



## Support to refugee crisis

Council is acknowledging its culturally diverse communities by declaring South Gippsland Shire a Refugee Welcome Zone.

Now one of 124 Refugee Welcome Zones in Australia, Council will sign the declaration of commitment in the spirit to uphold human rights, welcome refugees into the community, demonstrate compassion for refugees and enhance cultural diversity in the community.

Council does not need to have a large refugee population to make this declaration, according to Mayor, Cr Robert Newton. Becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone helps connect Council with the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers, and provides acknowledgement to the community of Council's support for diversity.

In September, 2015 the Australian Government announced that 12,000 additional humanitarian places would be made available to people displaced as a result of conflicts in Syria and Iraq. South Gippsland has not been identified to receive refugees directly from this intake. Most of the 4,000 refugees expected in Victoria are expected to be accepted through applications from existing family members in Hume and then in rural areas to the North West of Melbourne.

In the five years to 31 March, 2015 South Gippsland received a total of 211 migrants comprised of: 98 families, 8 humanitarian entrants and 105 skilled workers. Services are provided within the Shire in settlement support, migrant English and direct support from community members and groups.

Local organisations working with refugees in the area include Milpara Community House, Latrobe Community Health Service, South Gippsland Rural Australians for Refugees and Gippsland Multicultural Resource Centre.

“There are many community groups and individuals also involved in refugee support both locally and more broadly through fundraising, awareness events and direct assistance to new arrivals to help connect them to services and activities in the community,” Cr Newton explained.

“Council may also provide support to State and Federal Government, local service providers and community organisations, and through recognition of diversity in Council planning and service provision.”

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