



## Case Study 3: Allianz/ Settlement Support International (SSI) Refugee Scholarship Program commenced in 2016

<http://www.ssi.org.au/scholarships>

[www.allianz.com.au/media/news/2016/new-scholarships-for-refugees](http://www.allianz.com.au/media/news/2016/new-scholarships-for-refugees)

Assessing the economic contribution of refugees in Australia June 2013 by Richard Parsons

### Introduction

In 2016 Settlement Support International (SSI), a not-for-profit humanitarian organisation, and Allianz (Insurance) joined forces to develop a scholarships program for refugees who have settled in Australia. The program is focussed on assisting refugees including young people needing help with their school education and adults seeking recognition for their qualifications. Successful applicants will be eligible for a range of new scholarships worth more than \$90,000.

Forty-six scholarships, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, are offered in five categories, including primary and secondary school, vocational training, tertiary qualification and skills recognition.

Examples scholarships on offer include the following.

**Table 1**

| Provider              | Scholarship                     | No       | Type   | Value   | Criteria  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------|--|---|---|
| SSI/Allianz Australia | SSI Allianz Refugee Scholarship | 46       | Primary/ Secondary school<br>Voc Ed + Training (VET)<br>University Skills & Qualls recognition | Primary School – five x \$500<br>Secondary school – 19 x \$1,500<br>Vocational education & training (VET) – 10 x \$3,000<br>University – 2 x \$5,000<br>Skills & qualifications recognition – grants of up to \$2,000 each from a \$20,000 fund | To be eligible, students must:<br>-Be from a refugee background on a permanent humanitarian visa<br>-Have been living in Australia for five years or less<br>-Be able to demonstrate additional socio-economic disadvantage such as financial hardship or family challenges<br>-Study and reside in NSW |
| Swinburne             | Welcome Scholarships            | 6 u/grad | Full-time. U/Grad,   | Tuition fees or in the case of Cert I-IV - concession fees.   | Bridging Visa E (BE) (subclass V050) & TPV (subclass 785). The  |

| Provider                        | Scholarship                                    | No  | Type  | Value   | Criteria  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| University                      |  | 4<br>Dip/AdvDip<br>4<br>Foundation<br>TBC Cert I - IV                           | Dip/Adv Dip, Foundation Certificate I-IV.   | Recipients undertaking a course longer than 12 months who lose their government support as a direct result of doing so will receive a payment of \$7,500.00. This will not be sufficient to live on, so recipients of this payment will be expected to be working part-time whilst they are studying. | following equity principles will be applied in the selection:<br>o Commitment to study<br>o Likelihood of success<br>o Financial hardship<br>o Connection to support agencies and community (to ensure the student is supported and has every opportunity for success)<br>o Other factors such as disability, women in non-traditional areas of study, regional/rural location  |
| University of Canberra          | UC Foundation Refugee Scholarship              | 5   | First year undergraduate degree             | \$2,500   | Considered a refugee student enrolled full-time ; Be able to demonstrate financial need; Attach a 300 word statement outlining how the financial assistance provided by the award would contribute to the advancement of their education and career ambitions; Be willing to be profiled to promote scholarships offered by the UC Foundation.  |
| University of Notre Dame        | The Vice Chancellor's Humanitarian Scholarship | Scholarships awarded each year will be at the discretion of the Vice Chancellor | Granted for one year and reviewed each year | The tuition fees of the recipient   | i) Be from a refugee or asylum seeker background as evidenced by the recipient holding a current Australian Government Refugee and Humanitarian Protection Visa or a Bridging Visa E which permits the recipient to undertake tertiary studies in Australia; ii) Be able to demonstrate that they will be able to reside in Australia for the completion of their course; and iii) Have been accepted as a full time first year or Foundation Year student at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle or Sydney campus. |
| University of Western Australia | UWA Humanitarian Visa Scholarships             | 3   | Undergraduate                               | All tuition costs for 6 semesters plus honours if applicable  | applicants must hold or have applied for a Temporary Protection Visa (subclass 785) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (subclass 790   |

This Case Study looks to understand the driving forces behind this initiative, the criteria developed for the different scholarship opportunities and how the program may impact the potential for employment for young refugees and adults seeking recognition for their qualifications.

SSI is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation providing a range of services in the areas of humanitarian settlement, housing, asylum seeker assistance, foster care, disability support and employment services in NSW. Allianz Australia delivers a wide range of personal, commercial and corporate insurance products and services to more than 3 million policyholders.

## Relevance of this Case Study

This Case Study provides insights into an alternative approach to aligning the talent needs of business and industry with the desires and aspirations of newly arrived refugees and migrants as they seek settle into the Australian community. The scholarship program looks to remove some of the financial barriers that often hinder the refugee's progress towards further education and skills/qualifications recognition. By eliminating some of these barriers, the doorway to employment can be opened wider.

The primary driver for Allianz to invest in the scholarship program was their absolute commitment to diversity and the strong belief "that a diverse workforce is a better workforce."

## Some of the key messages/learnings from this Case Study

The *New Scholarships for Refugees* program by its very nature validates the fact that the majority of new arrivals to Australia, through the various refugee, migrant and asylum seeker channels are intelligent, skilled, adaptable, resilient, motivated to work/learn and in many cases well educated. From a more intangible perspective, refugees also possess a strong sense of, and commitment to family and community, respect for leadership in both internal and host communities, strong family values and a richness of spirit. All are highly desirable qualities for any business or community looking to grow and prosper.

Some of these attributes are required just to meet the selection criteria (Table1) for the scholarships. Selection criteria includes but is not limited to:

- ability to demonstrate additional socio-economic disadvantage such as financial hardship or family challenges
- commitment to study
- likelihood of success
- financial hardship or be able to demonstrate financial need in a 300-word statement
- connection to support agencies and community (to ensure the student is supported and has every opportunity for success)
- other factors such as disability, women in non-traditional areas of study, regional/rural location.

Often in the business rush to identify and acquire labour (in large numbers) to meet urgent business needs, the realities of many of these virtues are lost (especially in the red meat processing industry). This problem can be further compounded by the general temptation of

many in the community and in industry to stereotype and judge refugees before there is any effort to establish a relationship.

This problem is highlighted in Richard Parsons 2013 Literature review 'Assessing the economic contribution of refugees in Australia'

"...we know that refugees contribute to the Australian economy through employment, business, and other activities, but we do not know the extent or value of this contribution, or how to assess it holistically. This gap enables the public and media to focus on alleged negative consequences and financial costs of refugee settlement. In particular, those arriving by boat have received increasing opposition in Australian opinion polling and public sentiment over the last four decades (Phillips and Spinks, 2010). The resulting uneven debate tends to perpetuate what Courtney (2013) describes as an "island-nation mentality which fears invasion by sea", belying the fact that the number of 'unauthorised' boat arrivals in Australia is small compared to the US and parts of Europe (Phillips and Spinks, 2010). Such a mentality is perpetuated by language characterised by derogatory terms, such as 'bogus asylum seeker' and 'queue jumping' (Phillips and Boese, 2013). The debate, in other words, appears to be biased by misinformation, myth, and misplaced assumptions. Common assumptions – or myths – are that refugees are an economic burden on society, taking much and giving little, and that they take immigration places away from skilled workers who would make a bigger contribution (Stevenson, 2005)." <sup>1</sup>

In this Case Study Allianz has shown the importance of great leadership and, in partnership with SSI, has matched the words of their strategic business commitment to diversity, with a real pre-employment program funded by real dollars. The program looks to invest in the potential of people first before seeking to recruit talent. The potential is there however for Allianz to be the number one 'employer of choice' when the studies and recognition are complete and the employment journey commences.

" In the very early stages of the program Allianz recruited 9 new employees from countries such as Vietnam, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan."

For SSI, this is part of why they exist and what they do. This partnership between SSI and Allianz is a direct response to the various educational needs of refugee communities. Education Scholarships for individuals for the 2017 academic year are as follows:

- a. Primary school – five x \$500
- b. Secondary school – 19 x \$1,500
- c. Vocational education & training (VET) – 10 x \$3,000
- d. University – 2 x \$5,000
- e. Skills & qualifications recognition – grants of up to \$2,000 each from a \$20,000 fund.

As seen in many other case studies, outcomes are achieved when there is strong leadership, teamwork, mutual respect and a commitment between business, support agencies and the community to work together for people goals. When all act together, with integrity, everyone can win. Full time employment can then be a beautiful by-product of prospering communities and enriched lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Parsons, June 2013 *Assessing the economic contribution of refugees in Australia*.