is essential because it is a source of income that in most cases supports their immediate family:

... yeah, one of the differences between students from refugee backgrounds and normal students, where both students worked, is that for one group, they work to get pocket money. Whereas the other group is still pays for living expenses. So, it's—how do you manage that—yeah, that extra burden, yeah ... (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

For many younger SfRBs, their parents have very limited English language proficiency. The immediate implication of this is that the child (who is now a student) is expected to get a job and support the family, or in some instances become the primary earner. This means that often students tend to have jobs that are almost as demanding as full-time jobs, which in turn impacts on their ability to fully commit to their studies at university:

The rest of my family are back in Kenya and my Dad is saying he's getting old and that I need to step in and help out. (Curtin University: IEC student)

Furthermore, the students in the Macquarie study reported that they were confused by the flexible nature of university timetables and the fact that lectures are mostly also available online. This confusion led to an underestimation of the time needed to complete their studies and maintain their work commitments. Consequently, the academic progress of these

students was seriously affected, which had a significant impact on motivation and overall achievement, as well as diminishing their likelihood of remaining in their studies.

4.5 Settlement and education

For people from refugee backgrounds, settling in a new country is a long process and is associated with a number of demands and issues. The students who participated in the qualitative longitudinal research carried out by the University of Newcastle were all adult recent arrivals in Australia when the project began in mid-2014. For this reason, 'settlement' features as a ubiquitous theme throughout their experiences, with challenges, issues and barriers related to 'settling' in a new country interwoven throughout the data. Similarly, the demands of settlement featured for participants in the Curtin University study in the first two years post-arrival.

Many of the participants had to negotiate layers of systemic and institutional bureaucracies in order simply to have shelter, eat, learn and participate in their new communities. For participants in the University of Newcastle study, these layers include but are not limited to: finding appropriate accommodation; travelling to, from, in and around the city for various commitments; attending appointments related to welfare payments, health, education, work obligations; and applying, enrolling and participating in education. For example, the University of Newcastle participants' early experiences of studying in the AMEP were hindered by persistent phone calls from their settlement caseworkers, organising, rescheduling or reminding the participants about various appointments:

I wasn't able to concentrate because if I would open my books or my lecturers, then I were thinking like, 'Okay need to go attend the Centrelink appointment, I need to apply for this many jobs in two weeks or in a month and I need to support my family, I need to buy this, I need to have a car at least to get where I need to go'. It was, you know then all these issues don't let me to focus. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

Negotiating unfamiliar systems loaded with linguistic and cultural assumptions while managing the personal toll/disruption of forced migration and personal expectations was unsurprisingly challenging and frustrating for these participants. As one University of Newcastle participant said:

I don't want to just stay alive. I want to live. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

The competing settlement-related priorities for the younger participants in the Curtin University study include socialisation, learning English, acculturation and overcoming trauma. These competing priorities made it very difficult to focus entirely on studies. Employment can be a priority, and trauma can impact on learning in the IEC:

When they have experienced trauma, in the first two years not much happens academically because they need to settle down socially first before they can start processing language and learning. (Curtin University: IEC principal)

4.5.1 Family responsibilities and settlement

Family responsibilities feature strongly throughout the University of Newcastle data from adult SFRBs, as well as from younger students in the Curtin University study. These responsibilities are often tied to cultural expectations, for example the obligation to send money to family remaining in their home countries, and to care for children without using formal child care, thereby reducing available study time. Financial responsibilities to family increased pressure on participants to find employment. Other pressures included negotiating the systems required to facilitate the migration of their family to Australia.

Other responsibilities to family are associated with language brokerage. For example, in the University of Newcastle study, Nilofer, a young woman living with her mother, father and younger siblings, is the oldest child in the family. Because of her abilities comprehending and using English across a range of domains, she is called upon to be available to negotiate medical appointments, lease agreements and a variety of other language-heavy interactions and situations. Nilofer described the pressure she experienced as:

Like, everyone is depending on me. Like, I have to manage the electricity bills, the others ... like if we have to find a home, like renting a house, so I have to go. I have to do all the paperworks. I have to search ... I have to search a suitable like everyone prefer. Everything is dependent on me. Yeah, so sometimes it's a big responsibility. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

All of the adult participants in the University of Newcastle study spoke about their responsibilities for driving their family members to various appointments related to health and settlement as no other family members had a driver's licence (however, as time moved along, John's wife gained her licence and so this responsibility for him lessened). Further, when family members were ill or hospitalised, which was the case for both John and Nilofer, further caring and household responsibilities fell upon them.

Each University of Newcastle study participant recalled how their increased responsibilities to their families impacted on their ability to find time to study as well as their ability to attend classes during unexpected periods when family members experienced hospitalisation or severe health problems. Not only that, John expressed difficulty finding suitable quiet space in his home to study (as he has a small child), preferring to use the University library; however, his absence from the family home and from spending time with his wife and child caused friction within the household, therefore preventing him from using those spaces as often as he would have liked. The cumulative effect of the weight of responsibility to family and resulting lack of time caused stress, anxiety, pressure and—for Nilofer and Andy (a single male), depression—for many participants.

4.6 Navigating educational systems and partial information gaps

As part of their initial settlement in a country like Australia, people from refugee backgrounds are obligated to navigate a number of complex government, institutional and organisational systems and bureaucracies as they negotiate their ongoing settlement. Often the information provided by these systems is siloed, even though the decisions made with respect to one system may impact and intersect with decisions made in another. The data collected by the

University of Newcastle team suggest that the lack of formalised connections between government and institutional systems such as settlement service providers and educational institutions increases the likelihood of students making ill-informed decisions regarding their educational trajectories and exacerbates the gaps in reliable information available to SFRBs to inform these decisions. Similarly, the Curtin University data revealed that new young refugees are not necessarily directed by settlement services to appropriate IECs, but to schools closest to the students' homes, despite not being academically suitable. These information gaps are not solely located with SFRBs; in the University of Newcastle study, several misunderstandings and misinformation given by TAFE, university and settlement personnel about the various pathways available into tertiary study were observed, suggesting that these gaps pre-existed the arrival of the participant cohort. As the University of Newcastle participant Yusuf lamented, 'It's always been confusing, since we arrived'. For Modaser, these confusions contributed to his decision to leave his enabling program studies:

Doing the extension math, again I was made mistake because some of teachers told me, you know, that I can, once I choose the extension math, and a couple of weeks I can withdraw. I can step down to intermediate or, you know, one step down. But it was too late. (The University of Newcastle: ex-enabling program student)

For students wanting to move straight into higher education upon arrival in Australia, the Curtin University study found there were a myriad of decisions to make regarding university, enabling courses and final destination courses. Many students received conflicting or misinformation about course entry requirements:

There are some things that they don't tell you until you screw it up. For example I change my course from UWA [The University of Western Australia] to Murdoch and I didn't know for example that I can transfer my grades from UWA to Murdoch so I don't have to choose the human biology units. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

In addition, many were unable to attend orientation week events due to competing settlement priorities, which meant they were not aware of support services, how the online learning management system worked and the location of classrooms and eating venues:

I was thinking to have a gap year to work and save some money but then I changed my mind in a couple of days and enrolled in all my units and I didn't even come to the orientation week. Then I started and it was such a shock. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

Some of the Curtin University study participants reported that the volume and nature of information available about educational possibilities, and the freedom of choice, were overwhelming. They struggled with the change from a collectivist society to an individualistic society and felt the need for clear guidance from someone in authority, similar to the role played by fathers and teachers in their home country:

In Iran they were forcing you to study, study, study and get a good mark. But here is more they give you more freedom but at the end it's your own responsibility to study. You can get zero. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

4.7 Taking on the imperative to ‘work hard to succeed’

The data across the three arms of the project showed that, on many occasions, participants tended to place the onus on themselves for ‘achievement’, ‘success’ and ‘progression’. Critiques of Western higher education’s marketisation and adoption of neoliberal logics since the 1990s have highlighted students’ internalisation of discourses of meritocracy and choice (for example, Archer, 2007; Burke, 2013) where the burden falls on individuals to achieve and to choose their own trajectory despite multiple and unrecognised disadvantages. What could be described as individual ‘resourcefulness’ could also be characterised as an undue burden on individuals to ‘fit in’ with a system that does not acknowledge or cater for the particular experiences or subjectivities that SFRBs bring with them. In the University of Newcastle study, John compares his persistence in study to the experiences of his fellow group of Afghani men who undertook the TAFE transition course. He concludes that his persistence—amidst compounding disruption and disadvantage—is largely due to his motivation to achieve his clear end-goal.

Participants from IECs in the Curtin study valued highly the attributes of self-determination and hard work and believed these would carry them through transition periods and into higher education. They were extremely motivated to do well:

If someone else can do it, I can do it. (Curtin University: IEC student)

The students in the Macquarie University study expressed similar themes:

As long as you’re willing to work hard, I think you can improve yourself. At the end of the day you’ll end up doing whatever you want to do, but it’s because you’re working hard. (Macquarie University: high school student)

I need to do more work. I need to do—I have to work—I should do work hard, day and night. (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

So if you want something, you’re going to work hard to get it ... But you need to try to find—to know where to go to get the help. (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

These students believed their future was in their own hands—a value possibly taught to them by their parents. Students drew strength from previous challenges. They believed school in their home country had been more difficult and described high school in Australia as ‘heaven’ metaphorically as they felt it was a safe and supportive environment with resources:

Compared to my country, there are just a few subjects here, like five or six subjects in Year 11 and 12. Back in my country there is like 15 or 14 subjects. (Curtin University: IEC student)

Expectations of family and friends also created conflict. For many there were contradictory expectations from friends (‘make money’), family (‘make money and be a doctor’), themselves (‘follow your heart’), and memories of previous experiences (when they had no money) about what their future life course should be.

4.8 Support, ‘trusted people’ and building a sense of belonging

The availability, accessibility and use of face-to-face support was reported by many participants across the three sites of study as significant in the development of not only academic and language practices, but also social and cultural networks. However, while participants in IECs, high schools and enabling programs commented on the benefits of the trusting relationships they developed with institutional support people, there was either an evident mismatch with the type and quantity of support available post-transition to undergraduate studies (in the University of Newcastle longitudinal study) or a fear of such a mismatch (in the Curtin University and Macquarie University studies).

For example, Nilofer (University of Newcastle participant) was able to access a variety of supports in her enabling program. Using her ‘warm’ connection (Baker et al., 2018a, 2018b) with Sally (teacher and researcher) through the University of Newcastle-designed/TAFE transition course (see Section 3.2.1), Nilofer connected with other supports (largely English language support) when she began her enabling program. This connection facilitated further connections with other forms of support including administrative and academic (her lecturers). However, this support was not as readily available to Nilofer through her faculty when she began her undergraduate degree. This contributed to her sense of loneliness and her ability to navigate unfamiliar learning and assessment activities such as role-plays.

Other University of Newcastle participants did not experience similar connections (particularly the students who had not taken the University of Newcastle-designed/TAFE transition program). For example, Ahmad (University of Newcastle participant) made the following comment just before he dropped out of the enabling program: ‘That was a big wishes for me to find that someone to at least sit me and tell me how should I do assessments’.

The trusting relationships with institutional support givers developed in pre-undergraduate programs served as a link or bridge to university studies (see Baker et al., 2018a; Ramsay et al., 2016). Instead of seeking new relationships in their new contexts, which may or may not have been readily available, participants tended to revisit their former teachers and supporters for help:

... If I did [need] support I would [be] coming back to the school because they can support me ... They’re so helpful ... No, I prefer to come here and get support from here ... (Macquarie University: high school student)

They said if you ever need any help you can come to them after school and they talk about it. (Curtin University: IEC student)

University student participants in the Macquarie University study highlighted the need for ongoing writing support beyond existing orientation activities. Students discussed how having someone to provide ongoing feedback while they develop their written assignments would help to boost their confidence in writing and provide them with an opportunity to learn and develop their writing skills over time. More generally, ongoing support would reassure students of their abilities and efforts in their ongoing studies:

Having someone that you can go to whenever you have difficulties ... Or maybe something that you have to think about it to cover in this month maybe students will face afterwards, but they will always have that someone to come back to and ask. For me, so many times I felt lost and I didn't know who to go to ask, to seek help.
(Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

Support for students takes many forms in the data across the three sites of the project, with formalised institutional support in academic practices, English language and counselling forming just one aspect. Students also reported seeking informal academic support through friends when institutional support mechanisms did not offer the accessibility, flexibility or specific content required:

No one will help you because tutors they so busy and so many student always like just ask her by email, I can't meet her face to face. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

While English language and other forms of support such as counselling was available to all participants studying enabling programs at the University of Newcastle, Macquarie University and Curtin University, most adult participants, for a variety of compounding reasons, found it difficult or unappealing to access it. Many participants chose to study their program in the evenings so that they could work or leave time for other VET certificate courses in the daytime. This carried with it two impediments for accessing support: (1) much of the face-to-face support offered is only available during business hours (online forms of support are available after hours, but these were largely not used by participants); (2) participants were short of time and tended only to attend activities related to their core, assessable studies, leaving language support and associated academic brokerage on the periphery despite 'warm' connections (Baker et al., 2018a) with support staff.

Participants in the Curtin University and Macquarie University studies also expressed the desire for institutional support to include proofreading:

I'm looking for someone who can read through to me my assignment. I finished everything but I don't want to submit it and losing mark for my English. Sometimes I find some people I really like, second year or third year student. Sometimes they help me and be happy to help me but sometimes they say we are busy, we can't help you.
(Curtin University: undergraduate student)

However, without specific attention to expert English language teaching practices and knowledges, we consider this to be complex territory in which student authorship may be contestable.

Participants in the Curtin University and University of Newcastle studies also cited family and friends as providing specific social and cultural support for their education. For example, Nilofer (The University of Newcastle study) credits her father as an important support and motivator in her continued efforts to study. The importance of familial support and involvement was recognised in the case of IECs, with teachers and principals working with families of students to help transitions into higher and further education:

You have to speak to their parents about it and also one of our jobs is to try and give them an understanding of the school system and how best that their child fits into it all, and often educate them about the differences between TAFE and university and apprenticeships and the different pathways that they can choose. (Curtin University: IEC principal)

Younger participants in all three projects expressed a variety of concerns related to their social connections and feelings of belonging in university contexts. Many of these concerns were tied to their under-confidence in their spoken language abilities, including pronunciation and accent and how this marked them as 'different'. In addition, the Curtin University study found stigma attached to refugee status, resulting in significant social as well as teaching and learning challenges:

The college student I say hello to them, I try to talk to them. Because my English is not good they don't like to talk to me. (Curtin University: undergraduate student)

There's a stigma about being a refugee, so the students will deny being a refugee. (Curtin University: English as an Additional Language or Dialect teacher)

In the Macquarie University data there were other examples of students who discovered the opportunity and ability to seek assignment deadline extensions via their friends. In these circumstances, the students could have struggled and possibly would not have been able to submit their assignment if they had not been made aware of the possibility of an extension in their specific circumstances.

For some of the participants, not having the knowledge was the first barrier and then they must deal with the feeling that by seeking an extension they are not working hard enough. For instance, a student from the University of Newcastle project described her dismay at failing her Maths module because:

Student: *I actually didn't get any help for my whole studies; I only studied by myself*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Student: *Maybe because I believe that I want to get the mark I really deserve. Maybe I think that I get help this is not my actual mark. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)*

The data also suggest that some students deliberately tried to hide their status as having a refugee background, and so did not seek support or exemptions. This is further complicated by institutional policies around seeking extensions for assignments; in one of the project institutions, non-English speaking background students need to register as 'having a disability' in order to be granted extended time for examinations. Macquarie University and Curtin University data suggest that many of their participants did not want to use their refugee background status as an excuse to be treated differently from other students in their class, which connects to the example of the University of Newcastle student above. This is reflected in the following comment:

If you're already not feeling well, you're sick and then—and then sometimes mentally, it's not physically, you are unwell ... I used to think that mentally if I'm down, that I am—that there is no such thing as an illness like that... There's no such excuse, yeah ... It is within your right. (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

4.9 Misrecognitions and assumptions

Misrecognitions happen when particular norms and their associated attributes are privileged and where there is 'pervasive devaluation and disparagement' associated with things coded as other to those norms (Fraser, 1998: 102). The most obvious case of misrecognition in this project comes from the lack of recognition of prior experience/qualifications reported by adult participants in the University of Newcastle study. Having held high status among Australian and US forces in Afghanistan as cultural and linguistic advisors, the participants were initially upset by the expectations from job network providers to apply and train for low-status occupations.

Further, within the Australian education system, misrecognitions involving dominant, Western/Global North assumptions regarding legitimate knowledges/epistemologies is evident. Participants described instances where specific cultural knowledge was taken for granted within curricula and where language and methods of doing (in mathematics and physics courses) known to some participants were not recognised within the curricula of their courses as legitimate ways of doing (see Harris, Marlowe & Nyuon, 2015; Rowntree, Zufferey & King, 2015). This was expressed by one IEC student who was challenged by the teaching of evolution in science, rather than creation.

Furthermore, students reported that, among university teaching staff, there remain misunderstandings and misrecognitions with respect to equity and equality. Participants in the Macquarie University study expressed how they often found responses from university staff reflected an understanding of fairness as treating everyone equally. So, when they sought additional support or asked for special consideration because of the challenges that they face, they were often met with the implication that special consideration was an undue advantage over their peers. Such a response was also reflected in situations where students contacted course convenors and/or tutors in person or via email. They often received limited or no response:

... But she mentioned that, if I give you extension, that's not fair ... That's unfair to other students ... (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

Participants were also concerned that their refugee status and/or linguistic background attracted assumptions about their abilities in discipline-based university courses, compounded by linguistic errors in early assignments:

Yeah, this is the meaning of trust. Also, I think once they've got a view, they're not going to change their view. This is really bad. While you have got a view from a person, you shouldn't have a view. (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

Similarly, some students had had the experience of inconsistency in their grades between exams and assessments, and this had been interpreted as them having cheated in the take-

home assignment. In one instance, the student concerned had a history of exam stress, which had previously made her eligible for special consideration in high school:

But then because I didn't do well in my final, and so she's like maybe she's been cheating in her exams. Because there were two assignments; I got 10 out of 10 for both. Then there was one that I think out of eight I got 6.5 or something. That was a class one. Then the two tests I did, I got them ... I did them wrong. So, I'm like okay. (Macquarie University: undergraduate student)

These assumptions were particularly prevalent with regard to students' reading and writing. As argued in Section 4.3.1, some of the participants struggled with the reading requirements on multiple levels. This was also true—and perhaps felt more keenly—when it came to writing for assessment. One University of Newcastle study participant clearly articulated what he felt were problematic assumptions on the part of his enabling program lecturers and tutors:

They expect all of you know how to do it. They're not teaching you how to write a report; they just give you. (The University of Newcastle: enabling program student)

These assumptions clearly informed, and were informed by, the misrecognitions that the participants experienced in all of their education, but particularly so in the high-stakes, mysterious environs, practices, processes and feeling-rules of the academy.

5 Recommendations for knowledge translation

Recommendations have been categorised to facilitate interpretation and knowledge translation for a cross-section of stakeholders. Recommendations are drawn from the analysis and have been proposed by participants. Many of the recommendations are transferable to other equity student groups and international students with lower English levels.

5.1 Programs and interventions (for schools, TAFEs and universities)

5.1.1 Preparation and orientation programs

- Adaptation and tailoring of existing transition preparation courses between schools/IECs/TAFE and higher education institutions. An example of this is the university preparation course modified from the Edith Cowan University enabling program and delivered at Balga Senior High School, and the University of Newcastle transition curricula and resources.
- Continuation and expansion of the Macquarie University successful university student mentoring of high school student programs to enhance student transition into higher education.
- Preparation courses should include academic, personal and interpersonal practices and expectations, to facilitate students' transitions into higher education.
- Orientation and transition activities for SfrBs should include explicit information relating to university policies such as adverse circumstance procedures and emphasise that this is a right, not a privilege.
- Institutions should provide special orientation activities for SfrBs, and possibly a 'rolling orientation' to cater for students who may have family commitments that impinge on their ability to attend a stand-alone orientation activity. This could provide one response to the fragmentation of information provided to SFRBs.

5.1.2 Teaching

- Improve institutional support for SfrBs by providing face-to-face, professional, personable, constant, support informed by sound equity principles.
- Suitably qualified and trained English language specialists should provide assistance with language development.
- Develop, in the university context, scaffolded, iterative and formative assessment practices that provide timely and informative feedback that can enhance the learning experiences of SfrBs.
- Create course glossaries (including key terms, words, definitions and example sentences), which can be translated into other languages to support students with the additional study load of translating content language.
- Enact targeted professional development for teaching staff to expose the implicit assumptions and misrecognitions of the stereotyping of SfrBs and to illuminate the strengths, experiences and challenges SfrBs bring with them to their higher education experience.
- Professional development activities for teaching staff should identify SfrBs as a discrete group.
- Have further professional development for higher education teaching staff around the

equity and pedagogic implications involved in teaching SfRBs, particularly with regard to unpacking assumptions about language, literacies and cultural aspects of teaching and learning in the disciplines.

5.1.3 Support provision

- Employ people-rich approaches to identify students who are struggling to ensure timely referral to appropriate support staff/services, and train support staff to recognise SfRBs as a discrete group requiring different support to the general Language Background other Than English cohort.
- Explicit course overviews/online resources should be linked to course outlines that unpack/unmask institutional language and subject specific metalanguage. This requires collaboration with language and literacy specialists.
- Familiarisation trips of high school and TAFE SfRBs to higher education institutes should be supported by all high schools and TAFEs that have cohorts of SfRBs so that the students can feel that ‘university is for them’.
- Offer mentoring programs within universities to address the struggle SfRBs face in accessing opportunities to connect meaningfully with the wider university community while providing a valuable and critical experience for domestic students.

5.2 Policy (senior leaders, government and policy officers)

- Support national funding initiatives to assist young refugees’ transition into mainstream high school and higher education.
- Promotion of IECs and centres that offer English language initiatives to newly arrived refugee families needs to be a priority for Department of Social Services staff working in the Humanitarian Settlement Program to ensure SfRBs are aware of their benefits. This will lead to a more advantageous school choice for SfRB students.
- Universities should prioritise SfRBs when offering students employment, given SfRBs challenges with being able to devote time to their studies because of family commitments and obligations to find employment to support themselves and their families.
- Initiate internship programs for SfRBs by government, local business and community organisations to assist with employment pathways.
- Consider the impact of the policy of standardised testing on the progression of SfRBs through the secondary school sector, and subsequently their transition to higher education.
- Adequately fund IECs to offer specialist classes for SfRBs with limited/disrupted schooling with suitably qualified teachers.

5.3 Future research

- There is a need for future research into attrition and retention of SfRBs and employment pathways of those completing higher education.
- Evaluation is required of the effectiveness of mentoring programs for SfRBs in higher education on students’ sense of belonging and perceptions of support.
- Further exploration is warranted of the implicit assumptions by policymakers that serve to mask the non-normative experiences of SfRBs and lead to misrecognitions of SfRBs’ prior experiences and strengths.

6 Project outputs

- A national series of seven workshops were held across November and December 2017 for practitioners and researchers working with SfRBs across VET, school, community and higher education sectors.
- Project website
- National Audit of Pathways to Higher Education, hosted by the Refugee Council of Australia
- The University of Newcastle transition intervention:
 - Development of assessment tasks with a further education focus, mapped to the Certificate III in Spoken and Written English (or equivalent) for AMEP and SEE teachers to use. The University of Newcastle team are in talks with Linda Wyse Associates (current managers of the Assessment Task Bank) regarding national distribution via the Assessment Task Bank
 - Curricula for each of the three iterations are available on request.
- Refugee Education SIG—a national network of colleagues (students and educators, advocates, policy makers, supportive people) from the community, school, VET and university sectors. Team member Sally Baker (ex-University of Newcastle) is a co-chair of this network.
- Team members Sally Baker and Seamus Fagan (The University of Newcastle), and ex-team member Ruth Tregale (Macquarie University), contributed to a framework on the role of higher education institutions in supporting SfRBs. This framework, *The Role of Further Education Institutions in Refugee Resettlement in NSW*, September 2016, informed the NSW Government Premier and Cabinet Higher Education Round Table discussions. Sally, Seamus and Ruth participated in these Higher Education Round Table discussions as representatives of their respective universities. The purpose was to collaborate and discuss:
 - Support services that are currently in place and how well these are working;
 - The support refugee students need, and how well these match current services;
 - Opportunities to improve, expand or leverage current support; and
 - Opportunities to collaborate on this work.

These discussions have culminated in initiatives covering employment, education, health, youth and family support, with \$106,000,000 allocated in the most recent NSW State budget for projects being rolled out over four years.

- Jaya Dantas and Sally Baker continue their advocacy work with Academics for Refugees in their respective institutions, which strongly advocates for refugee well-being, particularly refugee education.
- Jaya Dantas continues to advocate for a more humane approach to the treatment of asylum seekers with the Public Health Association of Australia. In recent months, Jaya has contributed to national submissions and policy reviews, in her role within the association, on (1) The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Australia including those

in detention, (2) status of the human right to freedom of religion or belief and (3) strengthening multiculturalism in Australia.

- Multiple presentations at academic and practitioner events have been held during the project, including being selected as a featured symposium for the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference in Melbourne in 2016, and being chosen to represent the AARE at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference in Brighton (UK) in 2017. A panel has been accepted at the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration conference to be held in July 2018 in Thessaloniki, Greece.

6.1 Analysis of factors critical to success and those that impeded the project

Factors critical to the success of the project included sound and positive relationships with partners such as IEC principals and TAFE service providers, the willingness of SfRBs to share experiences and regular communication via phone and email between partner sites. Impediments to the project took the form of delays in ethics approvals, and participant attrition. Ethical approval obtained from the Western Australian Department of Education by Curtin University to access staff and students at Education Department sites on which the IECs are located (reference number D16/0391626) was a lengthy application process. The delay encountered in obtaining final approval hampered the implementation of research, with an enforced postponement of six months. Attrition of participants over the project was largely due to changing contact details, movements between states, and other priorities for students.

6.2 Linkages within and across disciplines

Strong connections have been forged between sectors and institutions in each of the project partner's institutions. At the University of Newcastle, we have established a firm link between the local TAFE and the university, and between the enabling program and colleagues in the Schools of Education and Social Work. The University of Newcastle team members Sally Baker and Evonne Irwin have also been at the forefront of developing national and international connections with colleagues in other institutions via the Refugee Education SIG. Further, stronger links between administrative, teaching/support and academic staff across a broad range of disciplines within the University of Newcastle's enabling programs have been facilitated in order to bring about better experiences and outcomes for all SfRBs in the programs.

Stronger relationships have been forged between Curtin University and the IECs involved in this project. A greater awareness now exists of the challenges facing IECs in providing education to this cohort, and the expectations of universities, as well as opportunities offered by universities in English support. The launch of the project findings at Curtin University and at Flinders University were attended by a combined number of nearly 100 people from community organisations providing refugee settlement services, representatives from various faculties across a number of universities, and other educational institutions such as TAFE and community education providers.

Macquarie University was able to expand on its existing relationships with the high schools in Greater Western Sydney, which led to the development of new projects such as the LEAP-UP

(University Preparedness) program for Year 12 students to assist them in their transition to university. In 2016, MYAN Australia, RCOA, The University of Newcastle, RMIT University, Macquarie University, Swinburne University and Griffith University launched the Refugee Education SIG. This group is a national community of practice comprising researchers, equity practitioners and partner organisations, active in supporting SFRBs. Secretariat support for the SIG has been provided by Macquarie University since 2016.

6.3 Other linkages

This project built on the ALTC-funded LiFE program, developed by Murdoch and Curtin universities (Silburn et al., 2010) for first-year SFRBs. We have developed upon this by firstly explicitly including language and locating this program outside of university. Moreover, we acknowledge that the Office for Learning and Teaching has funded two other projects looking into SFRB-related issues from the institutional perspective: Vickers & Zammit (2015) are looking at developing support structures for SFRBs in universities while Naidoo et al. (2015) developed a toolkit for university practitioners. However, there is little engagement with SFRBs' practices and perspectives and less still that addresses the various pathways into university. It is in this niche that this project was located.

7 Impact and dissemination

The project has already had a significant impact on education practitioners, academics and the wider refugee support community. It has attracted wide interest through workshops and conference symposiums/presentations, team member development and participation in a refugee education SIG within RCOA and MYAN, and through the development of the interrelated professional relationship of education bodies, bureaucracies and organisations working to benefit refugee wellbeing.

Through the creation of the national audit of pathways, the project has provided SfRBs and people working alongside them with an easy-to-use, holistic overview of the various pathways available in their local area. Through partnership with RCOA, this resource is now available to an international audience.

Adult education providers—specifically but not restricted to AMEP and SEE teachers—can now access curricula and teaching/assessment materials that have been designed specifically for SfRBs preparing to transition to further education. These resources are available via the project website and will also be added to the national Assessment Task Band for AMEP and SEE, which is now managed by Linda Wyse & Associates.

Project findings have been presented nationally and internationally through academic presentations and practitioner workshops, which have been enthusiastically received and further disseminated. The resulting discussions indicated strong interest in the subject, which augurs well for the continuation of improvements to higher education. This will not only further facilitate access, participation and success for SfRBs; it could also lead to broader impacts for other culturally and linguistically diverse students, as well as ‘mainstream’ students, many of whom also struggle with the language and cultural expectations of university study.

Table 7.1: (Re)claiming social capital project impact mapped to the Impact Management Planning and Evaluation Ladder model

1.	Team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent collaboration between team members during the course of the research project, culminating in the dissemination of findings and resources through national and international presentations/symposium and a national practitioner workshop series.
2.	Immediate students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and adoption of transition preparation courses between schools/VET and universities. • Teachers have been utilising the developed curricula and teaching resources and, through iterative reflective practice, improving iterations of preparation courses, with significant improvements in retention and academic grades.

3.	Spreading the word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving pathways for students from refugee backgrounds SIG was convened at the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia conference, Geelong, 9–12 November 2015 (Sally Baker, Ruth Tregale and Sonal Singh). • Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia (HERDSA) conference, Fremantle, 4–7 July 2016, (project team). • AARE conference, Melbourne, 27 November – 1 December 2016. Competitively selected featured symposium: Researching Pathways into Higher Education with Students from Refugee Backgrounds: Exploring the Conceptual, Methodological and Ethical Challenges (project team). • Refuge Alternatives conference, University of New South Wales, 22–23 February 2017. Invited panelist: Sally Baker. • World Congress on Public Health 2017 conference, Melbourne, 3–7 April 2017. Digital poster – Students from Refugee Backgrounds: Transitioning from Intensive English Centres to Higher Education in Western Australia (Jaya Dantas and Shelley Gower). • British Education Research Association conference, University of Sussex, 5–7 September 2017. Selected symposium to represent AARE (\$5000 funding received). Researching Pathways into Higher Education with Students from Refugee Backgrounds: Exploring the Conceptual, Methodological and Ethical Challenges (Sally Baker, Mary Taiwo and Jaya Dantas). • Association for Academic Language and Learning conference, Geelong, 1–3 November 2017, (Sally Baker, Evonne Irwin and Simone Nance). • National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia Conference, Gold Coast, 29 November – 1 December 2017 (Evonne Irwin and Seamus Fagan). • Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia conference, Brisbane, 20–23 November 2017 (Mary Taiwo). • Australian Association for Research in Education conference, Canberra, 26–30 November 2017 (Mary Taiwo).
4.	Narrow opportunistic adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner universities have utilised internal staff professional development days to present and disseminate project findings and resources. This has raised the profile of the issues explored and impacted on university staff’s understandings of SfRBs’ transitions into higher education.
5.	Narrow systemic adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and adoption of transition preparation courses between schools/VET and universities. • ‘Refugee like’ criteria added to the University of Newcastle enrolment form: the problem of identifying SfRBs within the university system was highlighted initially by the project reference group and initiated by Sally Baker, ex-University of Newcastle team member, and Evonne Irwin as part of a specific working party.
6.	Broad opportunistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with practitioner workshop participants indicates that workshop attendees are disseminating project resources and

	adoption	<p>findings among colleagues, thus impacting teaching professional development and teaching practice on a national scale. This bodes well for successful adoption of project recommendations and resources into the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued participation by team members within refugee education advocacy groups continues to benefit the relationships between groups/organisations working to benefit refugee transition into and through higher education. • Sally Baker and Jaya Dantas are building international academic contacts with colleagues in the UK, US and Canada that have the potential for future grant and publication opportunities.
7.	Broad systemic adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>Refugee Education SIG group</u> has developed into an active, effective, national special interest group. • The NSW Government Premier and Cabinet Higher Education Round Table discussions may influence policy relating to refugee transition into higher education, with multiple layers of connectivity and the potential to influence the national agenda.

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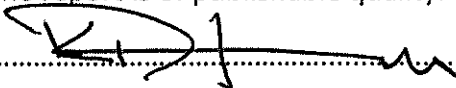
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Appendix A

Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent)

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant/fellowship (remove as appropriate) provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name:  Date: 27/2/18

Professor Kevin Hall
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)
The University of Newcastle

Appendix B

Reference Group members and their affiliations

Carmel Jennings	Centacare Employment & Training, WA
Ann Hayter	STARTTS (Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors)
Dr Andrew Joyce	Research Fellow, CSI Faculty of Business and Enterprise Swinburne Business School Centre for Social Impact Swinburne
Paul Robertson	Head of Languages, AMEP Educator, Hunter TAFE
Lucy Morgan	Information and Policy Coordinator, Refugee Council of Australia
Asher Hirsch	Policy Officer, Refugee Council of Australia
Matthew Lumb	Equity and Diversity, The University of Newcastle
Jane Wallace	Department of Education and Communities
Margaret Piper	Multicultural NSW
Dorothy Hoddinott	Holroyd High School
Nadine Liddy	Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
Eric Brace	The Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation
Professor Sandy Gifford	Swinburne Institute for Social Research Swinburne University

Appendix C

External Evaluation

External Evaluators Report for project: (Re)Claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for Students from Refugee Backgrounds into Australian higher education, funded by Office of Learning and Teaching.

[project reference: ID15-4758]

Project external evaluator: Alan Beckley, Western Sydney University¹⁰

1. Summary

The (Re)Claiming social capital project has met its contractual objectives and extended beyond them in several areas, thereby achieving significant benefits for students from refugee backgrounds (SfRBs). The project has been highly productive and was delivered by a dedicated and well-qualified team of researchers from three different universities working in collaboration with partner organisations. The approach and methodology of the project has proved a highly-effective strategy to obtain optimum answers to important questions in this context. The nationwide audit of pathways for SfRBs is a valuable resource for practitioners working in this area which can be developed further in the education sector when more comprehensive holistic provision is forthcoming nationally. The qualitative data obtained directly from the target audience across the wide-ranging sectors covered by the project is an invaluable source to plot the barriers for SfRBs to make effective progress and transition to higher education study. Findings from the qualitative data, which have been processed into recommendations, are vitally important information for all universities in Australia, and indeed world-wide, because the number of refugees is regrettably increasing globally. This reveals one of the major strengths of this project: the communications strategy and dissemination plan have delivered far more than the planned objectives envisaged. Therefore, the true value of the project is in its legacy and the sustainability of its findings which have been transmitted to a wide audience.

2. Background: Project objectives and the evaluation plan

The project: *(Re) Claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for Students from Refugee Backgrounds into Australian higher education*, was funded by Office of Learning and Teaching and commenced in August 2015 with a completion date of 30 April 2018. It was a collaborative project between three universities linking with the appropriate partners in the education sector and refugee organisations: The University of Newcastle (The University of Newcastle); Curtin University (Curtin University), and; Macquarie University (Macquarie University). The overarching aims of this project were to:

¹⁰ Alan Beckley was formerly acting Director, Widening Participation at Western Sydney University.

- (1) Conduct a nationwide audit of what pathways students from refugee backgrounds (SfRBs) take to enter higher education and consult with relevant stakeholders to identify key issues;
- (2) Examine in-depth three educational pathway programs that open access to higher education for SfRBs and review their efficacy through qualitative analysis of student feedback;
- (3) Develop a set of best practice recommendations for pathway providers who engage with SfRBs;
- (4) Strengthen the sense of community among Australian higher education institutions with regards to supporting SfRB transitions;
- (5) Contribute towards and facilitate SfRBs' positive engagement with university study so as to identify issues that could improve levels of retention by seeking to better understand their transitions, and;
- (6) Enhance educational opportunities by developing resources that improve SfRBs' understandings of the academic language and culture that shapes Australian higher education.

The participating universities were to examine, through separate research projects, three different 'departure points' that SfRBs (or Humanitarian Entrant Background (HEB)) students might start from on higher education journeys and the factors relating to barriers to achievement and support that might be required. The departure points were TAFE, enabling education, high school and Intensive English Centres (IEC). The University of Newcastle examined the departure point of TAFE AMEP Tertiary Preparation Certificate and the Open Foundation enabling program, with a view to enabling students to achieve undergraduate status. Macquarie University examined the departure point of students at High Schools who attended their LEAP (Learning, Education, Aspiration and Participation) Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) Program with a view to enabling students to progress to undergraduate study. Curtin University examined the departure point of IECs to enable SfRBs to gain English speaking and comprehension skills to enable them to attend undergraduate study.

Prior to the project, factors and problems affecting SfRBs' transition to university study were believed to be: language, time management, teaching and learning, socialisation, mix of formal and informal support mechanisms, navigating the system, guidance. Transition for these students was understood as messy, fluid and non-linear; therefore the methodology and research was chosen and designed to accommodate this situation. The three research projects were described in simple terms (further details in main report) as: The University of Newcastle an ethnographic, longitudinal project with multiple interactions with participants over three years; Curtin, two cohorts of students interviewed, cohort 1 at IECs and cohort 2 undergraduate students, with IEC teachers and principals also interviewed; Macquarie University an examination of SfRBs experiences with LEAP high school students, LEAP and non-LEAP current university students. There would be multiple forms of data collected (interviews, focus group discussions, curriculum documents) which each university would undertake to be responsible for checking and validating. The whole project was overseen by a Reference Group of national experts made up of local and national colleagues working in refugee organisations, school, TAFE and higher education and the community.

3. Terms of reference for external evaluator

Contained within the Evaluation Terms of Reference in the Office for Learning and Teaching contract conditions of grant was the requirement to appoint an external evaluator. The terms of reference for the external evaluator were agreed at an early stage in the project to include:

- **Collaborative arrangements**, management of program, delivery of program.
- **Program evaluation ethos and principles**, program logic, aims, objectives, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes
 - Proposed dissemination plans for evaluation data, publications etc. Lines of authority for publications;
 - Human Research Ethics approval(s) required; confidentiality, security of data arrangements;
 - Additional data protection, security issues, permissions required, if any; and
 - Child Access issues.
- **Evaluation Framework** and reporting requirements.
- **Project plans**, collaborative format, reporting and responsibility arrangements, related risk management arrangements, quality plans.

Subsequently, the external evaluator undertook an audit of evaluation processes in each of the participating universities (Annex 1), compiled the project logic (Annex 2) and assessed the universities' collaborative arrangements (Annex 3). In terms of the evaluation processes, these were assessed and found to be satisfactory (Australasian Evaluation Society, 2013) along with the methodological approaches (see below). The project logic was devised by the external evaluator and circulated to the Chief Investigators in each participating university; following discussion, the project logic was endorsed by all universities. There was also a joint communications strategy and dissemination plan agreed by all parties.

Partnership surveys (*Cross-institutional collaborative relationships*)

The partnership surveys carried out by the external evaluator confirmed the governance of the project between the three universities. That is, this was a collaborative project between three universities but the management and leadership of each project was essentially focused within individual universities. Thus, each project, although delivered concurrently, was managed individually through the separate universities. It was not a truly collaborative program where university staff worked with each other in co-located workplaces or working groups. Indeed, the objectives of the project did not seek a collaboration between the participating universities, merely a strengthening of the sense of community. However, what was clear was that the three universities worked cooperatively in identifying and sharing issues and solutions that were common findings relating to barriers for SfrB students. Collaboration between the universities was effective in the dissemination of outputs, outcomes and findings (see below). The partnership surveys were completed at a project level and a university level, resulting in four separate surveys that were administered confidentially by the external evaluator. The survey instruments were individually tailored to the needs of the survey audience and were based on the *partnerships analysis tool* devised by Victoria Health (VicHealth, 2011). This instrument had been successfully used in analysing collaborative / partnership arrangements between universities in a larger higher education

program (Beckley, Netherton, and Singh, 2015). The number of participants in the survey is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Total number of participants in the partnerships analysis.

Survey Title	No of Questions	No of Responses
(Re) claiming social capital Partnership survey	23	10
The University of Newcastle – stakeholder survey	21	5
Macquarie University – stakeholder survey	19	6
Curtin University – stakeholder survey	18	3
Total number of participants		24

The final question in the survey, question 19 was the same in all surveys and produced the results in figure 1; other results are included in Annex 3.

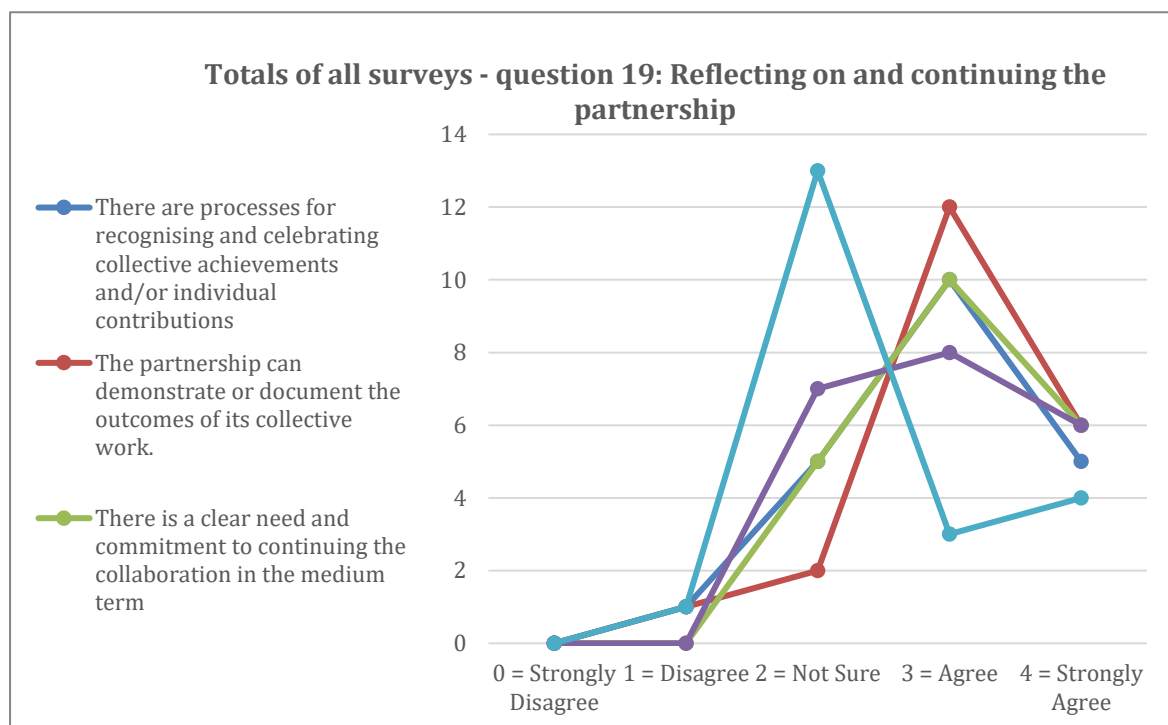


Figure 1: Results of surveys to question 19.

The line chart in figure 1 indicated strong agreement to the first three statements within question 19: *'There are processes for recognising and celebrating collective achievements and/or individual contributions'*; *'The partnership can demonstrate or document the outcomes of its collective work'*; *'There is a clear need and commitment to continuing the collaboration in the medium term'*. However, there were lower levels of agreement to the fourth and fifth statements: *'There are resources available from either internal or external sources to continue the partnership'*; *'There is a way of reviewing the range of partners and bringing in new members or removing some'*. This indicated that, although the universities and their respective partners had worked well together during the project, the future possibilities and sustainability of the relationships in the future were less clear.

4. Project governance, leadership and management

Project governance complied with the conditions of grant in the Office for Learning and Teaching contract which stipulated appointment of a reference group of national experts to advise the project participants. The reference group members were highly influential and authoritative individuals from peak advocacy groups relevant to the participants such as Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) and other pertinent practitioners. The project clearly benefitted from input from these individuals and groups and the reference group meetings were held at appropriate times and intervals. The project was led and administered from the University of Newcastle which was effective, but suffered minor delays when staff moved on from key positions. Each university had a nominated chief investigator which resulted in clear lines of communication and leadership. For the main part, other university staff who were committed to the project were constant, and worked effectively towards achieving the objectives. University staff working on the project were well-qualified and experienced researchers, lecturers, and interviewers dedicated and empathetic to the well-being of SfRBs and were also committed to contribute towards the successful outcomes of this project. In support of these ideals, as reported in the main report, extra measures were taken in relation to researching people from refugee backgrounds, in addition to the normal human research ethics requirements. In accordance with conditions of grant, four progress reports were submitted at specified intervals during 2016 and 2017. A final report was also prepared to be submitted by 28 February 2018.

5. Methods

The method for the project was theoretically sound in that it incorporated triangulation and synergy whereby results and findings could be identified in differing contexts which would enable aggregation of identification of issues and problems. This provided holistic evidence of strengths and areas for improvement in the provision of programs for SfRBs in a wide range of settings and pathways. The universities were identified as having varying approaches towards SfRB enabling programs and each had slightly different experiences to add to the body of knowledge obtained from the project from working with different partners to different cohorts of students, some in high school and some under-graduate students. Working with different cohorts of students and different partners but working towards similar end-products, the three projects successfully achieved triangulation of results which tended to corroborate each other, ensuring rigorous and robust findings.

After obtaining relevant authority from human research ethics committees in each university, the project researchers completed interviews with students, key stakeholders and education practitioners to provide a vast store of qualitative data. This data was analysed through utilising Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data: (1) 'Familiarising yourself with your data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; (6) producing the report' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:35). Qualitative data were obtained by use of personal interviews and focus groups; Curtin University also completed interviews with key informants and stakeholders, and Macquarie University asked student participants for suggestions to

improve systems. In addition, three individual in-depth case studies per pathway were developed by using the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Framework¹¹ (see below).

6. Evaluation data

Project evaluation resources on the Office for Learning and Teaching website were utilised to enable effective evaluation methods devised by each of the universities. The evaluation methods were coordinated and recorded by the process outlined in the section Terms of reference for external evaluator, above. The evaluation methods were in alignment with the recommendations from the Evaluators' professional learning competency framework (Australasian Evaluation Society, 2013). The outputs and outcomes of the project, which are mainly of a qualitative nature but include some products, are listed against the project objectives in the section following.

7. Outputs and Outcomes

The outputs and outcomes from this important project can be illustrated through examining the results based on the numbered objectives listed at the beginning of this report. Detailed findings from the research are included in the main report.

(1) Conduct a nationwide audit of what pathways students from refugee backgrounds (SfRBs) take to enter higher education and consult with relevant stakeholders to identify key issues

Pathways to Education (audit): This part of the project provided a useful database, for the use of practitioners operating nation-wide in this field, of contacts and programs related to SfRB requirements; over 200 organisations were contacted, analysed and categorised. Four codeable themes were identified from the initial search (iterative, 'rechecking' design): *Access schemes; preparation for study and support; financial support, and; networks and belonging*. When completing the audit, researchers found that the number of organisations relevant to widening participation for SfRB candidates was vastly in excess of those originally envisaged. The resource produced is proving extremely useful to the education and immigration practitioners to whom it is freely available. The audit information has been hosted on the website for the Refugee Council of Australia¹² which bodes well for its sustainability.

(2) Examine in-depth three educational pathway programs that open access to higher education for SfRBs and review their efficacy through qualitative analysis of student feedback

Literature review: A comprehensive literature review was completed which resulted in an excellent summary of the situation that currently exists in educational pathways for SfRBs. This external evaluator's report will not dwell on the accurate and explicit exposition of the situation found in the main report to the project (Section 2); suffice it to say that the literature review offers a sound foundation of information for the project and future studies. In

¹¹ <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=image+bronfenbrenner&espv>

¹² <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getting-help/education-info/pathways-education/>

addition, project researchers compiled a large annotated bibliography on refugee/ education-related literature, which will be shared via the Refugee Education SIG¹³ in the future.

Review of efficacy of the three pathways: The review has found that there is no ideal all-encompassing holistic approach that can be applied in all circumstances; indeed, the findings indicate a community-sensitive response is the most effective approach. To the credit of the three participating universities, they have demonstrated continuous improvement of their provision of services to SfRBs to enhance the likelihood of achieving educational success. SfRBs need a variety of pathways depending on the starting point of their journey towards higher education. However, it is clear that the current provision is not adequate as it is not provided universally in all areas of Australia. The main report for this project and the conference presentations and workshops, in addition to future journal articles which will be published imminently, will assist wider sharing of good practice around appropriate support and guidance across the education sector. It is clear from feedback from SfRBs that the education system in this country is complex for them to negotiate and there is a clear need for more people-rich supports that can provide personalised advice, guidance, and navigational help to enable informed and targeted decision-making. The holistic findings of the main report of which this report is an appendix, illustrates these succinct findings very clearly.

(3) Develop a set of best practice recommendations for pathway providers who engage with SfRBs

Best practice recommendations and report on cultural and language/literacy challenges: All of the three strands of the project focused on longitudinal tracking and developing in-depth understanding of SfRBs transition and progression to university through the three departure points previously mentioned. The report successfully captures the many systemic, institutional and individual challenges that the SfRB participants faced. The findings across the three universities were common and tended to corroborate each other. A recurring theme was that time needs to be allowed for SfRB candidates for acculturation and familiarity with systems, conventions, rules and regulations in their adopted country, as there are many customs and cultures that they do not understand and cannot predict, especially in the field of education ('disconnections'). The report, based on the findings of the research synthesised from personal interviews, identifies and explains the priorities, challenges and issues well; although it also identifies many problems caused by the Australian education system itself and its lack of flexibility. Practical problems of interacting with other students were identified, along with some proposed solutions. The review and the development of a set of best practice guidelines has caused the universities to examine their own policies, practices and procedures and amend them to be more user-friendly. Also, teaching practice, learning materials, and resources have been amended from the findings to enhance the learning process for SfRBs.

(4) Strengthen the sense of community among Australian higher education institutions with regards to supporting SfRB transitions

Partnership surveys: The nature of the relationship between the three participating universities was described above, but there is a sense of community among higher education institutions in relation to supporting SfRB transitions. The main report has focused particularly

¹³ SIG = Special Interest Group

on relationships with other key organisations such as TAFEs, IECs and high schools, but connections were also established with all universities across Australia through the conference proceedings, workshops, and the special interest group (SIG¹⁴), which was created as a direct result of two symposia that team members organised and facilitated. These collaborative events highlighted the need for a space where good practice and questions could be shared, and which needed to centrally include students and colleagues from all education and community sectors to help 'bridge the gaps' that were clearly identified in practice, and which are also reflected in the literature. To this end, a collaboration with RCoA and MYAN was sought, so as to make the network as inclusive as possible with one team member being a co-chair of the Refugee Education SIG. The project was also afforded national prominence through the invitation to three NSW project team members to participate in the event organised by the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet in October 2016, chaired by Professor Peter Shergold that welcomed the arrival of refugees from Syria. This resulted in the establishment of a NSW-focused steering group to consider issues pertaining to refugee participation in higher education with colleagues from Western Sydney University, University of NSW, and Charles Sturt University.

Website (www.refugeetransitions.com): The website that the project initiated is well-designed, attractive to viewers and easy to use. It has been used as a useful medium to inform practitioners and participants about the project, disseminate resources and strengthen the sense of community among Australian HEIs towards supporting SfRB transitions.

(5) Contribute towards and facilitate SfRBs' positive engagement with university study so as to identify issues that could improve levels of retention by seeking to better understand their transitions

Longitudinal studies: The research interviews carried out by each of the universities, especially the longitudinal studies, have provided rich data for the myriad of findings for this project. This external evaluator's report will not repeat the vast amount of data, but will attest to its extreme value to guide university policy, practices, and procedures, to enhance levels of retention for SfRBs in the future. I am aware however, that these improvements and enhancements take a long time to achieve fruition and are beset by problems such as allegations of 'unfair advantage' over other mainstream students, which have been documented in the main report in quotes from key informants and practitioners. Another method of identifying the retention barriers was the compilation of personal case studies of SfRBs.

Case Studies: An example of one of the case studies was John who worked as a security advisor, linguist and cultural translator in Afghanistan. John completed the TAFE transition course then Open Foundation at the University of Newcastle. He reported practical issues (lack of a personal laptop) and found that, although he had studied electrical engineering to a low standard previously, he had to withdraw from Physics and needed more assistance to study Maths while also working. The reasons for withdrawal were pressures of family life and time constraints. The case study successfully tracked his progress and while his decision to pause his studies for the reasons stated are not exclusive to SfRBs, the case study does

¹⁴ Refugee Education Special Interest Group – national network of colleagues:
<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/educationsig/>

emphasise the difficulties for a person who had a responsible and skilled job in his home country making the transition to the workplace in Australia. His skills were not valued, recognised or accredited as prior learning in his adopted country. John also appeared to take on a high level and number of educational commitments that he could not realistically achieve while working and having family commitments. The case of John also illustrates the inflexibility of the higher education system: John is adamant that he will return to his studies on a part-time basis in the future – which is an example of his agentic capability to decide what is best for him and his family at this point in time. From an institutional perspective, however, this is recorded as attrition.

(6) Enhance educational opportunities by developing resources that improve SfRBs' understandings of the academic language and culture that shapes Australian higher education.

Resources for HEB students: Resources on the refugee transitions website include assessment tasks for the Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE) linked to 10364NAT Certificate III, which was the mandated program of study for AMEP¹⁵/ SEE¹⁶ when the project began. Since then, the government have made significant reforms to the AMEP, meaning that CSWE may not be used in the future although a full set of assessment items have been created to map on to modules of CSWE III. Although only four learning modules are currently included on the website, they are good quality. Furthermore, the AMEP Assessment Task Bank coordinator at Linda Wyse & Associates, who oversee the Quality Assurance of the AMEP, have signalled that they will include these materials in the national task bank, thus making them available to AMEP and SEE teachers across Australia. Also, the University of Newcastle developed transition curricula and resources especially to support SfRBs' progression to undergraduate studies linked to a bridging program. The Macquarie University LEAP program has been developed over a number of years and is constantly evaluated for its effectiveness.

8. Dissemination of findings from the project

In addition to the nationwide audit of SfRB information, this project contributed towards objectives 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 by the high level of outputs in the form of the establishment of the Refugee Education SIG, conference presentations, practitioner-focused workshops, and journal articles (in press and in progress) from its findings. This rich source of information has significantly added to the body of knowledge in this area, which, according to the main report, was a substantial gap in previous research. The communications plan from this project included the website mentioned above and also social media outlets of Facebook and Twitter (#refugeesinHE). Moreover, stakeholder workshops and symposiums were held to disseminate to HEI, school, VET and community practitioners and academics in all states and territories except for the Northern Territory as an alternative to the planned webinar was replaced by extra practitioner workshops (7). At the time of writing there were seven conference presentations recorded and 14 journal articles were in production along with one research report. The amount of publications from this project are truly prodigious and the

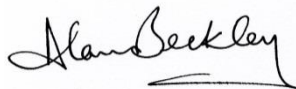
¹⁵ Adult Migrant English Program

¹⁶ Skills for Education and Employment

university research staff are to be congratulated for their efforts at disseminating the valuable information at their disposal and making it available to many other practitioners in this field to aid SfRBs not only in Australia but world-wide. Indeed, a featured symposium originating from this project was chosen to represent the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) for delivery at the British Education Research Association Annual Conference in England in 2017.

9. Implications for other projects

The project has contributed richer understandings and practical resources to enable access and participation of SfRBs, to facilitate enhanced support, and to achieve educational success in higher education. There are several evidenced recommendations relating to improving connections and unmasking assumptions that the main report makes, which should be taken on board as minimum requirements of future projects. Other projects that seek to improve transitions and outcomes for SfRBs should carefully read the details and findings of this report before commencing their own programs; they will find a great deal of useful information in here to advise of the correct path to follow. On a national strategic level, Australia, with its ageing population, should ensure appropriate care and support for the valuable multi-cultural human resource of students from refugee backgrounds to ensure the vigour and sustainability of the workforce for the future. This project offers great assistance towards the achievement of this national imperative.



Alan Beckley
Project external evaluator
29th January 2018

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Annex 1: (Re) claiming social capital improving language and cultural pathways for refugee students into Australian higher education (project reference: ID15-4758)

Evaluation processes¹⁷

What	Who		How	When / Where	Why - rationale
	Persons involved	Who is responsible			
select an evaluation team (including advisors) to cover the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the work, including culturally-knowledgeable members					
effectively engage identified and diverse stakeholders					
delineate evaluation questions					
define evaluation purpose					
describe program					
attend to intended and potential uses of evaluation					
design feasible, acceptable and engaging evaluation approaches					
conduct data collection activities					
utilise existing data					
refine lines of enquiry					
integrate data from multiple sources					
synthesise credible and valid evaluative conclusions					
report on evaluation findings interpersonally and in culturally sensitive ways					
report findings in formats that are useful for client and key stakeholders					
seek feedback from clients					

¹⁷ Source: Adapted from: Australasian Evaluation Society (2013) *Evaluators' professional learning competency framework*. Carlton: Australasian Evaluation Society Inc. (p.16)

Annex 2: Program Logic: (Re) claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for refugee students into Australian higher education (project reference: ID15-4758)

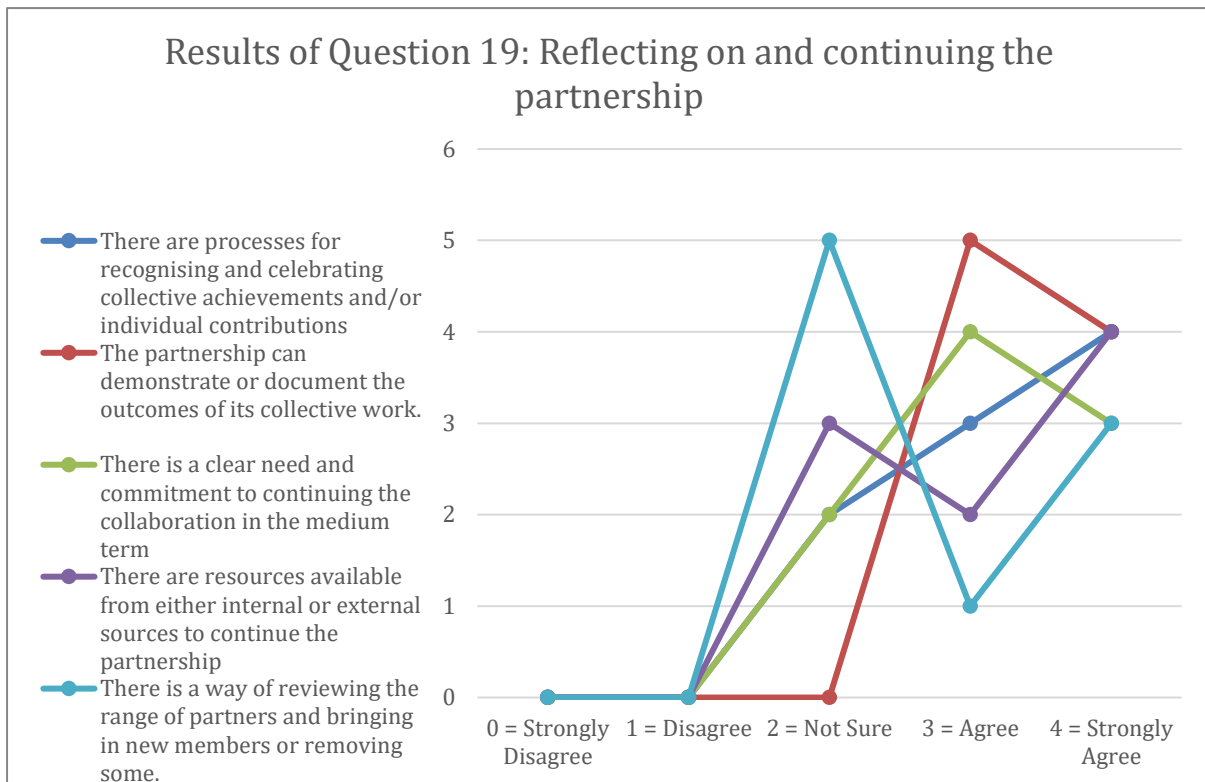
Program Logic Table¹⁸

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes - Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short	Medium	Long
Collaboration between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Newcastle (Lead) • Macquarie University • Curtin University Inputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project staff - Accommodation - Teaching / learning materials - Research & Admin costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordination of program (The University of Newcastle) 2. Audit of Pathways (The University of Newcastle) 3. Exploring HEB students' lived experience of academic culture, learning and language in an enabling program 4. Exploring HEB students' lived experience who did not participate in a program 5. Tracking HEB students' transitions into and through undergraduate study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project leaders and team members • HEB students • Schools • IECs • VET sector • Reference Group • Student Reference Groups • External Evaluation Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research data collection • Audit of Pathways for HEB students • Conference papers • Project website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on Pathways • Pre-university transition resources for HEB students • Recommendations for schools • Workshops for KSH • Report on research findings • National webinar for 'train the trainer' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-institution collaboration between schools, IECs, VET and HE sector • Enhanced participation / aspiration / opportunities for HEB students in HE.

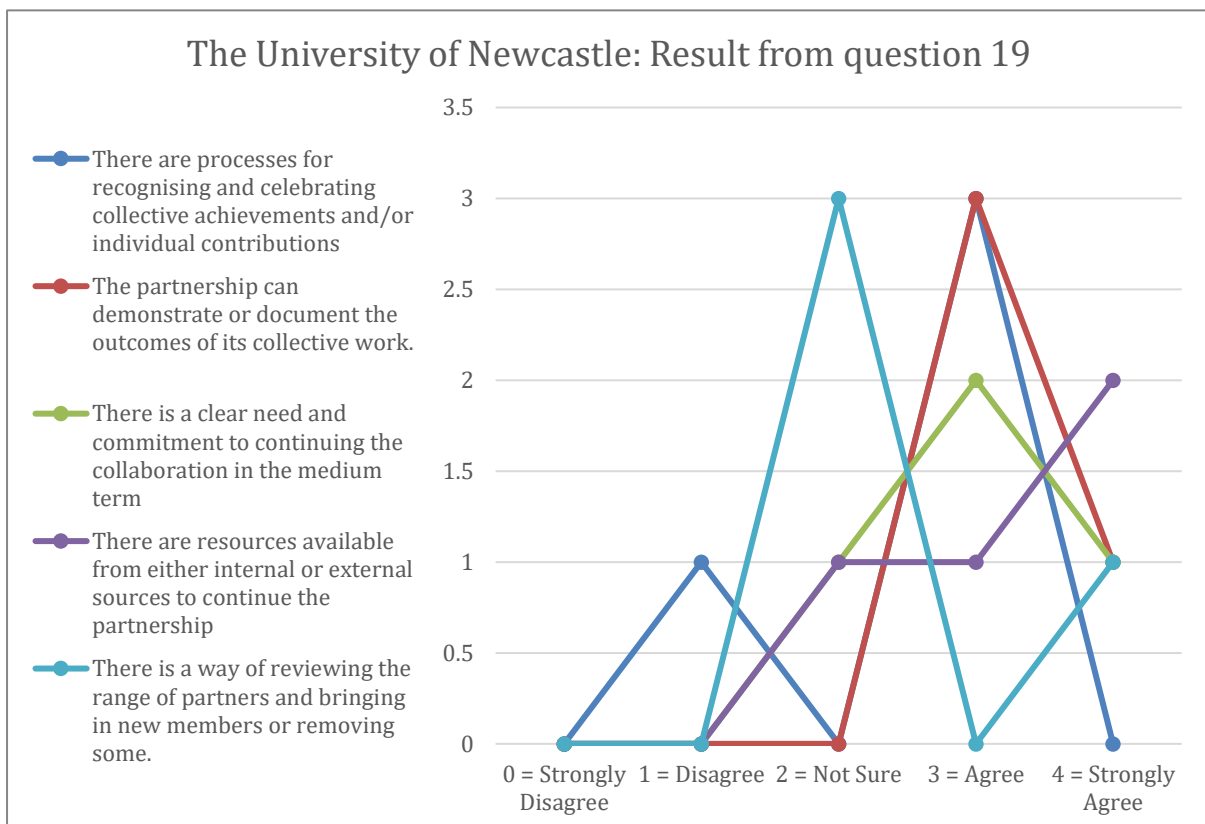
¹⁸ Adapted from: Taylor-Powell, E. & Henert, E. (2008) *Developing a logic model: Teaching and Training guide*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

(Re)Claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for students from refugee backgrounds into Australian higher education

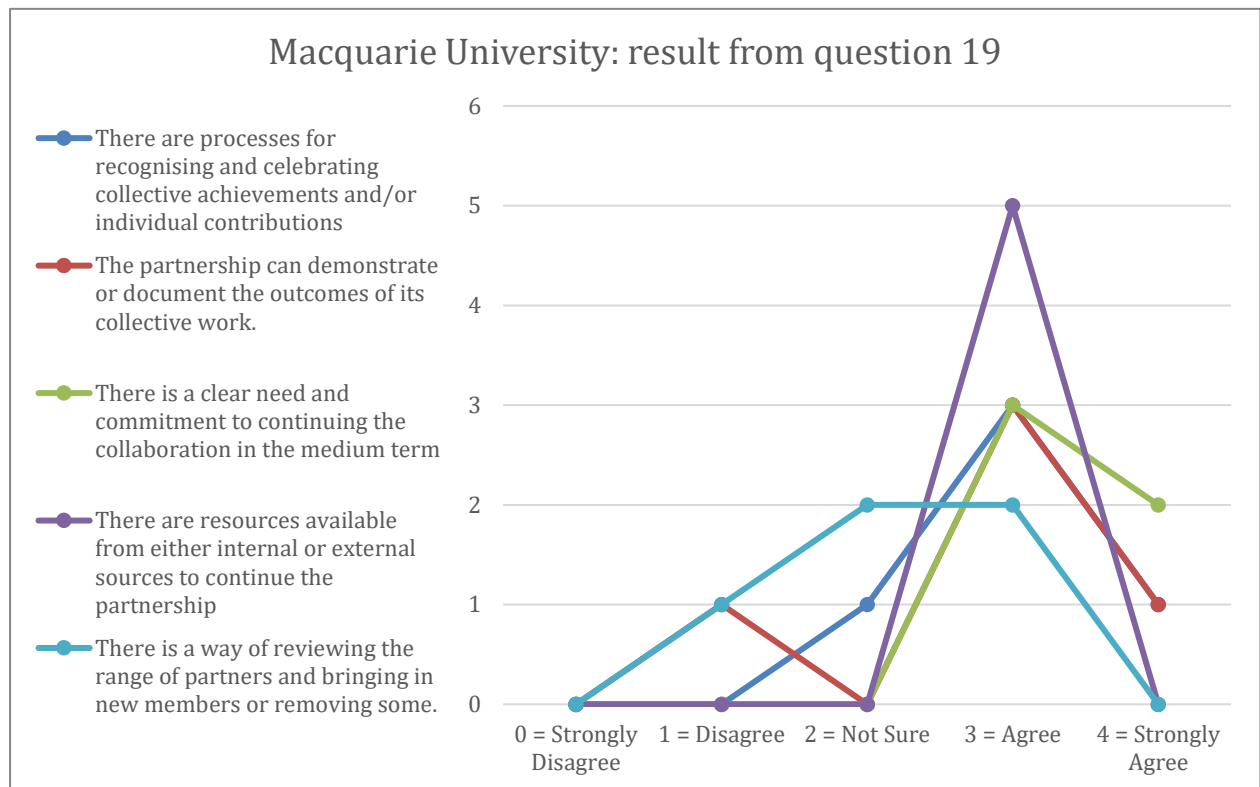
Annex 3: General results from question 19



The University of Newcastle: Result from question 19



Macquarie University: result from question 19



Curtin University: result from question 19

